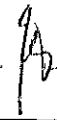


FOURTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC)
OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)

SENATE
S. No. 2278

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Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Constitution in Article 2, Section 13 provides that:

Section 13. The State recognizes the vital role of the youth in nation-building and shall promote and protect their physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual, and social well-being. It shall inculcate in the youth patriotism and nationalism, and encourage their involvement in public and civic affairs.

Last February 2006, St. Andrew's School in Paranaque City faced closure following the complaint of parents of students exposed to mercury. A total of 19 students were confined at the Philippine General Hospital (PGH) while other parents said their children are beginning to develop rashes in different parts of the body. Some 35 students were exposed to mercury when a student accidentally opened a beaker containing mercury.

Mercury is a heavy, silvery d-block metal, and is one of six elements that are liquid at or near room temperature and pressure. Mercury and most of its compounds are extremely toxic and are generally handled with care; in cases of spills involving mercury (such as from certain thermometers or fluorescent light bulbs) specific cleaning procedures are used to avoid toxic exposure. It can be inhaled and absorbed through the skin and mucous membranes, so containers of mercury are securely sealed to avoid spills and evaporation.

The dangers of mercury spills cannot be overlooked. A study has shown that acute exposure (4-8 hours) to calculated elemental mercury levels of 1.1 to 44 mg/m³ resulted in chest pain, dyspnea, cough, hemoptysis, impairment of pulmonary function, and evidence of interstitial pneumonitis.

Acute exposure to mercury vapor has been shown to result in profound central nervous system effects, including psychotic reactions characterized by delirium, hallucinations, and suicidal tendency. Occupational exposure has resulted in broad-ranging functional disturbance, including erethism, irritability, excitability, excessive shyness, and insomnia. With continuing exposure, a fine tremor develops and may escalate to violent muscular spasms. Tremor initially involves the hands and later spreads to the eyelids, lips, and tongue. Long-term, low-level exposure has been associated with more subtle symptoms of erethism, including fatigue, irritability, loss of memory, vivid dreams, and depression.

This bill aims to prevent the accidental elemental mercury spills in schools to protect our school children from the adverse effects of mercury spills.


MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO

FOURTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC)
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First Regular Session)

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
OF THE SENATE

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1 AN ACT
2 TO PROHIBIT THE USE, PURCHASE AND STORAGE OF ELEMENTAL
3 MERCURY BY SCHOOLS

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

6 SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Mercury Use in
7 Schools Prohibition Act of 2008.”

8 SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – The State recognizes the vital role of the
9 youth in nation-building and shall promote and protect their physical, moral, spiritual,
10 intellectual, and social well-being. For this reason, it is declared the policy of the state to
11 eliminate elemental mercury in schools to avert its deleterious effects on the health of
12 school children.

13 SECTION 3. *Elimination of the Use of Elemental Mercury.* – Except as
14 otherwise provided in this section, no public or private school or educational institution
15 shall purchase, use or store any quantity of free flowing elemental mercury for any
16 purpose, nor purchase, use or store any instrument which contains mercury including, but
17 not limited to, thermometers, barometers, sphygmomanometers and manometers.

18 If no reasonably acceptable, mercury-free alternative exists for any instrument
19 prohibited by subdivision one of this section, a school or educational institution may
20 use such type of instrument which contains the lowest mercury content readily
21 available on the market.

22 The Secretary of Health, in consultation with the Secretary of Environment and
23 Natural Resources, shall promulgate rules and regulations requiring public and private
24 schools and educational institutions to dispose of or recycle any quantity of elemental

1 mercury and instruments containing mercury in a manner which is least harmful to the
2 environment.

3 SECTION 4. *Information Dissemination.* – The Secretary of Health shall
4 compile, produce and distribute to all public and private schools and educational schools
5 materials explaining the hazards created by elemental mercury and actions that may be
6 taken to reduce such hazards.

7 SECTION 5. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part of this Act is held
8 invalid, the remainder of this Act shall not be affected thereby.

9 SECTION 6. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, executive order or rules and
10 regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

11 SECTION 7. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days
12 after its publication in the Official Gazette or two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

13 Approved.

/jps