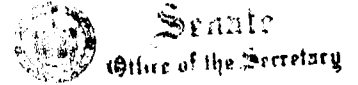


SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)



'16 JUL 18 P6:04

S E N A T E

S.B. NO. 390

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by SENATOR LOREN LEGARDA

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

Explanatory Note

The Filipino Sign Language (FSL) is the natural sign language indigenous to the Filipino Deaf community who developed the language with its own grammar and linguistic structure. The Filipino Deaf acquire conversational skills easily as they interact with the other deaf in the community. According to Dr. Marie Bustos, a sign language interpreter and special education professor at the University of the Philippines – Diliman, 70% of the Filipino Deaf Community (2015), mostly from urban areas, uses FSL and some of the schools have used the Sign in Exact English (SEE) or Sign Supported Speech, which are artificial sign systems based on oral and written English.

This law seeks to declare the Filipino Sign Language as the national sign language of the Filipino Deaf and the official language of the Philippine government in all transactions with the Deaf. It recognizes that the FSL is the backbone of the Philippine deaf culture, thus, mandating its use in following:

- a. Public and private schools and institutions;
- b. Public and private workplaces including courts, quasi-judicial agencies, and other tribunals;
- c. Public health system and other public transactions, services and facilities
- d. Broadcast media which would require interpreter insets in news and public affairs programs.

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


LOREN LEGARDA
Senator

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

1 **SEC. 1. Title.** – This Act shall be known as “The Filipino Sign Language Act.”
2

3 **SEC. 2. Filipino Sign Language as the National Sign Language of the**
4 **Filipino Deaf.** – Filipino Sign Language, hereinafter referred to as FSL, is
5 hereby declared as the national sign language of the Philippines. As such, it
6 shall be used as the medium of official communication in all transactions
7 involving the Deaf and the language of instruction of Deaf education.
8

9 **SEC. 3. Filipino Sign Language in Education.**

10
11 **a. Medium of Instruction and Curriculum.** The Department of Education
12 (DepEd), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Technical Education
13 and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and all other national and
14 local government agencies involved in the education of the Deaf, are
15 tasked to henceforth use FSL as the medium of instruction in Deaf
16 education. The FSL shall also be taught a separate subject in the
17 curriculum for Deaf learners. The reading and writing of Filipino, as the
18 national spoken language, other Philippine languages, and English shall
19 also be taught to Deaf learners.
20

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

26 **c. Deaf Teachers.** – To promote the licensing of Deaf teachers who use FSL,
27 the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) is directed to employ
28 affirmative action measures by administering alternative assessment
29 procedures which shall consider the conditions and abilities of the Deaf
30 and be language-appropriate and culture-fair to Deaf education
31 graduates.
32

1 In the hiring and deployment of teachers in formal and non-formal
2 education programs, DepEd and all other concerned national and local
3 agencies are directed to employ affirmative action in recruiting Deaf
4 persons who use FSL.
5

6 **d. FSL in Teacher Training Programs for Deaf Education.** – FSL shall be
7 included as a separate subject in the curriculum of training programs for
8 teachers in Deaf education.
9

10 **e. Training and Evaluation Programs.** – To improve the quality of teachers
11 in Deaf education, all national and local government agencies, centers,
12 and programs providing education to Deaf students, are hereby tasked to
13 institute periodic training and evaluation programs for their teachers.
14 Training and evaluation shall be designed and taught in consultation
15 with the representatives of the Filipino Deaf community.
16

17 **SEC. 4. Standards for Filipino Sign Language Interpreting.** – The National
18 Council for Disability Affairs (NCDA), with the involvement of the Deaf
19 community and other stakeholders, shall establish a national system of
20 standards, accreditation, and procedures for FSL interpreting.
21

22 **SEC. 5. Filipino Sign Language in Courts, Quasi-Judicial Agencies, and**
23 **other Tribunals.** – FSL shall be the official language of legal interpretation for
24 the Deaf in all public hearings, proceedings and transactions of the courts,
25 quasi-judicial agencies, and other tribunals. To ensure effective access to
26 justice for the Deaf on an equal basis with others and to facilitate their effective
27 role as direct and indirect participants in the legal system, courts, quasi-
28 judicial agencies, and other tribunals are hereby mandated to ensure the
29 availability of FSL interpreting in all proceedings involving the Deaf.
30

31 For purposes of this Act, “hearings, proceedings, and transactions” shall
32 include those in police stations and the *Lupong Tagapamayapa*, as well as
33 preliminary investigations and other initial stages in the courts, quasi-judicial
34 bodies, and other tribunals.
35

36 The Supreme Court and other concerned agencies shall promote appropriate
37 training for those working in the administration of justice, including hearing
38 and Deaf relay interpreters, and other court personnel, and police and prison
39 staff.

40 The NCDA, the Department of Justice, and the Judiciary, with the involvement
41 of the Deaf community and other stakeholders, are tasked to create a national
42 system of standards, accreditation, and procedures for legal interpreting in
43 FSL.
44

45 **SEC. 6. Filipino Sign Language in All Workplaces.** – FSL shall be the official
46 language of the Filipino Deaf employed in the public and private service. For
47 this purpose, every government office shall take all reasonable measures that
48 would encourage the use of FSL among its Deaf and hearing employees,
49 including the conduct of awareness and training seminars on the rationale and
50 use of FSL.
51

52 **SEC. 7. Filipino Sign Language in the Public Health System.** – State
53 hospitals and health centers shall take steps to ensure access of the Filipino
54 Deaf to health services, including the free provision of FSL interpreters for Deaf
55 patients.

1
2 **SEC. 8. Filipino Sign Language in All Other Public Transactions, Services,**
3 **and Facilities.** – As the medium of official communication, all national and
4 local government agencies are hereby directed to use FSL in all public
5 transactions involving the Deaf. FSL interpreting shall be provided whenever
6 necessary or requested in all government offices and during forums,
7 conferences, meetings, cultural events, sports competitions, community affairs,
8 and activities conducted by government agencies.
9

10 **SEC. 9. Filipino Sign Language in Broadcast Media.** – FSL shall be the
11 official language of broadcast media interpreting. To guarantee access to
12 information and freedom of expression of the Filipino Deaf, the National
13 Telecommunications Commission (NTC) shall, within a reasonable period upon
14 the effective date of this Act, require FSL interpreter insets in new and public
15 affairs programs. Subsequently, the NTC shall take steps to promote the use of
16 FSL in all other broadcasts and programming.
17

18 The NTC, in consultation with the NCDA, *Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng*
19 *Pilipinas*, the Deaf Community, and other stakeholders, is tasked to create a
20 national system of standards, procedures and accreditation for broadcast
21 media interpreting in FSL.
22

23 **SEC. 10. Promotion of FSL.** – The DepEd, CHED, and other national and
24 local agencies shall take appropriate steps to propagate sign language
25 competency among hearing people, by offering FSL as an optional language
26 subject in the regular or mainstream curriculum, among others.
27

28 State universities and colleges are directed to undertake continuing research
29 for the development, propagation, and preservation of FSL.
30

31 **SEC. 11. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** – The DepEd, CHED,
32 TESDA, PRC, NCDA, Supreme Court, DOJ, and other relevant agencies shall,
33 within thirty (30) days after its effective date, promulgate the necessary rules
34 and regulations. For this purpose, these agencies shall involve representatives
35 of the Deaf community, teachers with knowledge and experience in the use of
36 FSL in Deaf education, the academe, and other persons concerned. These rules
37 and regulations shall likewise be published in accessible formats in their
38 respective websites and through other means necessary.
39

40 **SEC. 12. Monitoring of the Implementation of this Act.** – The NCDA, in
41 collaboration with representatives of the Deaf community, is hereby tasked to
42 convene an Inter-Agency Committee including individuals and institutions with
43 knowledge and experience on FSL and its use, to make an annual assessment
44 of the implementation of this Act. The report of this Inter-Agency Committee
45 shall be transmitted annually to the House Committee on basic Education and
46 Culture, and Senate Committee on Education, Arts, and Culture, and
47 published in accessible formats in their respective websites and through other
48 means necessary.
49

50 **SEC. 13. Appropriations.** – Implementation of this Act shall derive its funding
51 from the 5% appropriations for Persons with Disabilities as provided in the
52 General Appropriations Act.
53

54 **SEC. 14. Repealing Clause.** – All laws and executive issuances inconsistent
55 with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

1 **SEC. 15. Separability Clause.** – If any provision of this Act is declared
2 unconstitutional, the same shall not affect the validity and effectiveness of its
3 other provisions.

4
5 **SEC. 16. Effectivity.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
6 publication in the Official Gazette or in any two (2) newspapers of general
7 circulation.

8
9 Approved,

10