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# 'Free tuition not for truant students'

By DELON PORCALLA

A Congress official who was instrumental in realigning P40 billion to provide free tuition to poor but deserving students in state universities and colleges (SUCs) yesterday warned students against playing truant.

"Our state and local colleges and universities should not become '*iskul bukol*' even as we give free education to our students," Davao City Rep. Karlo Nograles said.

Nograles, who chairs the House committee on appropriations, said Congress will exercise its oversight powers to ensure that the funds allocated for the free college tuition program "will not be wasted

on malingers and recidivist absentees."

Nograles said they would "assist" the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the participating educational institutions in making sure that only deserving students or those who only truly want to study will benefit from the free college tuition program.

"The funds we have set

aside are simply too precious," Nograles stressed.

The free college education in SUCs across the country is provided for under Republic Act 10931, or the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act, which President Duterte signed last August.

The law effectively does away with the collection of tuition and other school fees in SUCs.

"The House may hold hearings after every semester to check on the implementation of RA 10931, particularly on how it is helping less fortunate families in getting their children to college. After all,

this is the spirit of the law," Nograles said.

RA 10931's beneficiaries include students from the country's 114 SUCs, 16 CHED-accredited local universities and colleges and 122 technical-vocational institutions under the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority.

"We can't expect this to be free of hitches especially during its first year of implementation, so close coordination between lawmakers, CHED and other stakeholders is vital. We can learn the problems and solve them as we go along," he said.

\* EDUCATION

\* CHED

\* SUC