

THIRTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC)
OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Third Regular Session)

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SENATE

S. B. No. 2571

Introduced by Senator Manuel "Lito" M. Lapid

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Everyday left handed people struggle in a right handed world. There are many different factors in the environment that may pose problems for left handed people. Majority of people are right handed and various products and tools are often made for right handed individuals without any thought whether they will work for a left handed person. Almost all hand-held devices have been designed with a right-handed individual in mind. In fact, most right-handed people don't even recognize that things have been made specifically for them.

From a global perspective, available data indicate that there are at least 20 million people in the United States that are left handed and 500 million left-handers on the planet. There are now more left handed people in the world than ever before. A recent study in the U.S. shows that the number of people who primarily use their left hand is on a steady rise. In fact, as much as 10% -15% of the population is left handed. That's more than one out of ten people. Therefore, if you don't happen to be left handed yourself, you likely know someone who is. In fact, data indicate that the three candidates who ran in the 1992 U.S. presidential election, George Bush, Bill Clinton and Ross Perot were all left-handed. If we take the assumption that 10% of the total population are left handed, then we can easily estimate that there are about 8.8 million Filipinos that are left-handed given that we have a total population of 88 million.

For left handed school children, everyday is a struggle as they are faced with many obstacles in school. Some of these problems include using right handed scissors, desk, ruler; even notebooks are made for the right handed person. Left handed students also have a hard time when it comes to sitting at a table with right handed students because they constantly bump elbows with them. Even writing poses a problem for left handed individuals because they always move their hand across what they have just written and in the process often smudge the ink all over the paper and smear their hands as well. In the U.S., a research covering 1,000 left handed respondents indicate that an overwhelming 85% of the lefthander respondents are having trouble with smudging writing. Moreover, aching hands are also a problem for 65% of lefthanders, yet only 10% of students have received any specific advice on left-handed writing techniques from their teacher. Tragically, some teachers even try to "uncorrect" children who have been taught the correct left-handed techniques at home, because this does not conform to school policies.

In many instances in bar examinations and professional board examinations, left-handed people are competing for the limited number of left-handed desks. Even when left handed examinees could get an appropriate desk, there are other problems because left-handed desks are all the way over to the left-handed side of lecture hall where you have to strain your neck to see the overheads. This is so because few school administrators, teachers, maintenance administrators and furniture makers and buyers take infrastructure bias for granted. Right-sided arm school desks represent an obstacle to learning for left-handed students from pre-school through university. Yet this is a problem that may be easily solved by better informed parents, students, teachers, school administrators, classroom designers, and furniture makers and buyers.

Even the most basic educational tools are not made available in a large number of classrooms. Only 18% had access to a left-handed fountain pen, or pen with left-handed finger grips. A great many left-handers do not realize that the correct educational tools and equipment would improve their school performance. Practical subjects in schools such as practical arts, home economics, woodwork & metalwork which involve using heavy machinery also raised concerns, both with blade positioning and over the positioning of safety overrides, which, according to many experts are positioned for right-handers' convenience. This means that left-handers can lose valuable seconds in an emergency, as they would instinctively reach out with their dominant hand in moments of stress. Although many schools and universities embrace anti-discrimination policies, unwitting school administrators and maintenance administrators continue to institutionalize discrimination by buying right-armed chairs. Without proper instruction, a child may develop a needlessly uncomfortable, inefficient, slow, or messy way of writing.

In many instances, the education system not only fails left-handed students by inflicting a right-handed education upon them, but also fails them by not stimulating the potentials inherent in left-handers.

The most common & serious problems left-handers face in school are: Forcing a left-hander to switch to the right hand may precipitate the onset of serious learning disorders; improper instruction on how to position paper and pencil can lead to awkward, uncomfortable, and/or slow writing.

Research studies indicate that there is a significant gap in teachers' knowledge relating to their left-handed pupils. Far too few teachers are aware of their left-handed students' needs and crucially do not know how easily these needs can be met. Alarming, it appears very few teachers give specific safety guidance to left-handers on the best positions to adopt when using such machinery. Students are even being told to "use it right-handed" which not only means relying on their weaker hand, but also impairs hand-eye co-ordination, making them less accurate which can have disastrous consequences.

Today, modern science has shown us that it is perfectly natural for some people to be left handed. If parents discover that their child prefers to use their left hand over their right, many medical authorities strongly encourage parents not to change this natural process. There is nothing wrong with a child using their left hand. It simply takes a little more guidance when it comes to developing handwriting skills. A recent study has shown that parents must never force and try to train a left handed child to become right-handed. The reason is that the left-handed child will start to have concentration problems and difficulties, and also develop negative psychological effects later on in life.

Indeed, there is an urgent need to provide teachers with the proper training and information so that they can address the major concerns of left-handed students. Left-handedness need never be a problem for children provided teachers can guide them in the techniques to adopt when approaching new tasks as a left-hander.


This humble measure is being proposed with the hope that this intervention will address the horizon of concerns faced by our left-handed school children who have to struggle and face difficulties in a right-handed oriented school system.

In view of the foregoing, the passage of this measure is earnestly sought.


MANUEL "LITO" M. LAPID
Senator

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SENATE

S. B. No. 2571

Introduced by Senator Manuel "Lito" M. Lapid

**AN ACT INSTITUTING A COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK
AND PROGRAM FOR LEFT-HANDERS AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

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

SECTION 1. Short Title. - This Act shall be known as the
"Comprehensive Handedness Act of 2007".

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy. -- It is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote the right to education and to promote the total and holistic human development. In this light, the State shall institutionalize a holistic handedness education program in the country that will be sensitive to the needs not only of the right-handers but also the left-handers in order to provide educational programs that are responsive to the handedness preference of the students.

Towards this end, the State shall provide comprehensive mechanisms that will update and improve scientific knowledge on the issues concerning handedness with the purpose of promoting better education to our students.

SEC. 3. Philippine Handedness Research and Training Institute (PHRTI). -- There is hereby established a Philippine Handedness Research and Training Institute (PHRTI), hereinafter referred to as the "Institute". The Institute shall be established as an attached agency of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST). The purpose of the Institute is to advance the scientific understanding and knowledge of handedness (left-handed and right-handed) and to help alleviate the social and educational discrimination of left-handers nationwide through research, information, education and advocacy.

The objective of the Philippine Handedness Research Institute (PHRTI) is to contribute to the scholarly and social understanding of the human condition of majority right-handers co-existing with left-handers. Towards this end, the Institute shall perform the following functions:

1. To facilitate and support interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and international research and training activities to advance our knowledge and understanding on the issues concerning handedness;
2. To disseminate scientifically validated and verified educational resources to the country on the issues concerning right-handed and left-handed students;
3. To raise the awareness on issues of public concern related to handedness;
4. To provide a communication forum for researchers, professionals, policy makers, school administrators, the public and various stakeholders to exchange information and knowledge concerning the issues on handedness;
5. To provide forum and avenue for discussion of educational and modern techniques and methods in relation to the problems encountered by left-handed students;
6. To promote a continuing training program for teachers through information, education and communication (IEC) campaigns in order for them to be sensitized and be sensitive to the needs of the left-handed students;
7. To serve as an authoritative source of information regarding issues concerning handedness;
8. To publish and disseminate information, education, communication and training materials concerning the issues on handedness, most specially the concerns of the left-handers. These materials shall include, among others, the following: Parents' Guide to Left-Handers, Teachers' Guide to Left-Handers, Employers' Guide to Left-Handers, Students' Guide to Left-Handers, the Development of Handedness in Children, Handedness & Personal Health & Safety, Handedness & Brain Lateralization; and
9. To perform such other functions as mandated under this Act.

SEC. 4. *Information, Education and Communication (IEC) Campaign for Left-Handers.* – The Institute, in coordination with the Department of Education (DepEd), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Philippine Council for the Welfare of Children (PCWC) and Philippine Information Agency (PIA), shall conduct a year-round information, education and communication (IEC) campaign to inform and educate teachers, school administrators, policy makers and various stakeholders involved in the education of our children.

Among the activities and programs to be undertaken in the IEC Campaign shall include the following:

1. The Institute shall provide scholarly information on issues related to handedness. The information, education and communication (IEC) campaign of the Institute will focus on eradicating three global educational problems faced by left-handers namely: the forced switching of left-handed children's hand preference; the improper teaching of left-handed writing; and the use of biased school desks and arm chairs;

2. The Institute shall publish additional resources which will include series of topical articles on handedness, educational materials and educational posters. The Institute shall also provide translations into various local dialects and easy-to-print formats to help students and individuals obtain accurate and scientific information on the proper handling of the concerns of the left-handers and to make information easily accessible to every school and parent in the country;

3. The Institute shall publish the latest information, teaching aids, school equipment and advice for helping left-handed school children in all areas of the curriculum. The aim of the information campaign is to ensure that these children will receive equal learning experience as their right-handed contemporaries;

4. The IEC will include the preparation of educational training manuals for teachers for them to easily detect left-handed students so as not to discriminate them; and

5. The IEC campaigns shall ensure that left-handed children will have an equal right to receive the correct basic training and equipment that will enable them to reach their full potential.

Recognizing the value of two-way communication for researchers, professionals, and the public and in order to promote such communication avenues, the Institute shall invite comments, ideas, and suggestions regarding issues related to handedness.

SEC. 5. National Handedness Awareness Week. - In order to mainstream the issues and concerns of left-handers, the first week of September of every year is hereby declared as the "Handedness Awareness Week". This week will be celebrated nationwide so that left-handers all over the nation can celebrate and increase public awareness on the advantages and disadvantages of being left-handed. Said week-long activity will be spearheaded by the Philippine Handedness Research and Training Institute (PHRTI), in coordination with the Department of Education

(DepEd), Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Philippine Information Agency (PIA).

All educational institutions throughout the country are hereby enjoined to give their support to the celebration of the National Handedness Awareness Week by conducting their respective activities with the active participation of all their students, faculty and staff.

SEC. 6. *Provision on Left-Handed Educational Materials and Facilities.* –

The DepEd, in coordination with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), shall formulate the necessary implementing rules and regulations to ensure that schools all over the country will provide left-handed desks and educational materials in relation to the percentage of left-handed people in the student population and to ensure that school policies, regulations and activities are non-discriminatory to the needs of left-handed students. These school materials should include sports materials that are sensitive and fit to be used by left-handed students during sports activities and school events. These materials should also cover equipments in music, sports, arts, and all facets of education and training.

Moreover, the relevant professional regulatory bodies of the government, including the Professional Regulatory Commission (PRC), are hereby mandated to provide the appropriate arm chairs, desks and educational materials for left-handed students particularly during professional board examinations so that left-handed examinees will be given equal chances, learning experience, and opportunities with that of their right-handed contemporaries.

SEC. 7. *Annual Conference on Handedness.* – The Philippine Handedness Research and Training Institute (PHRTI), in coordination with the Department of Education (DepEd), Philippine Council for the Welfare of Children (PCWC), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), is hereby mandated to conduct an *Annual Handedness National Conference* which will be participated by school administrators, teachers, policy makers, academic researchers, and experts in the field of handedness in order to promote awareness and information exchange on the issues concerning handedness.

The Annual Handedness National Conference is envisioned to be an avenue where experts of various academic disciplines may share their knowledge on the issues faced by left-handers and identify ways and means to address said issues.

The National Conference will discuss and review various research and development efforts of various multidisciplinary institutions in the mainstreaming of the issues faced by left-handers. The Institute shall provide opportunities for international experts from across disciplines to address specific research topics related to handedness.

The proceedings of the Institute's Annual Research Conferences will be published and be made available to the public.

SEC. 8. *Appropriation.* – The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act shall be included and incorporated in the annual general appropriations of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST).

SEC. 9. *Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).* - Within six (6) months from the date of effectivity of this Act, the DOST shall promulgate necessary implementing rules and regulations to implement the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 10. *Repealing Clause.* - All Laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations or parts thereof not consistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 11. *Separability Clause.* - If any provision or part of this Act, or the application thereof to any person or circumstance, is held unconstitutional or invalid, the remainder of this Act shall not be affected thereby.

SEC. 12. *Effectivity Clause.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days from the date of its complete publication in the *Official Gazette* or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,