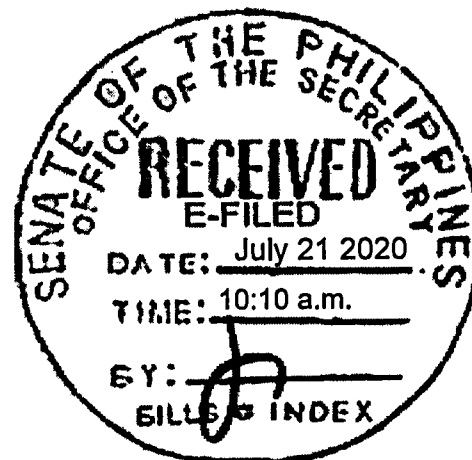


EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Second Regular Session)



SENATE

S.B. No. 1709

INTRODUCED BY: SENATOR EMMANUEL D. PACQUIAO

**AN ACT TO ENCOURAGE AND FURTHER DEVELOP THE USE OF
FILIPINO SIGN LANGUAGE IN SUPPORT OF MITIGATION MEASURES
AGAINST THE SPREAD OF CONTAGIOUS DISEASES**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article II, Section 15 of the 1987 Constitution directs the State to protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them. Article XIII, Section 11 of the Constitution moreover mandates the State to adopt an integrated and comprehensive approach to health development.

The continuing serious effects in the Philippines of the worldwide pandemic caused by the 2019 Novel Coronavirus that is known for short as "Covid-19" confirms that contagious illnesses can spread in a rapid pace and elucidates how the disease-causing microbes are commonly transferred.

The World Health Organization (WHO), the health departments of the world's states, and epidemic and new disease research institutions here and abroad, including our own Department of Health and Research Institute for Tropical Medicine, as well as Philippine academic institutions, are presently rushing significant studies of the disease.

These centers of health concerns commonly recognize that the virus causing the Covid-19 disease spreads through body fluids discharged by an infected person that subsequently get into the body system of a new host person. The general public has now been made to understand and it is increasingly being accepted that the common vehicles of transfer of the disease are almost invisible droplets of saliva or mucus that are discharged when a virus-carrying person coughs, sneezes, or simply talks verbally. Now, scientists are increasingly reporting that the virus lingers in the air or is carried possibly even by aerosols for some time and for distances of up to six feet and sometimes more, or it settles and is maintained for even longer times on various surfaces.

The danger of such a contagious disease is worsened when, like the Covid-19, it can possibly be transferred by a carrier that is asymptomatic, or one who does not show the symptoms of the disease. The unknowing carrier then spreads the disease by simple conversation or regular interaction with other people in the community.

The whole world is now witness to the gravity of the adverse effects of an epidemic, or even worse, a pandemic such as the Covid-19 pandemic. Health and allied health institutions and their workers are swamped to capacity and overworked with sick persons to treat. Deaths are reported daily in substantial and shocking numbers. Communities and families are quarantined, sometimes with necessary force, within the boundaries of localities and families within their abodes. Businesses can be closed and may only be gradually reopened and expectedly with great losses. The economies of nations are seriously endangered. Worst of all, these scenarios are accepted to continue until scientists find a cure or vaccine to control the disease and until governments find recovery solutions to the detrimental effects.

It is now accepted that the Covid-19 disease will have to be managed in communities for some time until it comes under control and in order that a deadly resurgence of the disease will be obviated. The entire world also now gets a new lesson that future microbes can cause similar contagions.

There is therefore an urgent need to institute measures that will allow and support the safe interaction of people and the conduct of business establishments and their transactions,

focused on complementing and enhancing other mitigation measures against the spread of Covid-19 and other viruses and microbes that may cause future contagious diseases.

This bill will seek to encourage and further develop the use of Filipino Sign Language that can be used during an epidemic to minimize the spread of the contagion and even other diseases by lessening or avoiding the danger of discharged body fluids and mucus that accompanies verbalized conversation and are carried in the air or through aerosols.

In view of the foregoing, approval of this bill is earnestly sought.

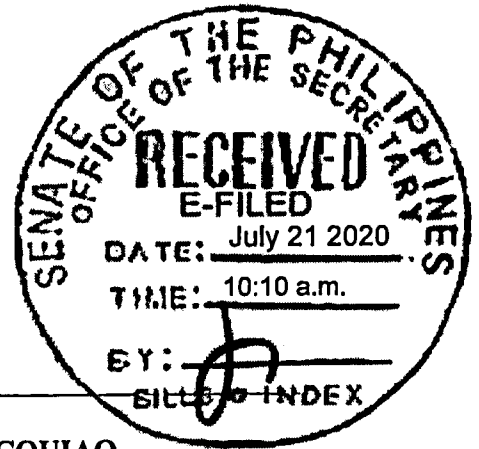
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'EMMANUEL D. PACQUIAO', written over a circular stamp or seal.

EMMANUEL D. PACQUIAO

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AGAINST THE SPREAD OF CONTAGIOUS DISEASES**

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 "New Normal Sign Language Act."

2

3 **Section 2. Declaration of Policy.** It is the policy of the State to protect and promote the
4 right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them. Thus, it shall adopt an
5 integrated and comprehensive approach to health development.

6 The continuing serious effects of the Covid-19 pandemic in the Philippines shows that
7 there is an urgent need for measures that will define a new normal for the behavior and safe
8 interaction of people, and for the resumption of transactions of businesses and management of
9 the limited gatherings of individuals, in order to stem the spread of the Covid-19 disease and
10 mitigate its effects in the country, as well as control other possible future contagious illnesses
11 from spreading in a manner like the Covid-19 disease.

1 There is a recognized need for a measure that will allow and support the safe interaction
2 of people and the conduct of business establishments and their transactions, such as the
3 encouragement and further development of the use of Filipino Sign Language that can be used
4 during an epidemic to minimize the spread of the contagion and even other diseases by lessening
5 or avoiding the danger of discharged body fluids and mucus that accompanies verbalized
6 conversation and are carried in the air or through aerosols.

7

8 **Section 3. *Development of TESDA Filipino Sign Language Modules.*** – The Technical
9 Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), in consultation with non-government
10 organizations presently teaching the recognized Filipino Sign Language that is already being
11 used by tens of thousands of verbally challenged individuals in the country and that follows the
12 local conversational word order, shall develop, regularly update, and offer skills development
13 modules for the use of Filipino Sign Language appropriate for different purposes, such as, for
14 daily conversation, for ordinary commercial transactions, for more complicated business and
15 technical activities, and for trainers thereof.

16

17 **Section 4. *LGU Dissemination of the TESDA Filipino Sign Language Modules.*** – The
18 TESDA, in coordination with the various local government units, shall promote the TESDA sign
19 language modules among the residents of the localities in order to enhance wider use of the sign
20 language and increase the numbers of trainers thereof.

1 **Section 5. *Online Introduction of the TESDA Filipino Sign Language Modules.*** – To
2 enhance further interest in the TESDA sign language modules, the TESDA, in coordination with
3 the Department of Information and Communications Technology, shall develop online material
4 to introduce and promote the said TESDA Filipino Sign Language modules that are being
5 offered by the TESDA.

6

7 **Section 6. *Separability Clause.*** If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or
8 otherwise invalid, the validity of the other provisions shall not be affected thereof.

9

10 **Section 7. *Effectivity.*** This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after publication in at
11 least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

12

13 Approved,