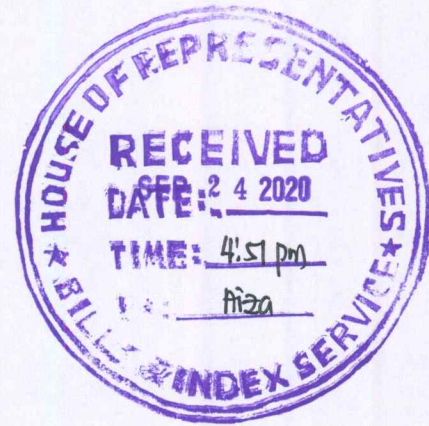


Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

Second Regular Session

House Bill No. 7752



**INTRODUCED BY
REP. ALFRED VARGAS**

**AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A FILIPINO SIGN LANGUAGE STUDIES PROGRAM**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Education and sign language are important elements in eliminating barriers to inclusivity and setting the foundations for the integration of persons who are deaf into mainstream society.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognizes and promotes the use of sign languages, and its equal status to spoken languages. It obligates Member States, including the Philippines, to facilitate the learning of sign language and promote the linguistic identity of the deaf community. It also acknowledges that access and services to sign language, including quality education in sign language, is vital to the growth and development of the deaf individual and critical to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals.

Countries all around the world have begun introducing Sign Language Education in their education system: the Chinese University of Hong Kong has the leading programs in Hong Kong Sign Language Linguistics in their Centre for Sign Linguistics and Deaf Studies; and the Ratchasuda College, Mahidol University of Thailand has Bachelor of Arts Programme in Deaf Studies for their very own Thai Sign Language.

In line with our commitment to creating an enabling environment for persons with disability, on October 30, 2018, the Republic Act No. 11106 or The Filipino Sign Language Act was signed into law by President Rodrigo Duterte declaring the Filipino Sign Language as the national sign language of

the Filipino Deaf community. Another relevant development is the recent approval of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) on a one-year project entitled "Program and Materials Development for Teaching Filipino Sign Language for MTB-MLE in HEIs" that pioneers training of Deaf FSL Specialists nationwide. However, more steps are to be taken in order to fully realize the promises of social, cultural, and economic integration for the PWD community, especially for Filipinos who are Deaf.

A logical step forward would be to create a Filipino Sign Language Studies Program, an academic program to institutionalize the curricula, outputs, and pedagogy to be gained from the one-year project of CHED, and the framework established by the Filipino Sign Language Law.

Thus, this bill seeks to establish a Filipino Sign Language Studies Program both in the undergraduate and post-graduate level in hopes of promoting quality and accessible education for all Filipinos anchored on social justice.

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



ALFRED VARGAS

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

SECTION 1. Short Title. – This Act shall be known as the "Filipino Sign Language Studies Program Act".

SECTION 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 and are included in civic participation. Accordingly, the State recognizes and promotes the use of sign languages embodying the specific cultural and linguistic identity of the Filipino deaf.

The State likewise recognizes the importance of both education and sign language, particularly Filipino Sign Language (FSL), to eliminate barriers to inclusivity and to lay the foundations for the integration of Filipinos who are Deaf to mainstream society.

SECTION 3. FSL Studies Program – All state universities and colleges in the

country are mandated to offer college and post-graduate studies relating to the field of Filipino Sign Language studies and its cultural society, and to offer incentives to students who are enrolling in such studies.

SECTION 4. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – The Commission on Higher Education, in collaboration with the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino (KWF), the National Council on Disability Affairs, and concerned higher education institutions, is mandated to formulate the rules and regulations necessary to effectively implement the provisions of this Act.

SECTION 5. *Separability Clause.* – If any portion or provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the remainder of this Act or any provisions not affected thereby shall remain in force and effect.

SECTION 6. *Non-Impairment Clause.* – Nothing in this Act shall be construed as to diminish, impair, or repeal rights recognized, granted, or made available to disadvantaged, marginalized, or specific sectors under existing laws.

SECTION 7. *Repealing Clause.* – Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order, letter of instruction, rule or regulation inconsistent with the provisions of this Act is hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 8. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following its complete publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,