

# 'Inform beneficiaries on free college education'

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State universities and colleges (SUCs) were urged yesterday to post within their campuses guidelines on the government's free college education program.

Davao City Rep. Karlo Nograles, who chairs the House of Representatives appropriations committee, said this would "ensure the smooth implementation of the program on its all-important first year."

"What we want is proper compliance with the requirements among beneficiary-students. SUCs and local universities and colleges accredited by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) must do everything to guarantee that all the relevant information is passed on to the target beneficiaries," he appealed.

The free college education program is contained in Republic Act 10931, also known as the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act.

Its implementation starts this school year and is envisioned to give poor Filipinos the chance to pursue a college education, giving them the tools to eventually change their lives and that of their loved ones for the better, Nograles pointed out.

"This landmark law must get off on the right foot so doubters of the program can no longer claim that tuitionfree tertiary education in the country is fake news," he said.

The guidelines to be posted in the different schools and universities shall be based on the implementing rules and regulations the CHED released in March, he added.

Free college education is available in all 112 SUCs and 78 universities and colleges run by local government units and accredited by CHED, as well as in 122 technicalvocational schools under the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), he also said.

The law provides that aside from the beneficiary-students' tuition, the government would shoulder their miscellaneous and other similar or related fees.

The Nograles-led appropriations committee realigned P40 billion in the 2018 national budget to fund the free college education program.

"All eyes are on the maiden implementation of the free tuition law. For us congressmen who possess the power of the purse, we will use this first year as basis on how to adjust or tweak the budget of the program for the coming years," Nograles said.