**OFFICE OF SENATOR CHIZ ESCUDERO**

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH | SB NO. 1359, CR NO. 6

CONTACT INFORMATION

CHIZESCUDERO.COM

REACHUS@CHIZESCUDERO.COM

TRANSCRIPT

SB NO. 1359, COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 6: ‘NO PERMIT, NO EXAM’ PROHIBITION ACT

Mr. President, Honorable Colleagues of this august Chamber:

​As Chairperson of the Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education, I rise to sponsor Committee Report No. 6, which recommends the approval of Senate Bill No. 1359, entitled, “An Act Prohibiting the Imposition of a “No Permit, No Exam” Policy, or any Policy that Prevents Students Enrolled in Public or Private Educational Institutions from Taking Examinations or any Form of Educational Assessment for Reasons of Outstanding Financial or Property Obligations, such as Unpaid Tuition and Other School Fees.”

In a country where basic goods are sold in sachets to make them affordable, tuition, too, is paid in the Pinoy way of multiple “gives” to make education accessible to many.

Curriculum is not the only thing ladderized in our schools—matriculation, too.

Sadly, many students fall from the rungs, not because they do poorly in class, but because they are poor in life.

The involuntary dropping out happens when tuition and other school fees are not paid in time.

And often, the penalty for that failure is that the student is prohibited from taking the examination.

By any moral yardstick, forcing a student to forfeit an exam is the cruelest of fines.

It triggers a chain of events that is sometimes life-altering for the student, for the worse, not only of denied diplomas but also of dead dreams.

The reasons why this bill must be passed have been argued brilliantly by Senator Revilla, Senator Cynthia Villar, and by the Senate President.

To their cogent explanations, let me add some commonsensical perspectives.

If there is no automatic kill switch on the engine of a car whose owner has missed several months of amortization, why should a student be instantaneously denied from taking an exam for an education that he, too, has been amortizing?

A family who misses paying the mortgage of their condo is not immediately evicted. On the contrary, banks throw them a lifeline.

Now let me ask: If consideration is given to those who have borrowed millions, why can’t the same be extended to students whose arrears are in the mere thousands only?

And if you read today’s business news, it is rife with accounts of how billionaires are suing and countersuing each other to collect billions they swear are owed them.

Some have succeeded in wangling writs of attachment from courts, but not one so far has tried to enforce it.

Even government has participated in bailouts—legislated even—not just for one company, but entire industries.

If companies viewed as too big to fail must be helped, why can’t the same generosity be extended to a student who is too bright to fail but too poor to pay tuition?

Mr. President, my dear colleagues:

Let me make it clear that this bill does not mandate tuition forgiveness.

It does not erase a student’s debt to schools. It only calls for the deferment of its payment—while the student is allowed to take the examination.

Para ma-protektahan naman ang mga paaralan, may probisyon dito na maaaring pumirma ng promissory note ang mag-aaral o kanyang magulang.

And to guarantee that financial obligations are settled, the educational institution may:

* Withhold the release or issuance of grades, diplomas, or certificates.
* Refuse to issue applicable clearances.
* Deny enrolment.

Sapat na po sigurong mga collateral ‘yan.

In fact, what is withheld as security guarantee by the school is of high value, because it is a future career that will yield income, and with that at stake, it is guaranteed that it will be redeemed.

To recap, this bill prohibits a school from:

* Disallowing any student with outstanding financial or property obligations from taking examinations with the rest of the student body.
* Requiring any student to secure a permit from school authorities prior to an examination or assessment.
* Compelling any student or their parents or guardians to pay a portion of the outstanding obligations before allowing the student to take the test.

In closing, let me point out a very important context of this bill, which could be the answer to comments that we are mandating a financial imposition on private entities on whose operations government has zero equity.

In the 2023 National Budget we are debating, there is Php53 billion in state assistance to private basic education under the budget of DepEd

On top of this are billions in the Tertiary Education Subsidy that will go to private higher education institutions next year.

Mr. President, let us pass this bill.