



'17 MAY 16 P4:23

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC)
OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)

RECEIVED BY: 

SENATE
S.B. NO. 1455

Introduced by Senator Maria Lourdes Nancy S. Binay

**AN ACT DECLARING THE 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**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Sign language is a visual language that uses hand shapes, facial expression, and body language, as defined by the National Deaf Children's Society of the United Kingdom. It is significant to deaf people as it provides vital access to language and communication. According to the World Federation of Deaf there are about 70 million deaf people who use sign language as their first language and each country has at least one or more sign language.

Sign language in the Philippines can be traced back as early as of the establishment of the very first School of the Deaf in 1907, then in the early 90s, the term Filipino Sign Language was coined to raise awareness about their own indigenous sign language.

This proposal aims to declare the Filipino Sign Language as the national sign language of the Philippines in order to promote the Filipino Deaf identity and to ensure that deaf and hard of hearing Filipinos enjoy their equal human, legal, linguistic, and cultural rights.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.


MARIA LOURDES NANCY S. BINAY
Senator



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

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

SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – The State shall, in compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, promote, protect, and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities. Thus, national and local state agencies shall uphold respect for their inherent dignity, individual autonomy, and independence by guaranteeing accessibility and eliminating all forms of discrimination in all public interactions and transactions, thereby ensuring their full and effective participation and inclusion in society. The State shall also take all appropriate measures to ensure that the Filipino deaf can exercise the right to expression and opinion. Accordingly, the State recognizes and promotes the use of sign languages embodying the specific cultural and linguistic identity of the Filipino deaf.

The State also furthers the vision taken with the *Early Years Act* (Republic Act No. 10410) and the *Enhanced Basic Education Act* (Republic Act No. 10533), which have already recognized Filipino Sign Language in the education of deaf learners from early childhood up to the secondary level.

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

SECTION 4. *Filipino Sign Language in Education.* –

- 1 (a) *Medium of Instruction and Curriculum.* The Department of Education
2 (DepEd), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the Technical
3 Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and all other
4 national and local government agencies involved in the education of the
5 deaf, are tasked to henceforth use, and coordinate with each other on the use
6 of FSL, as the medium of instruction in deaf education. The FSL shall also
7 be taught as a separate subject in the curriculum for deaf learners. The
8 reading and writing of Filipino, as the national language, other Philippine
9 languages, and English shall also be taught to deaf learners.
- 10
- 11 (b) *Deaf Teachers.* To promote the licensing and mobilization of deaf teachers
12 **in formal education as well as alternative learning systems**, the
13 Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) together with teacher education
14 ~~programs nationwide are directed to employ alternative assessment~~
15 ~~procedures as affirmative action measures which shall consider the~~
16 ~~conditions, abilities, and social barriers of the deaf teachers. These~~
17 ~~procedures shall be language-appropriate and culture-fair to deaf education~~
18 ~~graduates.~~
- 19
- 20 (c) *FSL in Teacher Education Programs.* In the context of inclusive education
21 and Universal Design, the learning of FSL shall be a curricular or co-
22 curricular offering in teacher education programs as deemed appropriate.
- 23
- 24 (d) *Training and Evaluation Programs.* All national and local government
25 agencies and centers providing education to deaf students are hereby tasked
26 to undertake regular pre-/in- service training and evaluation of their teachers.
27 These shall be designed and taught in partnership with the representatives of
28 the Filipino deaf community.
- 29

30 The University of the Philippines (UP), together with the *Komisyon sa*
31 *Wikang Filipino* (KWF), professional sign linguistics and linguistics
32 researchers, in collaboration with the CHED and the DepEd, and the Early
33 Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Council, shall develop guidelines
34 for the development of training materials in the education of the deaf for use
35 by all state universities and colleges (SUCs), as well as their teachers and
36 staff.

37

38 **SECTION 5.** *Standards for Filipino Sign Language Interpreting.* The Komisyon sa
39 Wikang Filipino, with the involvement of the deaf community and other stakeholders,
40 shall establish a national system of standards, accreditations, and procedures for FSL
41 interpreting, without prejudice to other forms of communication which respect the
42 right of a deaf person to accessibility, and to seek, receive impart ideas on an equal
43 basis with others according to their choice. This shall include policies on the practice
44 of interpreting as a profession such as compensation raters and benefits, working
45 conditions, procedures for grievances and others.

46

47 **SECTION 6.** *Filipino Sign Language in the Justice System.* – The FSL shall be in the
48 official language of legal interpreting for the deaf in all public hearings, proceedings,
49 and transactions of the courts, quasi-judicial agencies, and other tribunals. To ensure
50 effective access to justice for the deaf on an equal basis with others and to facilitate

1 their effective role as direct and indirect participants in the legal system, courts, quasi-
2 judicial agencies, and other tribunals are hereby mandated to ensure the availability of
3 a qualified sign language interpreter in all proceedings involving the deaf, without
4 prejudice to the right of the deaf to choose other forms or modes of communication, if
5 they so prefer.

6
7 For purposes of this Act, "hearings, proceedings, and transactions" shall include those
8 in police stations and before the *Lupong Tagapamayapa* of the Katarungang
9 Pambarangay, as well as preliminary investigations and other initial stages in the
10 courts, quasi-judicial bodies, and other tribunals.

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

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

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

28
29 The University of the Philippines, together with the KWF, professional linguistics
30 organizations and deaf linguistics researchers, shall formulate guidelines for the
31 development of training materials for the employees of the DOJ, the Judiciary, the
32 Department of Health (DOH), the Department of Social Welfare and Development
33 (DSWD), the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), the Council for the Welfare
34 of Children (CWC), and the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), in the conduct of
35 the mandates and activities of these concerned offices.

36
37 **SECTION 8. *Filipino Sign Language in the Health System.*** – State hospitals and all
38 health facilities shall take steps to ensure access of the Filipino deaf to health services,
39 including the free provision of FSL interpreters and accessible materials upon request
40 of deaf patients, or individuals who have family members who are deaf. As part of
41 their corporate social responsibility, private health facilities are encouraged to provide
42 access to health services to all deaf patients and their family members.

43
44 **SECTION 9. *Filipino Sign Language in All Other Public Transactions, Services, and***
45 ***Facilities.*** – All national agencies including government-owned or –controlled
46 corporations (GOCCs), and local government units (LGUs) are hereby directed to use
47 FSL as the medium of official communication in all public transactions involving the
48 deaf. Qualified FSL interpreters and accessible materials shall be provided whenever
49 necessary or requested during for a, conferences, meetings, cultural events, sports

1 competitions, community affairs, and activities conducted by government agencies
2 and GOCCs.

3
4 **SECTION 10. *Filipino Sign Language in Media.*** – The FSL shall be the language of
5 broadcast media interpreting. To guarantee access to information and freedom of
6 expression of the Filipino deaf, the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas (KBP),
7 and the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) shall,
8 within one year from the effective date of this Act, require FSL interpreter insets,
9 compliant with accessibility standards for television, in news and public affairs
10 programs. Subsequently, the MTRCB shall take steps to promote progressive use of
11 FSL in all other broadcasts and programming, especially in educational television
12 programs designed for children, in conjunction with the National Council for
13 Children's Television and the Department of Education.

14
15 The KBP and the MTRCB, the deaf community, and other stakeholders, are tasked to
16 create a national system of standards, procedures and accreditation for broadcast
17 media interpreting in FSL.

18
19 All videos published online including those on social media, shall also conform to
20 Philippine web accessibility standards.

21
22 **SECTION 11. *Promotion of Filipino Sign Language.*** – The DepEd, CHED, UP,
23 KWF, Linguistic Society of the Philippines, and other national agencies and LGUs
24 shall, in consultation with professional organizations with expertise and experience in
25 language policy and planning and the deaf community, take appropriate steps to
26 propagate sign language competency among hearing people, by offering FSL as an
27 elective subject in the regular or mainstream curriculum, particularly of State
28 Universities and Colleges.

29
30 In coordination with the KWF, SUCs, led by the University of the Philippines, are
31 directed to undertake continuing research for the development, propagation, and
32 preservation of FSL and its cultural history.

33
34 **SECTION 12. *Instructional Materials for Schools and Child Development Centers.*** –
35 The DepEd Instructional Materials and Council Secretariat shall, in coordination with
36 the Bureau of Learning Resources and Bureau of Learning Delivery, as well as the
37 ECCD Council, develop guidelines for the selection, production, procurement, and
38 distribution of print and video materials in FSL to all public schools, day care centers,
39 and national child development centers. Seventy-five percent of all procurement
40 contracts shall be reserved for deaf people's organizations, including regional or
41 provincial enterprises and cooperatives run by the deaf and recognized by the LGUs.

42
43 **SECTION 13. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – The Komisyon ng Wikang
44 Filipino, in coordination with the Secretary of Education, the Chairperson of the
45 CHED, the Director General of the TESDA, the Chairperson of the PRC, and the
46 Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the Secretary of Justice, and the heads of other
47 relevant agencies, and in consultation with the representatives of the deaf community,
48 teachers with knowledge and experience with the use of FSL in deaf education, the
49 academe, interpreters, and other persons concerned, shall promulgate the necessary
50 rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act within one hundred

1 eighty (180) days after its effective date. These rules and regulations shall be
2 published in accessible formats in the respective websites of the concerned agencies
3 and through other means necessary.
4

5 **SECTION 14. *Monitoring of the Implementation of this Act.*** – With representatives
6 of the deaf community, an Inter-Agency Committee shall be created including the
7 CHR, the CWC, the PCW, individuals and institutions with knowledge and
8 experience on FSL and its use, to make an annual assessment of the implementation
9 of this Act. The report of this Inter-Agency Committee shall be transmitted annually
10 to the House Committee on Social Services and Senate Committee on Social Justice,
11 Welfare and Development and shall be published in accessible formats in their
12 respective websites and through other means necessary.
13

14 **SECTION 15. *Appropriations.*** – The initial funding of this Act shall be taken from
15 the current year's appropriations of the concerned agencies. Thereafter, the amount
16 necessary for its continued implementation shall be included in the annual General
17 Appropriations Act. Relevant and allowable expenditures related to education may
18 also be charged to the ECCDC, the LGU Special Education Fund, or other relevant
19 fund.
20

21 **SECTION 16. *Separability Clause.*** – If any provision of this Act is declared
22 unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining parts or provisions not affected shall remain
23 in full force and effect.
24

25 **SECTION 17. *Repealing Clause.*** – All laws and executive issuances inconsistent
26 with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.
27

28 **SECTION 18. *Effectivity Date.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
29 publication in the Official Gazette or one newspaper of general circulation.
30

31 *Approved,*