

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 7279



Introduced by **HON. LUIS RAYMUND "LRAY" F. VILLAFUERTE, JR.**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Before 2017 finally closed, a mall in Davao City was engulfed in fire killing 38 call center employees. One week into 2018, another fire broke out in a Cebu City mall which took 180 firefighters and 40 hours to put out. The combined monetary cost of these two incidents, mere 10 days apart, is estimated to be between P100 million to half a billion pesos.

Fires remain a serious threat that occur by thousands in this country every year. They do not only cause unforeseen economic blows, but also claim the lives and properties of our people. The aforementioned mall fires in Cebu and Davao cause serious alarm as these were establishments with known fire exits and ample signage. Additionally, the employees were supposed to be familiar with the office layout and exit doors. Science explains that fire requires oxygen to combust, instantaneously robbing victims of the oxygen level they need to be able to think clearly and focus.

This bill intends first to safeguard the most vulnerable in instances of fire – our youth. We shall protect our school children from injuries or deaths from fire by requiring the disclosure of information with respect to campus fire safety practices and standards of all public and private academic institutions.

Schools shall be mandated to disclose to their students and employees a detailed summary of all educational facilities including student housing facilities, with a statement of whether or not the facilities are equipped with a fire sprinkler system or

any other fire safety system, or both. They shall also be required to provide statistics regarding fire occurrence such as cause, casualties and/or injuries. These reports shall be submitted to the Secretary of Education, who in turn, shall furnish Congress with a comprehensive summary of all reports from schools.

Survival lies in planning and practice. This bill seeks to ensure that the government is apprised of the situation of our schools, and their readiness in case of fire occurrence. Ultimately, the data generated and updated annually shall help the government draft more responsive measures for fire prevention and control.

In consideration of the foregoing, the swift passage of this bill is humbly sought.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Villafuerte', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

LUIS RAYMUND "LRAY" F. VILLAFUERTE, JR.

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AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR THE COMPULSORY DISCLOSURE OF FIRE SAFETY
STANDARDS AND MEASURES IN CAMPUS BUILDINGS

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 "Campus Fire Safety Right-to-Know Act of 2018."

SECTION 2. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act, the following terms shall be understood to mean as follows:

1. "Chairman" refers to the Chairman of the Commission on Higher Education;
2. "CHED" refers to the Commission on Higher Education.

SECTION 3. *Disclosure of Fire Safety Standards and Measures in Campus Buildings.* – All public and private educational institutions shall, beginning in the Academic Year 2018-2019, and each year thereafter, prepare, publish and distribute, through appropriate publications or mailings to all current students and employees and to any applicant for enrolment or employment upon request, an annual Fire Safety Report containing at least the following information with respect to their campus fire safety practices and standards:

- A. A detailed summary of all educational facilities including student housing facilities of the institution, if any, with a statement of whether or not the facilities

are equipped with a fire sprinkler system or any other fire safety system, or both.

- B. If available, statistics concerning the occurrence on campus during the two (2) preceding calendar year of fires and false alarms in the subject facilities.
- C. For each such occurrence, a statement of the human injuries or deaths, and the structural damage caused by the occurrence.
- D. Information regarding fire alarms, smoke alarms, the presence of adequate fire escape planning or protocols, rules on portable electrical appliances, smoking and open flames (such as candles), regular mandatory supervised fire drills, and planned and future improvement in fire safety.
- E. Preventive steps and/or programs and other fire safety undertaken by the educational institution concerned to curb and mitigate fire hazards.

SECTION 4. *Autonomy of Educations/Institutions.* – Nothing in the previous section shall be construed to authorize the Secretary of the Department of Education and/or the Chairman, when applicable, to require particular policies, procedures, or practices by educational institutions with respect to fire safety.

SECTION 5. *Periodic Reports.* – Each institution covered by this Act shall make periodic reports to the campus community on fires and false alarms which are reported to local fire departments in a manner that will aid the prevention of similar occurrences.

SECTION 6. *Reports to the Secretary of Education and/or Chairman.* – On an annual basis, each institution covered by this Act shall submit to the Secretary of Education or any of his duly authorized representative, in the cases of primary and secondary educational institutions and the Chairman or any of his duly authorized representative, in the cases of tertiary educational institutions, a copy of the information required to be disclosed under Section 3 hereof. Thereafter, the Secretary of Education and the Chairman, in proper cases, shall:

- A. Review such statistics;
- B. Make copies of statistics available to the public; and
- C. In coordination with representatives of the institutions concerned, identify exemplary fire and safety policies, procedures, and practices and disseminate information concerning those policies, procedures and practices that have been proven effective in the reduction of campus fires.

SECTION 7. *Report to Congress by the Secretary of Education and/or Chairman of CHED.* – Within one (1) year after the effectivity of this Act, the Secretary of Education and/or Chairman of the CHED, in proper cases, shall prepare and submit to the Congress a report containing the following:

- A. An analysis of the current status of the fire safety systems in all educational facilities covered by this Act;
- B. An analysis of the appropriate fire safety standards to apply to these facilities, which the Secretary of Education and/or the Chairman, in proper cases, shall prepare after consultation with such fire safety experts, representative of educational institutions, and other government agencies as the Secretary of Education and/or Chairman, considers appropriate;
- C. An estimate of the cost of bringing all nonconforming dormitories and other campus buildings up to current building codes; and
- D. Recommendations concerning the best means of meeting fire safety standards in all facilities, including recommendations for methods to fund such cost.

SECTION 8. *Lead Agency.* – The Department of Education shall be the lead government agency tasked to implement this Act.

SECTION 9. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – The Department of Education shall issue the necessary implementing rules and regulations to enforce the provisions of this Act within one hundred twenty (120) days from the enactment of this law.

SECTION 10. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remainder of the Act or the provision not otherwise affected shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SECTION 11. *Repealing Clause.* – Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order, letter of instruction, administrative rule or regulation contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act is hereby repealed, modified or amended accordingly.

SECTION 12. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,