



SENATE

S. No. 1455

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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:*

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

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

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

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

18 *SEC. 3. Filipino Sign Language as the National Sign*  
19 *Language.* – Filipino Sign Language, hereinafter referred  
20 to as FSL, is hereby declared as the national sign language

1 of the Philippines. The FSL shall be recognized, promoted,  
2 and supported as the medium of official communication in  
3 all transactions involving the deaf, and as the language of  
4 instruction of deaf education, without prejudice to the use  
5 of other forms of communication depending on individual  
6 choice or preference.

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

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

1           (b) Deaf Teachers. – To promote the licensing and  
2 mobilization of deaf teachers in formal education as well as  
3 alternative learning systems, the Professional Regulation  
4 Commission (PRC) together with teacher education  
5 programs nationwide are directed to employ alternative  
6 assessment procedures as affirmative action measures  
7 which shall consider the conditions, abilities, and social  
8 barriers of the deaf teachers. These procedures shall be  
9 language-appropriate and culture-fair to deaf education  
10 graduates.

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

16           (d) Training and Evaluation Programs. – All  
17 national and local government agencies and centers  
18 providing education to deaf students are hereby tasked to  
19 undertake regular pre-/in- service training and evaluation  
20 of their teachers. These shall be designed and taught in

1 partnership with the representatives of the Filipino deaf  
2 community.

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

11 SEC. 5. *Standards for Filipino Sign Language*  
12 *Interpreting.* – The KWF, with the involvement of the deaf  
13 community and other stakeholders, shall establish a  
14 national system of standards, accreditations, and  
15 procedures for FSL interpreting, without prejudice to other  
16 forms of communication which respect the right of a deaf  
17 person to accessibility, and to seek, receive impart ideas on  
18 an equal basis with others according to their choice. This  
19 shall include policies on the practice of interpreting as a

1 profession such as compensation rates and benefits,  
2 working conditions, procedures for grievances and others.

3       SEC. 6. *Filipino Sign Language in the Justice System.*

4 – The FSL shall be the official language of legal  
5 interpreting for the deaf in all public hearings,  
6 proceedings, and transactions of the courts, quasi-judicial  
7 agencies, and other tribunals. To ensure effective access to  
8 justice for the deaf on an equal basis with others and to  
9 facilitate their effective role as direct and indirect  
10 participants in the legal system, courts, quasi-judicial  
11 agencies, and other tribunals are hereby mandated to  
12 ensure the availability of a qualified sign language  
13 interpreter in all proceedings involving the deaf, without  
14 prejudice to the right of the deaf to choose other forms or  
15 modes of communication, if they so prefer.

16       For purposes of this Act, "hearings, proceedings, and  
17 transactions" shall include those in police stations and  
18 before the *Lupong Tagapamayapa* of the *Katarungang*  
19 *Pambarangay*, as well as preliminary investigations and

1 other initial stages in the courts, quasi-judicial bodies, and  
2 other tribunals.

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

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

15 *SEC. 7. Filipino Sign Language in All Workplaces. –*  
16 The FSL shall be the official language of the Filipino deaf  
17 employed in the civil service and in all government  
18 workplaces. For this purpose, all government offices shall  
19 take reasonable measures to encourage the use of FSL  
20 among its deaf and hearing employees, including the

1 conduct of awareness and training seminars on the  
2 rationale and use of FSL.

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

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



1 facilities are encouraged to provide access to health  
2 services to all deaf patients and their family members.

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

14       SEC. 10. *Filipino Sign Language in Media.* – The FSL  
15 shall be the language of broadcast media interpreting. To  
16 guarantee access to information and freedom of expression  
17 of the Filipino deaf, the *Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa*  
18 *Pilipinas* (KBP), and the Movie and Television Review and  
19 Classification Board (MTRCB) shall, within one (1) year  
20 from the effective date of this Act, require FSL interpreter

1 insets, compliant with accessibility standards for  
2 television, in news and public affairs programs.  
3 Subsequently, the MTRCB shall take steps to promote  
4 progressive use of FSL in all other broadcasts and  
5 programming, especially in educational television  
6 programs designed for children, in conjunction with the  
7 National Council for Children's Television and the DepEd.

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

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

15         SEC. 11. *Promotion of Filipino Sign Language.* – The  
16 DepEd, CHED, UP, KWF, Linguistic Society of the  
17 Philippines, and other national agencies and LGUs shall,  
18 in consultation with professional organizations with  
19 expertise and experience in language policy and planning  
20 and the deaf community, take appropriate steps to

1 propagate sign language competency among hearing  
2 people, by offering FSL as an elective subject in the regular  
3 or mainstream curriculum, particularly of state  
4 universities and colleges (SUCs).

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

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

1 and cooperatives run by the deaf and recognized by the  
2 LGUs.

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

18       SEC. 14. *Strict Monitoring and Implementation of this*  
19 *Act.* – The monitoring and implementation of this Act  
20 shall be strictly upheld. For this purpose, an Inter-Agency

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

15       SEC. 15. *Appropriations.* – The initial funding of this  
16 Act shall be taken from the current year's appropriations of  
17 the concerned agencies. Thereafter, the amount necessary  
18 for its continued implementation shall be included in the  
19 annual General Appropriations Act. Relevant and  
20 allowable expenditures related to education may also be

1 charged to the ECCD Council, the LGU Special Education  
2 Fund, or other relevant fund.

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

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

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

Approved,