S. No. 1455
H. No. 7503

Republic of the Philippines

Congress of the Philippines

Metro Manila

Seventeenth Congress

Third Regular Session

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[REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11106]

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

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

SECTION 1. *Title.* – This Act shall be known as "The Filipino Sign Language Act".

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – The State shall, in compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, promote, protect, and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities. Thus, national and local

State agencies shall uphold respect for their inherent dignity, individual autonomy, and independence by guaranteeing accessibility and eliminating all forms of discrimination in all public interactions and transactions, thereby ensuring their full and effective participation and inclusion in society. The State shall also take all appropriate measures to ensure that the Filipino deaf can exercise the right to expression and opinion. Accordingly, the State recognizes and promotes the use of sign languages embodying the specific cultural and linguistic identity of the Filipino deaf.

The State also furthers the vision taken with the Early Years Act (Republic Act No. 10410) and the Enhanced Basic Education Act (Republic Act No. 10533), which have already recognized Filipino Sign Language in the education of deaf learners from early childhood up to the secondary level.

SEC. 3. *Filipino Sign Language as the National Sign Language.* – Filipino Sign Language, hereinafter referred to as FSL, is hereby declared as the national sign language of the Philippines. The FSL shall be recognized, promoted, and supported as the medium of official communication in all transactions involving the deaf, and as the language of instruction of deaf education, without prejudice to the use of other forms of communication depending on individual choice or preference.

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

(a) Medium of Instruction and Curriculum. – The Department of Education (DepEd), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and all other national and local government agencies involved in the education of the deaf, are tasked to henceforth use, and coordinate with each other on the use of FSL, as the medium of instruction in deaf education. The FSL shall also be taught as a separate subject in the curriculum for deaf learners. The reading and writing of Filipino, as the national language, other Philippine languages, and English shall also be taught to deaf learners.

(b) Deaf Teachers. – To promote the licensing and mobilization of deaf teachers in formal education as well as alternative learning systems, the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) together with teacher education programs

nationwide are directed to employ alternative assessment procedures as affirmative action measures which shall consider the conditions, abilities, and social barriers of the deaf teachers. These procedures shall be language-appropriate and culture-fair to deaf education graduates.

(c) FSL in Teacher Education Programs. – In the context of inclusive education and Universal Design, the learning of FSL shall be a curricular or co-curricular offering in teacher education programs as deemed appropriate.

(d) Training and Evaluation Programs. – All national and local government agencies and centers providing education to deaf students are hereby tasked to undertake regular pre-/in-service training and evaluation of their teachers. These shall be designed and taught in partnership with the representatives of the Filipino deaf community.

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

SEC. 5. *Standards for Filipino Sign Language Interpreting.* – The KWF, with the involvement of the deaf community and other stakeholders, shall establish a national system of standards, accreditations, and procedures for FSL interpreting, without prejudice to other forms of communication which respect the right of a deaf person to accessibility, and to seek, receive, impart ideas on an equal basis with others according to their choice. This shall include policies on the practice of interpreting as a profession such as compensation rates and benefits, working conditions, procedures for grievances and others.

SEC. 6. *Filipino Sign Language in the Justice System.* – The FSL shall be the official language of legal interpreting for the deaf in all public hearings, proceedings, and transactions of the courts, quasi-judicial agencies, and other tribunals. To ensure effective access to justice for the deaf on an equal basis with others and to facilitate their effective role

as direct and indirect participants in the legal system, courts, quasi-judicial agencies, and other tribunals are hereby mandated to ensure the availability of a qualified sign language interpreter in all proceedings involving the deaf, without prejudice to the right of the deaf to choose other forms or modes of communication, if they so prefer.

For purposes of this Act, "hearings, proceedings, and transactions" shall include those in police stations and before the *Lupong Tagapamayapa* of the *Katarungang Pambarangay*, as well as preliminary investigations and other initial stages in the courts, quasi-judicial bodies, and other tribunals.

The Supreme Court and other concerned agencies shall promote appropriate training for those working in the administration of justice, including hearing interpreters, deaf relay interpreters, and other court personnel, police and prison staff. Support staff shall also be trained in translation from FSL to written English or Filipino.

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

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

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

SEC. 8. *Filipino Sign Language in the Health System.* – State hospitals and all health facilities shall take steps to ensure access of the Filipino deaf to health services, including the free provision of FSL interpreters and accessible materials upon request of deaf patients, or individuals who have family members who are deaf. As part of their corporate social responsibility, private health facilities are encouraged to provide access to health services to all deaf patients and their family members.

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

SEC. 10. *Filipino Sign Language in Media.* – The FSL shall be the language of broadcast media interpreting. To guarantee access to information and freedom of expression of the Filipino deaf, the *Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas* (KBP), and the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) shall, within one (1) year from the effective date of this Act, require FSL interpreter insets, compliant with accessibility standards for television, in news and public affairs programs. Subsequently, the MTRCB shall take steps to promote progressive use of FSL in all other broadcasts and programming, especially in educational television programs designed for children, in conjunction with the National Council for Children's Television and the DepEd.

The KBP and the MTRCB, the deaf community, and other stakeholders are tasked to create a national system of standards, procedures and accreditation for broadcast media interpreting in FSL.

All videos published online, including those on social media, shall also conform to Philippine web accessibility standards.

SEC. 11. *Promotion of Filipino Sign Language.* – The DepEd, CHED, UP, KWF, Linguistic Society of the Philippines, and other national agencies and LGUs shall, in consultation with professional organizations with expertise and experience in language policy and planning and the deaf community, take appropriate steps to propagate sign language competency among hearing people, by offering FSL as an elective subject in the regular or mainstream curriculum, particularly of SUCs.

In coordination with the KWF, SUCs, led by the UP, are directed to undertake continuing research for the development, propagation, and preservation of FSL and its cultural history.

SEC. 12. *Instructional Materials for Schools and Child Development Centers.* – The DepEd Instructional Materials and Council Secretariat shall, in coordination with the Bureau of Learning Resources and the Bureau of Learning Delivery, as well as the ECCD Council, develop guidelines for the selection, production, procurement, and distribution of print and video materials in FSL to all public schools, day care centers, and national child development centers. Seventy-five percent (75%) of all procurement contracts shall be reserved for deaf people's organizations, including regional or provincial enterprises and cooperatives run by the deaf and recognized by the LGUs.

SEC. 13. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – The KWF, in coordination with the Secretary of Education, the Chairperson of the CHED, the Director General of the TESDA, the Chairperson of the PRC, and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the Secretary of Justice, and the heads of other relevant agencies, and in consultation with the representatives of the deaf community, teachers with knowledge and experience with the use of FSL in deaf education, the academe, interpreters, and other persons concerned, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act within one hundred eighty (180) days after its effective date. These rules and regulations shall be published in accessible formats in the respective websites of the concerned agencies and through other means necessary.

SEC. 14. *Strict Monitoring and Implementation of this Act.* – The monitoring and implementation of this Act shall be strictly upheld. For this purpose, an Inter-Agency Council is hereby created which shall consist of one (1) representative each from the CHR, the CWC, the PCW, the KWF and the FSL organizations or institutions. The Inter-Agency Council shall make an annual report on the monitoring and implementation of this Act and the copy of which shall be submitted to both Houses of Congress and published in accessible formats in their respective websites and through other means necessary to serve the purpose of effective dissemination. Failure to comply with any of the provisions of this Act shall be a matter that can be referred to the Civil Service Commission, DILG, Sandiganbayan or Office of the Ombudsman or other pertinent offices or bodies for appropriate sanctions pursuant to existing laws and regulations.

SEC. 15. *Appropriations.* – The initial funding of this Act shall be taken from the current year's appropriations of the concerned agencies. Thereafter, the amount necessary for its continued implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act. Relevant and allowable expenditures related to education may also be charged to the ECCD Council, the LGU Special Education Fund, or other relevant fund.

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

SEC. 17. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws and executive issuances inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

SEC. 18. *Effectivity Date.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in one (1) newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,

GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO
Speaker of the House of Representatives

VICENTE C. SOTTO III
President of the Senate

This Act was passed by the Senate of the Philippines as Senate Bill No. 1455 on August 28, 2018 and adopted by the House of Representatives as an amendment to House Bill No. 7503 on September 10, 2018.

DANTE ROBERTO P. MALING
Acting Secretary General
House of Representatives

MYRA MARIE D. VILLARICA
Secretary of the Senate

Approved: OCT 3 0 2018

RODRIGO ROA DUTERTE
President of the Philippines

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