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NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES  
*First Regular Session*

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'22 JUL 13 A10 :45

SENATE

S.B. No. 475

RECEIVED BY:

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Introduced by SENATOR WIN GATCHALIAN

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**AN ACT  
INSTITUTIONALIZING A NATIONAL READING MONTH IN NOVEMBER OF  
EVERY YEAR, PROVIDING FOR MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION  
IN THE INCULCATION OF A CULTURE OF READING IN BASIC  
EDUCATION, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR,  
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

This bill seeks to declare the month of November of every year as the “National Reading Month” to be celebrated through the conduct of nationwide reading programs and activities to develop the habit and inculcate a culture of reading in our basic education learners and their communities. It further provides for multi-stakeholder participation to maximize and strengthen both formal and informal support structures at the regional, provincial, city, municipal and barangay levels, such as engaging the expertise, services, and resources of the media, book publishers, private libraries, and other stakeholders, as well as involving the learners’ parents and families. The bill also seeks the cooperation, assistance and support of relevant government agencies, local government units (LGUs), and private individuals and organizations involved in reading or literacy advocacies.

As implementing agency, the Department of Education (DepEd) shall adopt policies and formulate strategic initiatives that foster reading not only for information and entertainment, but for the purpose of equipping learners with knowledge, skills and character that will prepare them for policy-making, nation-building, and other means of contributing to economic, social and cultural development.

To contribute in making reading inclusive and accessible, the bill mandates that: 1) the National Library and all congressional, city and municipal libraries and barangay reading centers throughout the Philippines established pursuant to Republic Act No. 7743 shall actively participate in the celebration of the National Reading Month; 2) all purchases of any reading material, whether in traditional, digital or audio format, made in the month of November shall be discounted at a rate not lower than twenty percent (20%) of the regular price; 3) the DepEd, in coordination with the National Book Development Board, shall host a book fair during the National Reading Month; and 4) Public Telecommunications Entities shall provide free access to DepEd's online educational platforms, digital libraries, and other online knowledge hubs and sites without data charges upon its effectivity. The DepEd shall also maintain an online portal for donations in support of its reading initiatives, programs and activities. The portal shall contain the necessary information and procedures to make the donation process simple, efficient and responsive to the reading needs of the learners.

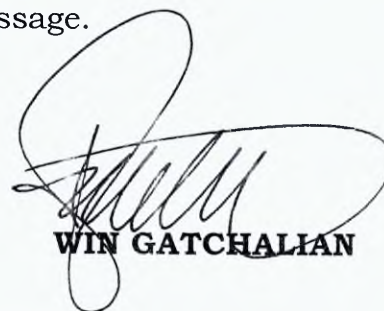
This proposed legislation acts as a policy intervention to develop a reading culture to help arrest the persistently low learner outcomes in basic education as shown in the results of the latest international standardized assessments, particularly on Reading:

1. The 2018 PISA Results where the average score of 15-year-old Filipino students in Reading was 340 points – the lowest, together with the Dominican Republic, among the 79 participating countries.

The Philippines' score in Reading was significantly lower than the OECD average of 487 points. Over 80% of students in the Philippines did not reach a minimum level of proficiency in Reading – one of the largest shares of low performers among all PISA-participating countries and economies.<sup>1</sup>

2. The 2019 SEA-PLM Results where the average score of Grade 5 Filipino students in Reading was 288 points or Band 3 of the SEA-PLM 2010.<sup>2</sup> Students in band 3 “can read a range of everyday texts, such as simple narratives and personal opinions, and begin to engage with their meaning.” This is lower than Band 4 where students “can understand simple texts that contain some ideas and information that is partly outside of the student’s personal experience.” The Philippines’ average score was lower than the ASEAN average of 300 points. It also ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> to the last in Reading among the 6 ASEAN countries who participated in the assessment – second only to Lao PDR with 275 points.<sup>3, 4</sup>

It is my fervent hope that this legislation will contribute in developing and inculcating a reading culture in every learner, and I earnestly seek the support of this Congress for its immediate passage.



**WIN GATCHALIAN**

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<sup>1</sup> OECD Country Report

(See [https://www.oecd.org/pisa/publications/PISA2018\\_CN\\_PHL.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/pisa/publications/PISA2018_CN_PHL.pdf))

<sup>2</sup> More than half or about 56% of Filipino Grade 5 students belonged to the lowest proficiency bands (Band 3 and below).

<sup>3</sup> PLM 2019 National Report of the Philippines

(See <https://www.unicef.org/philippines/media/2556/file/Southeast%20Asia%20Primary%20Learning%20Metrics%202019%20National%20Report%20of%20the%20Philippines.pdf>)

<sup>4</sup> Performance of Filipino learners in reading is strongly correlated with their performance in other critical learning areas such as mathematics. One score point increase in reading is associated with 0.88 score point corresponding increase in math.

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EVERY YEAR, PROVIDING FOR MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION  
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EDUCATION, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR,  
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*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in  
Congress assembled:*

1           Section 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as “*The National*  
2 *Reading Month Act*”.

3  
4           Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the declared policy of the State to  
5 promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, take  
6 appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all, and assign the  
7 highest budgetary priority to education. Under Article II, Section 17 of the  
8 1987 Constitution, the State shall give priority to education to foster  
9 patriotism and nationalism, accelerate social progress, and promote total  
10 human liberation and development. Further, Article XIV, Section 2(4) thereof  
11 mandates the State to encourage non-formal, informal, and indigenous

1 learning systems, as well as self-learning, independent, and out-of-school  
2 study programs particularly those that respond to community needs.

3  
4 *Sec. 3. Objectives.* – This Act aims to declare the month of November of  
5 every year as the “National Reading Month” in order to develop the habit and  
6 inculcate a culture of reading in our basic education learners and their  
7 communities. Towards this end, the Department of Education (DepEd) shall  
8 adopt policies and formulate strategic initiatives that foster reading not only  
9 for information and entertainment, but for the purpose of equipping learners  
10 with knowledge, skills and character that will prepare them for policy-making,  
11 nation-building, and other means of contributing to economic, social and  
12 cultural development.

13  
14 *Sec. 4. November as National Reading Month; DepEd as Implementing*  
15 *Agency.* – The entire month of November of every year is hereby declared as  
16 “National Reading Month” which shall be celebrated through the conduct of  
17 nationwide reading programs and activities to further the objectives of this  
18 Act. For this purpose, the DepEd shall:

- 19 a) act as the lead coordinating body in the formulation of strategies and  
20 conduct of reading, activities and endeavors during the National  
21 Reading Month;
- 22 b) seek the cooperation, assistance and support of relevant government  
23 agencies, local government units (LGUs), and private individuals and  
24 organizations involved in reading or literacy advocacies; and
- 25 c) maximize public participation to organize and strengthen both  
26 formal and informal support structures at the regional, provincial,  
27 city, municipal and barangay levels, such as the engagement of the  
28 expertise, services, and resources of the media, book publishers,  
29 private libraries, and other stakeholders, as well as the involvement  
30 of the learners’ parents and families.

1            *Sec. 5. Public Libraries and Barangay Reading Centers.* – The National  
2 Library and all congressional, city and municipal libraries and barangay  
3 reading centers throughout the Philippines established pursuant to Republic  
4 Act (RA) No. 7743 shall actively participate in the celebration of the National  
5 Reading Month. In collaboration with the DepEd, they shall provide the  
6 necessary services, assistance, and intervention in accordance with their  
7 respective mandates and functions under RA No. 7743.

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9            *Sec. 6. National Reading Month Discount; November Book Fair.* – All  
10 purchases of any reading material, whether in traditional, digital or audio  
11 format, made in the month of November shall be discounted at a rate not  
12 lower than twenty percent (20%) of the regular price.

13            Further, the DepEd, in coordination with the National Book  
14 Development Board, shall host a book fair during the National Reading Month  
15 as a means to encourage reading, promote reading habits, and further the  
16 objectives of this Act.

17  
18            *Sec. 7. Free Public Access to DepEd's Online Platforms.* – To contribute  
19 in making reading inclusive and accessible, Public Telecommunications  
20 Entities (PTEs) shall provide free access to DepEd's online educational  
21 platforms, digital libraries, and other online knowledge hubs and sites without  
22 any additional financial burden on all subscribers. No data charges shall be  
23 incurred in the download of data from these sites and applications upon the  
24 effectivity of this Act.

25            PTEs refer to entities that are duly authorized to offer voice, short  
26 messaging system or text, mobile data, value added services, or any other  
27 mobile telecommunications services to the public for a fee.

28  
29            *Sec. 8. DepEd Portal for Reading Donations; Tax Incentives.* – The DepEd  
30 shall maintain an online portal for donations in support of its reading  
31 initiatives, programs and activities. The portal shall contain the necessary

1 information and procedures to make the donation process simple, efficient  
2 and responsive to the reading needs of the learners.

3 Any donation, contribution, or grant, in cash or in kind, made by  
4 individuals or organizations, public or private, local or foreign, shall be exempt  
5 from the donor's tax and the cost of which shall be considered as an allowable  
6 deduction from the gross income of the donor in accordance with the  
7 provisions of the National Internal Revenue Code of 1997, as amended.

8

9 *Sec. 9. Mandatory Review and Impact Assessment.* – The DepEd shall  
10 conduct a mandatory review of the implementation of this Act and submit an  
11 assessment report to Congress on its impact and effectiveness, not later than  
12 three (3) years from its effectivity and every three (3) years thereafter.

13

14 *Sec. 10. Appropriations.* – The amount necessary for the implementation  
15 of this Act shall be charged against those authorized in the current  
16 appropriations of the DepEd. Thereafter, the amount necessary for its  
17 continued implementation shall be included in the annual General  
18 Appropriations Act.

19

20 *Sec. 11. Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days  
21 from the effectivity of this Act, the DepEd shall issue the rules and regulations  
22 implementing its provisions. The Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR)  
23 issued pursuant to this section shall take effect thirty (30) days after its  
24 publication in a newspaper of general circulation.

25

26 *Sec. 12. Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is held invalid  
27 or unconstitutional, the other provisions not so declared shall remain in force  
28 and effect.

29

30 *Sec. 13. Repealing Clause.* – All other laws, executive orders,  
31 presidential decrees, administrative orders, rules and regulations, issuances,

1 or parts thereof contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are  
2 hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

3

4           Sec. 14. *Effectivity.* – Notwithstanding the non-issuance of the IRR, this  
5 Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette  
6 or in a newspaper of general circulation.

*Approved,*