

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
First Regular Session

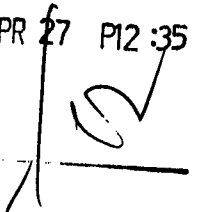


Senate
Office of the Secretary

SENATE

S. B. NO. 1452

20 APR 27 12:35

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by **SENATOR JOEL VILLANUEVA**

AN ACT
AUTHORIZING THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION TO POSTPONE
THE START OF SCHOOL YEAR IN CASE OF A DECLARATION OF A
STATE OF EMERGENCY, STATE OF CALAMITY OR SIMILAR
OCCURRENCE, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT
NO. 7977, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "AN ACT TO LENGTHEN THE
SCHOOL CALENDAR FROM TWO HUNDRED (200) DAYS TO NOT
MORE THAN TWO HUNDRED TWENTY (220) CLASS DAYS"

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Pursuant to Proclamation No. 922 issued on March 8, 2020, President Rodrigo Duterte declared a state of public health emergency throughout the Philippines due to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

After the Code Alert System for COVID-19 was raised to Code Red Sublevel Two (2), President Duterte issued Proclamation No. 929 on March 16, 2020, declaring a state of calamity throughout the Philippines and imposed an Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) in the entire Luzon effective from March 17 to April 13, 2020.

On April 7, 2020, the President extended the duration of the ECQ in the entire Luzon to April 30, 2020. Again on April 24, 2020, the President further extended the ECQ in Metro Manila, Central Luzon and CALABARZON and other high-risk provinces until May 15, 2020.

Meanwhile, as of April 25, 2020, 4:00 pm, the Department of Health reported that there are 7,294 total number of COVID-19 cases in the country. Of this number, 792 or 10.85% recovered, while 494 or 6.77% died.


In light of the COVID-19 situation, classes in all levels and school activities have been suspended since March 2020 as among the preventive measures against the spread of the coronavirus disease. Preparations for the schools' openings have also been deferred due to ECQ protocols.¹

Meanwhile, the Department of Education has raised a concern that they are mandated by Republic Act No. 7977 or "An Act to Lengthen the School Calendar from Two Hundred (200) Days to Not More Than Two Hundred Twenty (220) Class Days" to open the school year between the first Monday of June and the last day of August only. This will, thus, limit their ability to comply with the President's directive to move the opening of classes in areas under General Community Quarantine to September.²

This bill seeks to amend Republic Act No. 7977 to allow the Secretary of Education, in case of a declaration of a state of emergency, state of calamity or similar occurrence, to move the opening of the school year to a later date per area or region, with due regard to the safety of students, faculty and staff.

This bill will give the Secretary of Education the flexibility to open the school year 2020-2021 any time after August, especially considering that experts from the UP Resilience Institute have pointed out that the suspension of classes until December or the end of the year would be an effective way to limit further COVID-19 infections.³ According to Dr. Lagmay, the Executive Director of the Institute, 56% or majority of physical interactions among age groups happen among the 0-19 age group and that this age group is most likely to interact with the elderly, who are considered to be vulnerable to the coronavirus disease.⁴

For the sake not only of our children and youth but also of teaching and non-teaching personnel in our schools and the public in general, approval of this bill is earnestly sought.


SENATOR JOEL VILLANUEVA

¹ CNN. (2020). *UP experts propose no classes until December to stop COVID-19 spread*. Retrieved from <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/4/21/UP-experts-class-suspensions-December-COVID-19.html> (date last accessed: April 25, 2020).

² Philstar. (2020). *DepEd to present school opening recommendation to COVID-19 task force in May*. Retrieved from <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/04/24/2009517/schools-opening-moved-september-some-areas-due-covid-19-risk> (date last accessed: April 25, 2020).

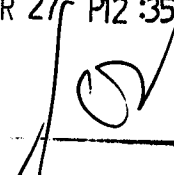
³ CNN. (2020). *UP experts propose no classes until December to stop COVID-19 spread*. Retrieved from <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/4/21/UP-experts-class-suspensions-December-COVID-19.html> (date last accessed: April 25, 2020).

⁴ Rappler. (2020). *To stop coronavirus spread, suspend classes till December 2020 – U.P. experts*. Retrieved from <https://www.rappler.com/nation/258584-stop-coronavirus-spread-no-classes-till-december-2020-up-experts> (date last accessed: April 25, 2020).

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MORE THAN TWO HUNDRED TWENTY (220) CLASS DAYS"

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

- 1 **SECTION 1. Declaration of Policy.** – It is the policy of the State to protect and
2 promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, and shall take
3 appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.
4
5 Towards this end, the State, in developing educational policies such as planning and
6 instituting the academic calendar, shall take into account not only national and global
7 opportunities that encourage or facilitate learning, but also national and regional
8 conditions that affect the safety and health of students, faculty, and staff.
- 9 **SEC. 2. Coverage.** – This Act shall cover all public and private basic education
10 institutions nationwide.
- 11 **SEC. 3. Postponing the Start of School Year.** – Section 3 of Republic Act No.
12 7977, otherwise known as "An Act to Lengthen the School Calendar from Two
13 Hundred (200) Days to Not More Than Two Hundred Twenty (220) Class Days," is
14 hereby amended to read as follows:
15

1 "SEC. 3. Start of the School Year. – The school year shall start on the
2 first Monday of June but not later than the last day of August;
3 *PROVIDED*, THAT IN THE EVENT OF A DECLARATION OF STATE
4 OF EMERGENCY, STATE OF CALAMITY OR SIMILAR
5 OCCURRENCE, THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION SHALL BE
6 AUTHORIZED TO PRESCRIBE A DIFFERENT DATE FOR THE
7 START OF THE SCHOOL YEAR PER REGION OR PER AREA,
8 WITH DUE REGARD TO THE SAFETY OF THE CONCERNED
9 STUDENTS, FACULTY AND STAFF; *PROVIDED FURTHER*, THAT
10 FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR 2020-2021, THE START OF THE
11 SCHOOL YEAR SHALL BE BASED UPON THE ASSESSMENT
12 AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCE
13 FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF EMERGING INFECTIOUS
14 DISEASES RELATIVE TO THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019
15 (COVID-19) SITUATION.
16

17 In the implementation of this Act, the Secretary of Education[,
18 Culture and Sports] shall determine the end of the regular school
19 year, taking into consideration the Christmas and summer vacations,
20 and the peculiar circumstances of each region.
21

22 In the exercise of this authority, the Secretary of Education[,
23 Culture and Sports] may authorize the holding of Saturday classes
24 for elementary and secondary levels for public and private schools."

25 **SEC. 4. Alternative Modalities of Learning.** – The Department of Education shall
26 ensure educational continuity in terms of national emergency or similar occurrence,
27 including the COVID-19 pandemic, by utilizing alternative modalities of learning such
28 as, but not limited to, modular instruction, online, digital or mobile learning, radio or
29 television-based instruction, and blended learning or a combination of various
30 modalities.

31 **SEC. 5. Report to Congress.** – The Department of Education, in coordination with
32 relevant agencies and sectors, shall submit a Report to Congress with regard its
33 decision on the opening of school year within one (1) month from making such
34 decision, through the Senate Committee on Basic Education, Arts and Culture and
35 the House of Representatives Committee on Basic Education and Culture.
36

37 With regard its report on the opening of school year 2020-2021, such report shall
38 include the actions taken by the Department relative to the COVID-19 situation.
39

40 The report shall also be posted on the official website of the Department of
41 Education.

42 **SEC. 6. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** – The Department of Education, in
43 coordination with relevant agencies and sectors, shall promulgate the implementing
44 rules and regulations as may be necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act.

1 **SEC. 7. Separability Clause.** – If any portion or provision of this Act is subsequently
2 declared invalid or unconstitutional, other provisions hereof which are not affected
3 thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

4 **SEC. 8. Repealing Clause.** – All other laws, acts, presidential decrees, executive
5 orders, presidential proclamations, issuances, rules and regulations, or parts thereof
6 which are contrary to or inconsistent with any of the provisions of this Act are hereby
7 repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

8 **SEC. 9. Effectivity.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication
9 in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

10
11 **Approved,**