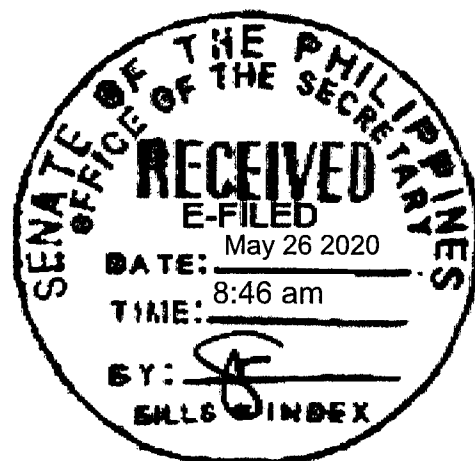


EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)



SENATE

P. S. Res. No. 416

Introduced by Senator MANUEL "LITO" M. LAPID

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON BASIC EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE, AND HIGHER, TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, TO DETERMINE THE FEASIBILITY OF MANDATING TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPANIES TO PROVIDE FREE INTERNET ACCESS TO ONLINE LEARNING PORTALS, EDUCATIONAL WEBSITES AND SIMILAR DIGITAL PLATFORMS FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL STUDENTS AND TEACHERS DURING TIMES OF DISASTER AND EMERGENCY WHEN PHYSICAL CLASSES CANNOT BE CONDUCTED

WHEREAS, the current Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic, along with the resultant government lockdowns and restrictions to curb its spread has brought massive disruptions to the social and economic life of all;

WHEREAS, one of its profound effects is the abrupt and unprecedented closure of schools and educational institutions for all levels of learning throughout the country;

WHEREAS, schools from the primary to tertiary level have resorted to online or virtual classes in order to deliver the lessons to the students, conduct tests, and provide for homework and other educational requirements;

WHEREAS, for the incoming school year 2020-2021, the Department of Education (DepEd) has decided to push back the opening of classes to August 24, 2020, with the caveat that “school opening will not necessarily mean traditional face-to-face learning in classroom”¹. This means that depending on the gravity of the situation in the locality relative to the pandemic, there may be schools that will be forced to implement alternative learning delivery modalities such as online classes;

WHEREAS, in the tertiary education sector, the opening of classes for this school year will largely depend on the capacity and mode of teaching to be employed by colleges and universities – for those with capacity to conduct full online classes, they can start their classes at any time, while institutions who adopt flexible learning system can open by August 2020. But for residential or traditional face-to-face mode of learning, classes can only be opened after August 31, 2020²;

WHEREAS, in the short-term, it is clear that education will mostly be delivered through non-traditional mechanisms like online classes, online activities, projects and assignments, video lectures, and sharing of digital books, handouts and materials;

WHEREAS, on the part of our teachers and students, reliable internet connectivity is a hardship that confronts them whenever classes shift to online or digital modes or platforms. During this COVID-19 pandemic and in similar calamities and emergencies, expenses and fees relative to internet subscription are not a priority, especially for poor households or those families whose income-earners are forced out of work or business;

WHEREAS, it is laudable on the part of the Department of Education to be able to establish the DepEd Commons³ which is an online education delivery platform designed as alternative mode for teaching-learning process during class suspensions and other

¹ https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/DO_s2020_007.pdf

² <https://www.rappler.com/nation/260921-iatf-says-start-classes-college-based-delivery-mode>

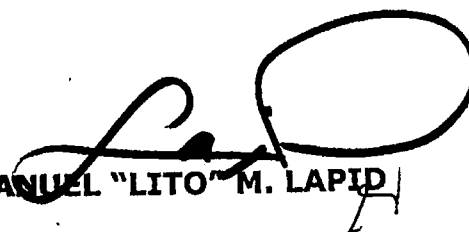
³ <https://commons.deped.gov.ph/>

similar circumstances⁴. The DepEd Commons provides access to public and private school learners and Alternative Learning System (ALS) students on online educational resources, review materials and content created by subject matter experts. DepEd was also able to partner with certain telecommunications companies to give teachers and learners free internet access to the website⁵;

WHEREAS, it is therefore necessary to determine the feasibility of the government partnering with all telecommunications company in providing free internet access whenever our teachers and students log-in, visit and use online learning portals, online repositories and libraries, educational websites and similar digital platforms during times like this COVID-19 pandemic when physical classes cannot be conducted;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Senate committees on Basic Education, Arts and Culture, and Higher, Technical and Vocational Education to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, to determine the feasibility of mandating telecommunications companies to provide free internet access to online learning portals, educational websites and similar digital platforms for the benefit of all students and teachers during times of disaster and emergency when physical classes cannot be conducted.

Adopted,


MANUEL "LITO" M. LAPID

⁴ <https://www.deped.gov.ph/2020/04/21/deped-taps-telco-partners-for-free-access-to-deped-commons/>

⁵ <https://www.deped.gov.ph/2020/04/21/deped-taps-telco-partners-for-free-access-to-deped-commons/>