



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

H. No. 6428

BY REPRESENTATIVES TINIO, COLMENARES, ILAGAN, HICAP, ZARATE,
DE JESUS, RIDON, PAEZ AND LANETE, PER COMMITTEE REPORT
No. 1007

AN ACT DECLARING FILIPINO SIGN LANGUAGE AS THE
NATIONAL SIGN LANGUAGE OF THE FILIPINO DEAF AND
THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF THE GOVERNMENT IN ALL
TRANSACTIONS INVOLVING THE DEAF, AND MANDATING
ITS USE IN ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS, BROADCAST MEDIA, AND
WORKPLACES

*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 Filipino
2 Sign Language Act”.

3 SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – The State shall, in compliance with
4 the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,
5 promote, protect, and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights
6 and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities. The national and local
7 government agencies shall uphold respect for their inherent dignity, individual
8 autonomy, and independence by guaranteeing accessibility and eliminating all
9 forms of discrimination in all public interactions and transactions, thereby
10 ensuring their full and effective participation and inclusion in society. The
11 State shall also take all appropriate measures to ensure that the Filipino deaf

1 can exercise the right to expression and opinion. Accordingly, the State
2 recognizes and promotes the use of sign languages embodying the specific
3 cultural and linguistic identity of the Filipino deaf.

4 SEC. 3. *Filipino Sign Language as the National Sign Language.* –
5 The Filipino Sign Language, hereinafter referred to as FSL, is hereby declared
6 as the national sign language of the Philippines. The FSL shall be recognized,
7 promoted, and supported as the medium of official communication in all
8 transactions involving the deaf, and the language of instruction of deaf
9 education, without prejudice to the use of other forms of communication
10 preferences.

11 SEC. 4. *Filipino Sign Language in Education.* –

12 (a) *Medium of Instruction and Curriculum.* The Department of
13 Education (DepED), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the
14 Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and all
15 other national and local government agencies involved in the education of the
16 deaf, are tasked to henceforth use FSL as the medium of instruction in deaf
17 education. The FSL shall be taught as a separate subject in the curriculum of
18 all public schools: *Provided,* That private schools shall ensure access to FSL
19 materials or individualized instruction on FSL, if requested. The reading and
20 writing of Filipino as the national spoken language, other Philippine dialects,
21 and English shall also be taught to deaf learners.

22 (b) *FSL in Early Childhood Care.* All early childhood care and
23 development programs provided by the government shall enable
24 age-adequate FSL acquisition to pre-school age deaf children and their
25 families.

26 (c) *Deaf Teachers.* To promote the licensing and mobilization of the
27 service of deaf teachers, the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) is
28 directed to employ alternative assessment procedures which shall consider the
29 conditions, abilities, and social barriers of the deaf teachers. Said procedures

1 shall be language appropriate and culturally-sensitive to the needs of the deaf
2 teachers. The TESDA shall likewise take similar measures in the certification
3 of technical-vocational teachers.

4 In the hiring and deployment of teachers in formal and nonformal
5 education programs, the DepED and all other concerned national and local
6 agencies are directed to employ affirmative action in recruiting deaf
7 teachers.

8 (d) *FSL in Teacher Training Programs for Deaf Education.* The FSL
9 shall be taught as a separate subject in the curriculum of training programs for
10 teachers in deaf education.

11 (e) *Training and Evaluation Programs.* To improve the quality of
12 teachers and interpreters in deaf education, all national and local government
13 agencies and centers providing education services to deaf students are hereby
14 tasked to undertake periodic training and evaluation of their teachers. Training
15 and evaluation shall be designed and taught in consultation with the
16 representatives of the Filipino deaf community.

17 The University of the Philippines (UP), together with the Komisyon sa
18 Wikang Filipino (KWF), professional linguistics organizations and deaf
19 linguistics researchers, in collaboration with the CHED, the DepED, and the
20 Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Council, shall develop
21 guidelines for the development of training materials in the education of the
22 deaf, for use by all state universities and colleges (SUCs), as well as their
23 teachers and staff.

24 SEC. 5. *Standards for Filipino Sign Language Interpreting.* – The
25 National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA), with the involvement of the
26 deaf community and other stakeholders, shall establish a national system of
27 standards, accreditation, and procedures for FSL interpreting.

28 SEC. 6. *Filipino Sign Language in the Justice System.* – The FSL
29 shall be the official language of legal interpreting for the deaf in all public

1 hearings, proceedings, and transactions of the courts, quasi-judicial agencies,
2 and other tribunals. To ensure effective access to justice for the deaf on an
3 equal basis with others and to facilitate their effective role as direct and
4 indirect participants in the legal system, the courts, quasi-judicial agencies,
5 and other tribunals are hereby mandated to ensure the availability of a
6 qualified sign language interpreter in all proceedings involving the deaf,
7 without prejudice to the right of the deaf to choose other forms or modes of
8 communication, if they so prefer.

9 For purposes of this Act, "hearings, proceedings, and transactions"
10 shall include those held in police stations and before the Lupong
11 Tagapamayapa, as well as preliminary investigations, alternative dispute
12 resolution processes, and other initial stages in the courts, quasi-judicial
13 agencies, and other tribunals.

14 The Supreme Court and other concerned agencies shall promote
15 appropriate training for those working in the administration of justice,
16 including hearing and deaf relay interpreters, other court personnel, and police
17 and prison staff.

18 The Department of Justice (DOJ), the NCDA, the Department of
19 the Interior and Local Government (DILG), and the Judiciary, with the
20 involvement of the deaf community and other stakeholders, are tasked to
21 create a national system of standards, accreditation, and procedures for legal
22 interpreting in FSL.

23 *SEC. 7. Filipino Sign Language in All Government Workplaces. –*
24 The FSL shall be the official language of the Filipino deaf employed in the
25 public and in all government workplaces. For this purpose, all government
26 offices shall take reasonable measures to encourage the use of FSL among its
27 deaf and hearing employees, including the conduct of awareness and training
28 seminars on the rationale and use of FSL.

1 The UP, together with the KWF, NCDA, professional linguistics
2 organizations and deaf linguistics researchers, shall formulate guidelines for
3 the development of training materials for the employees of the DOJ, the
4 Judiciary, the Department of Health (DOH), the Department of Social Welfare
5 and Development (DSWD), the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW),
6 the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC), and the Commission on
7 Human Rights (CHR), in the conduct of the mandates and activities of these
8 concerned offices.

9 SEC. 8. *Filipino Sign Language in the Public Health System.* – State
10 hospitals and health centers shall take steps to ensure access of the deaf to
11 health services, including the free provision of FSL interpreters and other
12 forms of communication, upon request of deaf patients. As part of their
13 corporate social responsibility, private health facilities are encouraged to
14 provide access to health services to all deaf patients and their family
15 members.

16 SEC. 9. *Filipino Sign Language in All Other Public Transactions,*
17 *Services, and Facilities.* – All national agencies including government-owned
18 or -controlled corporations (GOCCs), and local government units (LGUs) are
19 hereby directed to use FSL as the medium of official communication in all
20 public transactions involving the deaf. Qualified FSL interpreting and other
21 forms of communication shall be provided whenever necessary or requested
22 during fora, conferences, meetings, cultural events, sports competitions,
23 community affairs, and activities conducted by government agencies and
24 GOCCs.

25 SEC. 10. *Filipino Sign Language in Broadcast Media.* – The FSL
26 shall be the language of broadcast media interpreting. To guarantee access to
27 information and freedom of expression of the Filipino deaf, the National
28 Telecommunications Commission (NTC) shall, within one (1) year from the
29 effectivity of this Act, require FSL interpreter insets in news and public

1 affairs programs. Subsequently, the NTC shall take steps to promote the use
2 of FSL in all other broadcasts and programming, especially in educational
3 television programs designed for children.

4 The NCDA and the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP),
5 with the assistance of the NTC, the deaf community, and other stakeholders,
6 are tasked to create a national system of standards, procedures and
7 accreditation for broadcast media interpreting in FSL.

8 SEC. 11. *Promotion of Filipino Sign Language.* – The DepED,
9 CHED, UP, KWF, Linguistic Society of the Philippines, and other national
10 agencies and LGUs shall, in consultation with professional organizations
11 experienced in language policy and planning and the deaf community, take
12 appropriate steps to propagate sign language competency among hearing
13 people, especially families with deaf members, by offering FSL as an elective
14 subject in the regular or mainstream curriculum.

15 SUCs are directed to undertake continuing research for the
16 development, propagation, and preservation of FSL.

17 SEC. 12. *Instructional Materials for Schools and Child Development*
18 *Centers.* – The DepED Instructional Materials Council Secretariat shall, in
19 coordination with the Bureaus of Elementary Education, Secondary Education,
20 and Alternative Learning System, as well as the ECCD Council, develop
21 guidelines for the selection, production, procurement and distribution of print
22 and video materials in FSL to all public schools and national child
23 development centers. Seventy-five percent (75%) of all procurement contracts
24 shall be reserved for deaf peoples' organizations, including regional or
25 provincial enterprises and cooperatives run by the deaf and recognized by the
26 LGUs.

27 SEC. 13. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – The Executive
28 Director of the NCDA, in coordination with the Secretary of Education, the
29 Commissioner of Higher Education, the Director General of the TESDA, the

1 Commissioner of the PRC, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the
2 Secretary of Justice, and other relevant agencies, and in consultation with
3 representatives of the deaf community, teachers with knowledge and
4 experience in the use of FSL in deaf education, the academe, interpreters, and
5 other persons concerned, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations
6 for the effective implementation of this Act within one hundred eighty (180)
7 days from its approval. These rules and regulations shall be published in
8 accessible formats in the respective websites of these agencies and through
9 other means necessary.

10 SEC. 14. *Monitoring of the Implementation of this Act.* – The NCDA,
11 in collaboration with representatives of the deaf community, is hereby
12 tasked to convene an Inter-Agency Committee including the CHR, the CWC,
13 the PCW, individuals and institutions, with knowledge and experience on
14 FSL and its use, to make an annual assessment of the implementation of this
15 Act. The report of this Inter-Agency Committee shall be transmitted annually
16 to the House Committee on Social Services and the Senate Committee on
17 Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development and shall be published in
18 accessible formats in the respective websites of the concerned agencies and
19 through other means necessary.

20 SEC. 15. *Appropriations.* – The initial funding of this Act shall be
21 taken from the current year's appropriations of the concerned agencies.
22 Thereafter, the amount necessary for its continued implementation shall be
23 included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

24 SEC. 16. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part of this Act is
25 declared unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining parts or provisions not
26 affected shall remain in full force and effect.

27 SEC. 17. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, letters of instruction,
28 executive issuances, resolutions, orders or parts thereof which are inconsistent

1 with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, modified or amended
2 accordingly.

3 SEC. 18. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days
4 after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general
5 circulation.

Approved,

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