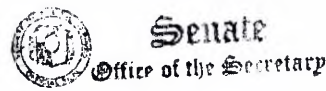
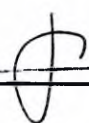


NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)



'22 JUL 18 P1 54

SENATE
S. No. 714

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by Senator Grace Poe

AN ACT
ENHANCING CITIZENS' ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT INFORMATION AND SERVICES BY REQUIRING ALL GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS TO BE WRITTEN IN PLAIN LANGUAGE AND IF NECESSARY, TRANSLATED TO LOCAL LANGUAGE OR DIALECT

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Section 24, Article II and Section 7, Article III of the 1987 Philippine Constitution highlights the important role of public information and communication:

Section 24, Article II states that: *"The State recognizes the vital role of communication and information in nation-building."*

Section 7, Article III states that: *"The right of the people to information on matters of public concern shall be recognized. Access to official records, and to documents and papers pertaining to official acts, transactions, or decisions, as well as to government research data used as basis for policy development, shall be afforded the citizen, subject to such limitations as may be provided by law."*

An informed citizenry is vital to nation building. If people know and understand laws, rules and regulations they are empowered to make informed decisions. To this, the government must take an active role in making sure that it communicates information that people can easily understand and comprehend. The use of plain language and the translation to local language or dialect improves the citizen's access to government information and services.

This measure is patterned after Public Law 111-274 (October 13, 2010) of the United States. As used in the law, "plain writing" is the use of simple, concise, easily understandable words and phrases in all government documents. The following benefits have been observed after the implementation of the Plain Writing Act in the United States:

1. There is a marked improvement in the public understanding of government communications and requirements;

2. It saves money and increases efficiency;
3. It reduces the need for public clarification and reduces resources spent for enforcement;
4. It simplifies government forms and applications; and
5. It reduces the number of errors and the time and effort required to fix them.

Plain Writing can also be an efficient tool in the Philippines to shorten transactions, lessen red tape, and streamline administrative procedures.

For this reason, the passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



GRACE POE



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

1 Section 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the "Plain Writing for
2 Public Service Act".

3 Sec. 2. *Objective.* – The purpose of this Act is to improve the accessibility and
4 effectiveness of government documents as presented to the public by promoting
5 clear government communication that citizens can understand and use. This shall
6 also enhance the transparency and accountability of government agencies to the
7 public.

8 Sec. 3. *Plain Writing for Public Service.* – All government agencies and local
9 government units (LGUs) are hereby mandated to adopt plain writing in all their
10 communications and in the implementation of their basic functions, mandates, and
11 services.

12 Plain writing shall refer to writing and preparations thereof that are clear,
13 concise, well-organized, and follows other best practices appropriate to the subject
14 or field and intended audience or constituents.

15 Government agencies, as used in this Act, shall mean all government
16 departments, bureaus, divisions, attached agencies and government owned- and
17 controlled corporations (GOCCs).

1 Sec. 4. *Translation of Local Language or Dialect.* – All government agencies
2 and LGUs are likewise mandated to translate to the predominant language or dialect
3 all communications and implementation of their basic functions, mandates, and
4 services.

5 Sec. 5. *Coverage.*- The use of plain language and translation shall be adopted
6 to the following documents but not limited to:

- 7 1. Information about any government benefit or services;
- 8 2. Documents necessary for obtaining any government benefit or service or
9 filing taxes;
- 10 3. Documents that explain to the public how to comply with a requirement the
11 government agencies administer, enforce and provide;
- 12 4. Other letters, forms, instructions, notices and publications issued to the
13 public.

14 Sec. 6. *Role of the Civil Service Commission.* – The Civil Service Commission
15 (CSC) shall oversee the implementation of this Act. The CSC shall create a Unit
16 which shall develop and issue guidelines in implementing the requirements of this
17 Act. The Unit will be allowed to consult and partner with relevant academic
18 institutions/organizations in the development and issuance of said guidelines.

19 The guidelines must contain the following details:

20 A. General Rules

- 21 1) Each government agency must designate one (1) or more officials
22 within the agency to be the point-person for the implementation of this
23 Act;
- 24 2) Each government agency shall communicate the requirements of this
25 Act to the employees of the agency;
- 26 3) Each government agency shall train employees of government
27 agencies in Plain Writing; and
- 28 4) Each government agency shall establish a process for overseeing the
29 compliance of the agencies with the requirements of this Act.

30 B. Websites. All government agencies are mandated to adopt a system of Plain
31 Writing in their websites or relevant portals.

1 *Sec. 7. Training and Capacity-Building.* – The CSC shall regularly conduct
2 trainings, seminars and other similar capacity-building activities for the offices and
3 agencies covered by this Act. For plain writing and translation in Filipino and other
4 regional dialects, the Komisyon ng Wikang Filipino (KWF) shall be tapped to facilitate
5 the necessary capacity-building activities.

6 *Sec. 8. Report on compliance.* – All government agencies are mandated to
7 report and publish in their respective websites or publications a report on their
8 agency's compliance with the requirements of this Act within one year after the
9 effectivity of this Act and two years thereafter. CSC shall also submit a report to
10 Congress on the status of implementation and compliance with this Act.

11 *Sec. 9. Appropriations.* – The amount of ten million pesos (Php10,000,000.00)
12 is hereby appropriated for the implementation of this Act. Every year, the CSC shall
13 be allotted the needed appropriation to implement the provisions of this Act.

14 *Sec. 10 Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within sixty (60) days from
15 the effectivity of this Act, the CSC, in coordination with other relevant government
16 agencies and stakeholders, shall issue the necessary rules and regulations to
17 implement the provisions of this Act.

18 *Sec. 11. Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, orders, rules, regulations and
19 other issuances or parts thereof which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act
20 are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

21 *Sec. 12. Separability Clause.* – If, for any reason, any part, section or
22 provision of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions not
23 affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

24 *Sec. 13. Effectivity Clause.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after
25 its complete publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspapers of general
26 circulation.

Approved,