

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

Senate
Office of the Secretary

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SENATE

S. No. 1898

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by SENATOR RAMON BONG REVILLA, JR.

**AN ACT
IMPLEMENTING A LIFELINE RATE FOR INTERNET SERVICES, AMENDING
FOR THIS PURPOSE SECTION 17 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7925, OTHERWISE
KNOWN AS THE "PUBLIC TELECOMMUNICATIONS POLICY ACT OF THE
PHILIPPINES"**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The United Nations Human Rights Council and the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines (CHR) have consistently acknowledged that "access to the internet is a human right," emphasizing that "better access to the internet is an exercise of freedom of information." In 2021, the Philippine Institute for Development Studies has reported that "*despite the widespread cellular phone signal coverage and mobile device ownership, internet usage in the country remains low owing to poor and expensive internet connectivity and inadequate digital infrastructure, especially outside the National Capital Region.*"

In a related study conducted by the Asian Development Bank, poorer areas in the countries have less access, slower internet speed and fewer cell towers. In the same report, it shows that "only 15 percent of Filipinos have access to sufficient internet speed and only 9.5 percent live within the serviceable scope of cell towers."

The pandemic has accelerated the need for such access. The internet access has allowed the government to strengthen their information dissemination on Covid-19, push for work-from-home options, and support the need to shift learning modalities. In recognizing this context, the assistance to low-income and connectivity-dependent households is emphasized.

This measure aims to establish a lifeline rate for internet access, similar to other utilities such as electricity and potable water.

This measure compliments Republic Act 10929, otherwise known as the "*Free Internet in Public Places Act*".

In recognition of the right for internet access, the immediate approval of this bill is most earnestly sought.


RAMON BONG REVILLA, JR.

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

1 Section. 1. *Extension of Lifeline Rate.* – Section 17 of Republic Act 7925,
2 otherwise known as the "*Public Telecommunications Policy Act of the Philippines*", is
3 hereby amended to read as follows:

4 "SEC. 17. Rates and Tariffs. - The Commission shall establish rates and
5 tariffs which are fair and reasonable and which provide for the economic
6 viability of telecommunications entities and a fair return on their investments
7 considering the prevailing cost of capital in the domestic and international
8 markets. The Commission shall exempt any specific telecommunications service
9 from its rate or tariff regulations if the service has sufficient competition to
10 ensure fair and reasonable rates or tariffs. The Commission shall, however,
11 retain its residual powers to regulate rates or tariffs when ruinous competition
12 results or when a monopoly or a cartel or combination in restraint of free
13 competition exists and the rates or tariffs are distorted or unable to function
14 freely and the public is adversely affected. In such cases, the Commission shall
15 either establish a floor or ceiling on the rates or tariffs.

16

1 **A BROADBAND AND DATA LIFELINE RATE FOR QUALIFIED**
2 **MARGINALIZED INTERNET END-USERS SHALL BE SET BY THE**
3 **COMMISSION.**

4
5 **"LIFELINE RATE" REFERS TO A SOCIALIZED PRICING MECHANISM IN**
6 **THE FORM OF APPLICABLE DISCOUNTS BASED ON CONSUMPTION**
7 **THRESHOLDS. THE LEVEL OF CONSUMPTION AND CORRESPONDING**
8 **DISCOUNT RATES SHALL BE DETERMINED BY THE COMMISSION**
9 **AFTER DUE NOTICE AND HEARING: *PROVIDED*, THAT THE**
10 **COMMISSION CANNOT SET A BASE LEVEL OF CONSUMPTION LESS**
11 **THAN ONE (1) GIGABYTE PER MONTH OR A BASE DISCOUNT LOWER**
12 **THAN TWENTY PERCENT (20%).**

13
14 **"QUALIFIED MARGINALIZED INTERNET END-USERS" SHALL REFER**
15 **TO THE FOLLOWING:**

16 **(A) QUALIFIED HOUSEHOLD-BENEFICIARIES UNDER REPUBLIC ACT**
17 **11310, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE PANTAWID PAMILYANG**
18 **PILIPINO PROGRAM, AS REGULARLY SUBMITTED BY THE**
19 **DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT (DSWD) TO**
20 **THE COMMISSION, AND THE PUBLIC TELECOMMUNICATIONS**
21 **ENTITY; OR**

22 **(B) MARGINALIZED END-USERS AS CERTIFIED BY THE PUBLIC**
23 **TELECOMMUNICATIONS ENTITY BASED ON A CRITERIA**
24 **DETERMINED BY THE COMMISSION: *PROVIDED*, THAT THE CRITERIA**
25 **SHALL TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE POVERTY THRESHOLD SET BY THE**
26 **PHILIPPINE STATISTICS AUTHORITY (PSA), AND PRIORITIZE**
27 **MEMBERS OF INTERNET AND/OR CONNECTIVITY-DEPENDENT**
28 **SEGMENTS OF SOCIETY SUCH AS STUDENTS, SENIOR CITIZENS,**
29 **PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, THE ELDERLY AND THE LIKE, AND**
30 **SHALL CONTAIN AN EXCLUSIVE LIST OF REQUIREMENTS TO BE**
31 **SUBMITTED TO THE PUBLIC TELECOMMUNICATIONS ENTITY:**
32 ***PROVIDED, FURTHER*, THAT THE EXCLUSIVE LIST OF REQUIREMENTS**

1 **AND THE PROCEDURE FOR THEIR SUBMISSION, WHICH SHALL BE**
2 **SUBJECT TO THE REVIEW AND SUPERVISION OF THE COMMISSION,**
3 **SHALL NOT BE BURDENSOME FOR THE APPLICANT: *PROVIDED,***
4 ***FINALLY,* THAT THE PUBLIC TELECOMMUNICATIONS ENTITY SHALL**
5 **ACT ON THE APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATION AS QUALIFIED**
6 **MARGINALIZED END-USER WITHIN TWO (2) WORKING DAYS FROM**
7 **SUBMISSION OF COMPLETE DOCUMENTARY REQUIREMENTS, AND**
8 **SHALL NOT UNREASONABLY WITHHOLD OR DELAY THE ISSUANCE OF**
9 **SUCH CERTIFICATION. THE COMMISSION SHALL PROMULGATE**
10 **RULES AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALIFIED MARGINALIZED END-**
11 **USERS WHOSE ACCOUNTS ARE NOT REGISTERED IN THEIR NAME.**
12

13 **THE COMMISSION SHALL SUBMIT TO THE JOINT CONGRESSIONAL**
14 **ENERGY COMMISSION AN ANNUAL REPORT ON THE**
15 **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LIFELINE RATE, AND A COMPREHENSIVE**
16 **EVALUATION OF ITS IMPLEMENTATION EVERY TWO (2) YEARS TO**
17 **INCLUDE A COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS AS WELL AS MODES OF**
18 **VALIDATION AND PREVENTION OF LEAKAGES AND ABUSE.”**
19

20 *Sec. 2. Harmonization with the Free Internet Access in Public Places Act. - The*
21 *implementation of this Act shall be harmonized with the implementation of the*
22 *Republic Act 10929, otherwise known as, “Free Internet Access in Public Places Act”.*
23

24 *Sec. 3. Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR). – Within ninety (90) days*
25 *from the date of effectivity of this Act, the Department of Information and*
26 *Communications Technology (DICT), in coordination with the National*
27 *Telecommunications Commission (NTC), and in consultation with other relevant*
28 *stakeholders, shall promulgate IRR for the effective implementation of this Act:*
29 *Provided, That the failure of the promulgation of the IRR shall not prevent the*
30 *implementation of this Act upon its effectivity.*
31

1 Sec. 4. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is declared invalid or
2 unconstitutional, other provisions hereof which are not affected thereby shall remain
3 in full force and effect.

4
5 Sec. 5. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, orders, decrees, rules and regulations, and
6 other parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed,
7 amended or modified accordingly.

8
9 Sec. 6. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
10 publication either in the *Official Gazette* or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation
11 in the Philippines.

Approved,