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SENATE

S. No. **2903**

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Introduced by Senator Antonio "Sonny" F. Trillanes IV

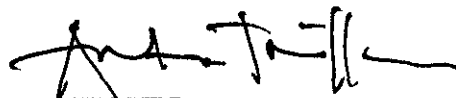
EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article XIV, Section I of the 1987 Constitution provides that the State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all. Visually impaired students have as much right to a quality education as anyone else and it is the duty of the State to ensure that that the literacy skills of blind and visually impaired students are by and large on a par with literacy skills achieved by sighted students of comparable aptitude and grade level.

During the 2000 census, the Philippine Government included questions about persons with disabilities. Results from the census reported that 942,098 persons with disabilities lived in the Philippines, representing 1.2% of the total population.¹ A total of 352,298 or 37.4 percent of the disabled population have low vision; and a total of 76,731 or 8.1 percent of the disabled population are partially blind. Currently, there are 2,569 visually impaired students in mainstream and special schools.²

In this light, this bill seeks to strengthen the literacy program for blind or visually impaired students. Braille, for many, may not be the exclusive literacy tool, but its potential usefulness even to those who can also read some printed matter must not be overlooked.³ The bill aims to ensure that every blind person receives instruction in Braille unless a more appropriate method is recommended. The bill also lays out the tasks of the Department of Education as the key institution of the aforementioned program if the State's goal of having a literate populace is to be achieved.

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



ANTONIO "SONNY" F. TRILLANES
Senator

¹ Information retrieved from: <http://www.apcdproject.org/countryprofile/philippines/statistical.html#content>. Retrieved on 23 October 2008.

² Information retrieved from: <http://pia.gov.ph/default.asp?m=12&sec=reader&rp=2&fi=p080730.htm&no=20&date=07/30/2008>. Retrieved on 23 October 2008.

³ Retrieved from: <http://www.nfb.org/images/nfb/Publications/fr/fr13/Issue2/f130201.html>. Retrieved on: 23 October 2008.

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AN ACT

**STRENGTHENING THE LITERACY PROGRAM FOR BLIND OR VISUALLY
IMPAIRED STUDENTS; DETERMINING THE NEED FOR BRAILLE INSTRUCTION;
PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

*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 the "*Blind Persons' Literacy*
2 *Rights and Education Act of 2008.*"

3
4 **SEC. 2. *Definition of Term.*** – As used in this Act, the term:

5 a. "Blind student" means an individual who is eligible for special education services, and who:

6 1. Has a visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with correcting lenses or has a
7 limited field of vision such that the widest diameter subtends an angular distance of no
8 greater than 20 degrees; or

9 2. Has a medically indicated expectation of visual deterioration.

10 b. "Braille" means the system of reading and writing through touch commonly known as
11 Standard English and Filipino Braille.

12
13 **SEC. 3. *Individualized Planning and Assessment.*** – Each legally blind student must be
14 identified and offered a special education program in consultation with a parent or legal
15 guardian. It is presumed that the need for Braille reading and writing are valuable skills to be

1 considered in the student's transition plan toward continuing in higher education and in
2 broadening job and career opportunities.

3 No child who is legally blind may be denied the opportunity to receive instructions in
4 Braille reading and writing on the basis that the child has the ability to read and write print. Each
5 student must be given an assessment which must include an evaluation of the need for Braille
6 skills to be designed by the Department of Education (DepEd), and shall include strengths and
7 deficits. The purpose of the assessment is to determine the most appropriate reading and writing
8 media for the individual child and does not require the use of Braille if other special education
9 services are appropriate.

10

11 **SEC. 4. *Instructional Materials.*** – From the effectivity of this Act, any publisher of a
12 textbook adopted pursuant to the DepEd's instructional materials procurement process shall
13 furnish the DepEd with a computer file in an electronic format specified by the department at
14 least two (2) years in advance that is readily translatable to Braille and can be used for large print
15 or speech access. Any textbook reproduced pursuant to the provisions of this subsection shall be
16 purchased at a price equal to the price paid for the textbook as adopted. The DepEd shall not
17 reproduce textbooks obtained pursuant to this subsection in any manner that would generate
18 revenues for the department from the use of such computer files or that would preclude the
19 rightful payment of fees to the publisher for use of all or some portion of the textbook.

20

21 **SEC. 5.** The DepEd shall perform the following functions:

- 22 a. formulate policies, plans and programs for the preparation of instructional materials, and
23 evaluation of programs in blind students' literacy education;
- 24 b. conduct studies and develops standards of programs and services for blind learners;
- 25 c. establish standards to ensure that individuals who provide Braille instruction are
26 appropriately trained and supervised;

- 1 d. plan for prototype in-service education programs to upgrade the competencies of
- 2 administrators, supervisors, coordinators, teachers as well as the non-teaching special
- 3 education personnel;
- 4 e. grant scholarship to teachers who will undergo training in the care and mentoring of blind
- 5 students; and
- 6 f. establish/strengthen linkages with agencies concerned with the education and welfare of
- 7 blind children.

8

9 **SEC. 6. *Philippine Printing House for the Blind.*** – The Philippine Printing House for

10 the Blind under the DepEd is hereby tasked to:

- 11 a. produce Braille books and other education materials;
- 12 b. produce Braille printing materials; and
- 13 c. distribute Braille books and supplies to regions/divisions/ schools with programs for
- 14 the visually impaired children and youth.

15

16 **SEC. 7. *Teacher Certification.*** – Teachers who provide education services to students

17 with blindness shall obtain the specific skills that enable them to work effectively with the

18 students. These skills may be obtained through formal training or in-service training or

19 consultation.

20 As a part of the certification process, teachers certified in the education of blind and

21 visually impaired students shall be required to demonstrate competence in reading, writing, and

22 teaching Braille pursuant to standards adopted by the DepEd. The department shall ensure that

23 teachers of students with visual impairments have access to in service instruction for the purpose

24 of updating their Braille skill competence.

25

1 **SEC. 8. *Separability Clause.*** If any provision or part hereof is held invalid or
2 unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall remain
3 valid and subsisting.

4
5 **SEC. 9. *Repealing Clause.*** Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order,
6 letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary to, or inconsistent with, the
7 provisions of this Act, is hereby repealed, modified, or amended accordingly.

8
9 **SEC. 10. *Effectivity Clause.*** This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
10 complete publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,