



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

H. No. 7503

BY REPRESENTATIVES TINIO, CASTRO (F.L.), VILLAFUERTE, NIETO, ERIGUEL, YAP (M.), VELASCO-CATERA, AQUINO-MAGSAYSAY, BRAVO (M.V.), TREÑAS, LAOGAN, ORTEGA (P.), BORDADO, NOGRALES (K.A.), FARIÑAS, SANDOVAL, DIMAPORO (M.K.), LOBREGAT, ANTONINO, SAMBAR, SUANSING (E.), PADUANO, LIMKAICHONG, NOEL, PANGANIBAN, UNABIA, MACAPAGAL-ARROYO, SUAREZ, CASILAO, ROA-PUNO, BELMONTE (R.), TAMBUNTING, SY-ALVARADO, REVILLA, VIOLAGO, PRIMICIAS-AGABAS, SARMIENTO (E.M.), BELMONTE (J.C.) AND ALEJANO, PER COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 714

AN ACT DECLARING FILIPINO SIGN LANGUAGE AS THE NATIONAL SIGN LANGUAGE OF THE FILIPINO DEAF AND THE OFFICIAL SIGN LANGUAGE OF GOVERNMENT IN ALL TRANSACTIONS INVOLVING THE DEAF, AND MANDATING ITS USE IN SCHOOLS, BROADCAST MEDIA, AND WORKPLACES

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

1 SECTION 1. *Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Filipino
2 Sign Language Act”.

3 SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – The State, in accord with
4 the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with
5 Disabilities, continues to promote, protect, and ensure the full and
6 equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of

1 persons with disabilities. Pursuant thereto, Congress has passed
2 legislations upholding the rights of persons with disabilities such as
3 Republic Act No. 10410, or the Early Years Act (EYA), and Republic
4 Act No. 10533, or the Enhanced Basic Education Act which
5 recognize the necessity of using Filipino sign language in the
6 education of deaf learners from early childhood to the secondary
7 level.

8 Similarly, national and local state agencies shall uphold the
9 inherent dignity, individual autonomy, and independence of persons
10 with disabilities by guaranteeing accessibility and the elimination of
11 all forms of discrimination in all public interactions and
12 transactions, thereby ensuring their full and effective participation
13 and inclusion in society. The State shall also take all appropriate
14 measures to ensure that the deaf can exercise the right to
15 expression and opinion. Accordingly, the State recognizes and
16 encourages the promotion of the use of sign language to embody the
17 specific cultural and linguistic identity of the Filipino deaf.

18 SEC. 3. *Filipino Sign Language as the National Sign*
19 *Language.* – The Filipino Sign Language, hereinafter referred to as
20 FSL, is hereby declared as the national sign language of the
21 Philippines. The FSL shall be recognized, promoted, and supported
22 as the medium of official communication in all transactions
23 involving the deaf, and as the language of instruction of deaf
24 education, without prejudice to the use of other forms of
25 communication depending on individual choice or preference.

26 SEC. 4. *Filipino Sign Language in Education.* –

27 (a) *Medium of Instruction and Curriculum.* – The
28 Department of Education (DepEd), the Commission on Higher

1 Education (CHED), the Technical Education and Skills
 2 Development Authority (TESDA), and all other national and local
 3 government agencies involved in the education of the deaf shall use
 4 FSL as the medium of instruction in deaf education. The FSL shall
 5 also be taught as a separate subject in the curriculum for deaf
 6 learners. The reading and writing of Filipino, as the national
 7 language, other Philippine languages, and English shall also be
 8 taught to deaf learners.

9 (b) Deaf Teachers. – To promote the licensing and
 10 mobilization of deaf teachers in formal education as well as
 11 alternative learning systems, the Professional Regulation
 12 Commission (PRC), together with teacher education programs
 13 nationwide, are directed to employ alternative assessment
 14 procedures which shall consider the conditions, abilities, and social
 15 barriers of deaf teachers. These procedures shall be language-
 16 appropriate and culture-fair to deaf education graduates.

17 (c) FSL in Teacher Education Programs. – In the context of
 18 inclusive education and Universal Design, the learning of FSL shall
 19 be a curricular or cocurricular offering in teacher education
 20 programs as deemed appropriate. As used in this Act, Universal
 21 Design refers to broad spectrum ideas meant to produce buildings,
 22 products and environments that are inherently accessible to older
 23 people and people with or without disabilities.

24 (d) Training and Evaluation Programs. – All national and
 25 local government agencies and centers providing education to deaf
 26 students are hereby tasked to undertake regular pre-service and
 27 in-service training and evaluation of their teachers. Training and

1 evaluation shall be designed and taught in consultation with the
 2 representatives of the Filipino deaf community.

3 The University of the Philippines (UP), together with the
 4 *Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino* (KWF), professional sign linguistics
 5 and linguistic researchers, in collaboration with the CHED and the
 6 DepEd, and the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD)
 7 Council, shall develop guidelines for the development of training
 8 materials in the education of the deaf. These materials shall be
 9 used by all state universities and colleges (SUCs), as well as their
 10 teachers and staff.

11 SEC. 5. *Standards for Filipino Sign Language Interpreting.* –
 12 The KWF, with the involvement of the deaf community and other
 13 stakeholders, shall establish a national system of standards,
 14 accreditation, and procedures for FSL interpreting, without
 15 prejudice to other forms of communication which respect the right of
 16 a deaf person to accessibility, and to seek and receive and impart
 17 ideas on an equal basis with others according to their choice. This
 18 shall include policies on the practice of interpreting as a profession,
 19 such as compensation rates and benefits, working conditions, and
 20 procedures for redress of grievances.

21 SEC. 6. *Filipino Sign Language in the Justice System.* – The
 22 FSL shall be in the official language of legal interpreting for the
 23 deaf in all public hearings, proceedings, and transactions of the
 24 courts, quasi-judicial agencies, and other tribunals. To ensure
 25 effective and equal access to justice for the deaf and to facilitate
 26 their effective role as direct and indirect participants in the legal
 27 system, courts, quasi-judicial agencies, and other tribunals are
 28 hereby mandated to ensure the availability of a qualified sign

1 language interpreter in all proceedings involving the deaf, without
2 prejudice to their right to choose other forms or modes of
3 communication, if they so prefer.

4 As used in this Act, "hearings, proceedings, and transactions"
5 shall include those that are held in police stations and before the
6 *Lupong Tagapamayapa*, as well as preliminary investigations and
7 other initial stages in the courts, quasi-judicial bodies, and other
8 tribunals.

9 The Supreme Court and other concerned agencies shall
10 promote appropriate training for those working in the
11 administration of justice, including hearing interpreters, deaf relay
12 interpreters, and other court personnel, and police and prison staff.
13 Support staff shall also be trained in translation from FSL to
14 written English or Filipino.

15 The Department of Justice (DOJ), the Department of the
16 Interior and Local Government and the Judiciary, with the
17 involvement of the deaf community and other stakeholders, are
18 tasked to create a national system of standards, accreditation, and
19 procedures for legal interpreting in FSL.

20 *SEC. 7. Filipino Sign Language in All Workplaces.* – The
21 FSL shall be the official language of the Filipino deaf employed in
22 the civil service and in all government workplaces. For this purpose,
23 all government offices shall take reasonable measures to encourage
24 the use of FSL among its employees, including the conduct of
25 awareness and training seminars on the rationale and use of FSL.

26 The UP, together with the KWF, National Council on
27 Disability Affairs, professional linguistics organizations and deaf
28 linguistics researchers, shall formulate guidelines for the

1 development of training materials for the employees of the DOJ,
2 the Judiciary, the Department of Health, the Department of Social
3 Welfare and Development, the Philippine Commission on Women
4 (PCW), the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC), and the
5 Commission on Human Rights (CHR), in the conduct of the
6 mandates and activities of these concerned offices.

7 *SEC. 8. Filipino Sign Language in the Health System.* –
8 State hospitals and all health facilities shall take steps to ensure
9 access of the deaf to health services, including the free provision of
10 FSL interpreters and accessible materials upon request of deaf
11 patients, or individuals who have family members who are deaf.

12 Private health facilities are encouraged to provide health
13 services to all deaf patients and their family members.

14 *SEC. 9. Filipino Sign Language in All Other Public*
15 *Transactions, Services, and Facilities.* – All national agencies,
16 including government-owned or -controlled corporations (GOCCs),
17 and local government units (LGUs) shall use FSL as the medium of
18 official communication in all public transactions involving the deaf.
19 Qualified FSL interpreters and accessible materials shall be
20 provided whenever necessary or requested during fora, conferences,
21 meetings, cultural events, sports competitions, community affairs,
22 and activities conducted by government agencies and GOCCs.

23 *SEC. 10. Filipino Sign Language in Broadcast Media.* – The
24 FSL shall be the language of broadcast media interpreting. To
25 guarantee access to information and freedom of expression of the
26 deaf, the *Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas* (KBP), and the
27 Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB)
28 shall, within one (1) year from the effectivity of this Act, require

1 FSL interpreter insets, compliant with accessibility standards for
 2 television, in news and public affairs programs. Subsequently, the
 3 MTRCB shall take steps to promote the progressive use of FSL in
 4 all other broadcasts and programming, especially in educational
 5 television programs designed for children, in conjunction with the
 6 National Council for Children's Television and the DepEd.

7 The KBP and the MTRCB, the deaf community, and other
 8 stakeholders are tasked to create a national system of standards,
 9 procedures and accreditation for broadcast media interpreting in
 10 FSL.

11 All videos published online, including those on social media,
 12 shall also conform to Philippine web accessibility standards.

13 SEC. 11. *Promotion of Filipino Sign Language.* – The
 14 DepEd, CHED, UP, KWF, Linguistic Society of the Philippines, and
 15 other national agencies and LGUs shall, in consultation with
 16 professional organizations with expertise and experience in
 17 language policy and planning and the deaf community, take
 18 appropriate steps to propagate sign language competency among
 19 hearing people, by offering FSL as an elective subject in the regular
 20 or mainstream curriculum, particularly of SUCs.

21 In coordination with the KWF, SUCs, led by the UP, are
 22 directed to undertake continuing research for the development,
 23 propagation, and preservation of FSL and its cultural history.

24 SEC. 12. *Instructional Materials for Schools and Child*
 25 *Development Centers.* – The DepEd Instructional Materials and
 26 Council Secretariat shall, in coordination with the Bureau of
 27 Learning Resources and Bureau of Learning Delivery, as well as the
 28 ECCD Council, develop guidelines for the selection, production,

1 procurement, and distribution of print and video materials on FSL
 2 to all public schools, day care centers and national child
 3 development centers. Seventy-five percent (75%) of all procurement
 4 contracts shall be reserved for deaf people's organizations, including
 5 regional or provincial enterprises and cooperatives run by the deaf
 6 and recognized by the LGUs.

7 SEC. 13. *Implementing Rules.* – The KWF, in coordination
 8 with the Secretary of Education, the Chairperson of the CHED, the
 9 Director General of the TESDA, the Chairperson of the PRC, the
 10 Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the Secretary of Justice, and
 11 the heads of other relevant agencies and, in consultation with
 12 representatives of the deaf community, teachers with knowledge
 13 and experience with the use of FSL in deaf education, the academe,
 14 interpreters, and other persons concerned, shall promulgate the
 15 necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of
 16 this Act within ninety (90) days after its approval. These rules and
 17 regulations shall be published in accessible formats in the
 18 respective websites of the concerned agencies and through other
 19 means necessary.

20 SEC. 14. *Monitoring of the Implementation of this Act.* – An
 21 Interagency Committee shall be created to be composed of
 22 representatives of the deaf community, the CHR, the CWC, the
 23 PCW, individuals and institutions with knowledge and experience
 24 on FSL and its use, to make an annual assessment of the
 25 implementation of this Act. The report of this Inter-Agency
 26 Committee shall be transmitted annually to the House Committee
 27 on Social Services and the Senate Committee on Social Justice,
 28 Welfare and Development and shall be published in accessible

1 formats in their respective websites and through other means
2 necessary.

3 SEC. 15. *Appropriations.* – The initial funding of this Act
4 shall be taken from the current year's appropriations of the
5 concerned agencies. Thereafter, the amount necessary for its
6 continued implementation shall be included in the annual General
7 Appropriations Act. Relevant and allowable expenditures related to
8 education may also be charged to the ECCD Council, the Special
9 Education Fund, or other relevant funds.

10 SEC. 16. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act
11 is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining parts or
12 provisions not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

13 SEC. 17. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws and executive
14 issuances inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby
15 repealed or amended accordingly.

16 SEC. 18. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15)
17 days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in any newspaper
18 of general circulation.

Approved,