

Republic of the Philippines  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
Quezon City

FIFTEENTH CONGRESS  
Second Regular Session

House Bill No. 5438



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Introduced by Representatives Mariano Michael M. Velarde Jr. and William Irwin  
Tieng (BUHAY Party List)

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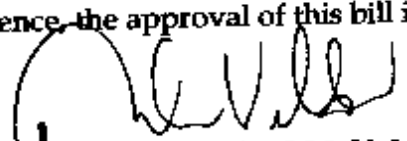
**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

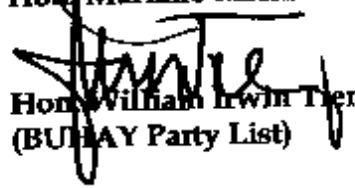
According to Resources for the Blind, Inc., a leading non-governmental organization in the country taking up the cause of blind, there may be up to 40,000 blind children in the Philippines who are not able to go to school. The organization said that the only thing keeping them out of school is the lack of teachers trained in how to include the blind child in the regular classroom.

Verily, such pronouncement was affirmed by a study published by the Asian Development Bank when it reported that despite increased awareness, the inclusion of disabled children in education continues to be an uphill battle, with just 3-5% of children with disabilities of school age currently accessing educational opportunities. The study concluded that there is a need for government authorities to take more serious steps to ensure that policies and programs for the education and development of disabled children are implemented adequately. In doing so, the finding suggested that methodologies and strategies to train more teachers in recognizing and addressing the special needs of children with learning disabilities must also be addressed.

In this regard, 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 should not be belittled. This piece of legislation 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.

Hence, the approval of this bill is earnestly requested.

  
Hon. Mariano Michael M. Velarde Jr.

  
Hon. William Irwin Tieng  
(BUHAY Party List)

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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 the House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:*

**SECTION 1. Short Title.** - This Act shall be known as the "*Blind Persons' Literacy Rights and Education Act of 2011.*"

**SEC. 2. Definition of Terms.** - As used in this Act, the term:

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

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

2. Has a medically indicated expectation of visual deterioration.

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

**SEC. 3. Individualized Planning and Assessment.** - Each legally blind student must be identified and offered a special education program in consultation with a parent or legal guardian. It is presumed that the need for Braille reading and writing are valuable skills to be considered in the student's transition plan towards pursuing higher education and in broadening job and career opportunities.

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

**SEC. 4. *Instructional Materials.*** - From the effectivity of this Act, any publisher of a textbook adopted pursuant to the DepEd's instructional materials procurement process shall furnish the DepEd with an electronic copy, which meets the specifications prescribed by the department, at least two (2) years in advance. Any textbook reproduced pursuant to the provisions of this subsection shall be purchased at a price equal to that paid for the textbook as adopted. The DepEd shall not reproduce textbooks obtained pursuant to this subsection in any manner that would generate revenues for the department or would preclude the payment of fees to the publisher for the use of the textbook.

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

- a. Formulate policies, plans and programs for the preparation of instructional materials, and evaluation of programs for the blind students' literacy education;
- b. Conduct studies, and develop standards for programs and services for blind learners;
- c. Establish standards to ensure that individuals who provide Braille instruction are appropriately trained and supervised;
- d. Plan for prototype in-service education programs to upgrade the competencies of administrators, supervisors, coordinators, teachers, as well as the non-teaching special education personnel;
- e. Grant scholarship to teachers who will undergo training in the care and mentoring of blind students; and
- f. Establish/strengthen linkages with agencies concerned with the education and welfare of blind children.

**SEC. 6. *Philippine Printing House for the Blind.*** - The Philippine Printing House for the Blind under the DepEd is hereby tasked to:

- a. Produce Braille books and other education materials;
- b. Produce Braille printing materials; and
- c. Distribute Braille books and supplies to regions/divisions/schools with programs for the visually impaired children and youth.

**SEC. 7. *Teacher Certification.*** - Teachers who provide education services to students with blindness shall obtain the specific skills to enable them to work effectively with the students. These skills may be obtained through formal training, in-service training or consultation.

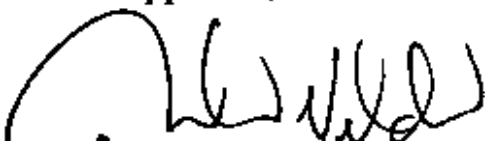
As a part of the certification process, teachers certified in the education of blind and visually impaired students shall be required to demonstrate competence in reading, writing, and teaching Braille pursuant to standards adopted by the DepEd. The department shall ensure that teachers of students with visual impairments have access to in service instruction for the purpose of updating their Braille skill competence.

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

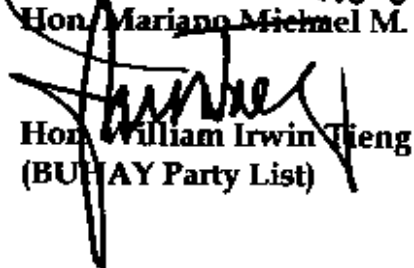
**SEC. 9. *Repealing Clause.*** - Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary to, or inconsistent with, the provisions of this Act, is hereby repealed, modified, or amended accordingly.

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

Approved,



Hon. Mariano Michael M. Velarde Jr.



Hon. William Irwin Tieng  
(BUHAY Party List)