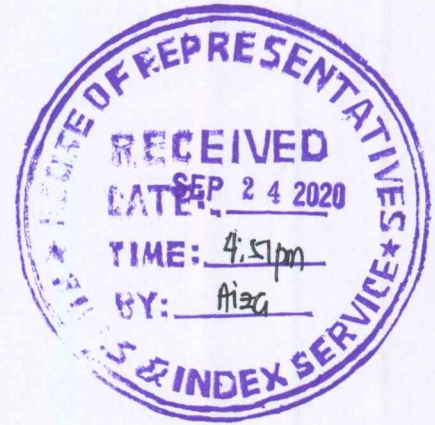


Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session
House Bill No. **7753**



INTRODUCED BY
REP. ALFRED VARGAS

AN ACT
DECLARING THE LAST FULL WEEK OF SEPTEMBER OF EVERY YEAR
AS THE "NATIONAL WEEK OF THE DEAF" AND SEPTEMBER 23
AS THE "FILIPINO SIGN LANGUAGE DAY"

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Our country's commitment to inclusivity is embedded on how our laws would vow to uphold and protect the rights and welfare of Filipinos who are marginalized. Persons with disability (PWDs) are among the most vulnerable to discrimination and exclusion because of the many barriers that prohibit them from accessing basic social services.

In 1992, the Republic Act No. 7277 or The Magna Carta for Disabled Persons brought light to the many challenges that the country faces together with its PWD citizens. The law provides for integration of persons with disability (PWD) into the mainstream of society by exerting all efforts to remove all social, cultural, economic, environmental, and attitudinal barriers to persons with disability.

In 2013, Republic Act No. 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act and Republic Act No. 10410 or the Early Years Act recognized the Filipino Sign Language (FSL) as the mother tongue and the visual language of the Filipino Deaf community, respectively. These two landmark laws are the first to give legal recognition to FSL leading to the Filipino Sign Language Act.

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.

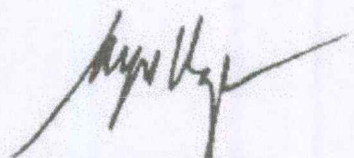
However, the State must continue to proactively forward cultural innovations to combat stigma and discrimination to members of the PWD community in order for the nation to reap the fruits of these progressive laws.

In line with the International Week of the Deaf, a worldwide initiative since 1958 celebrated annually by the global Deaf Community on the last week of September to commemorate the same month the first World Congress of the World Federation of the Deaf was held, the country must exert its efforts and use this opportunity to promote awareness for the plight of people who are deaf.

Consequently, the United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed September 23 since 2017 as the International Day of Sign Languages in order to raise awareness of the importance of sign language in the full realization of the human rights of people who are deaf.

This bill seeks to declare the last full week of September of every year as the "National Week of the Deaf" for the purposes of instilling public awareness of the human rights situation of the Filipino Deaf, in line with the International Week of the Deaf. Likewise, September twenty-three of every year shall be declared the Filipino Sign Language Day for the purposes of promoting recognition and acceptance of the Filipino Sign Language as a symbol of the need of the deaf for inclusion and as a reminder of the individual's and the State's duty to accord due respect to people who are deaf and their linguistic and cultural identity, in line with the International Day of Sign Languages.

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



ALFRED VARGAS

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AN ACT
DECLARING THE LAST FULL WEEK OF SEPTEMBER OF EVERY YEAR
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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 "National Week of the Deaf 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. 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 promoting awareness of human rights and sign language to eliminate barriers to inclusivity and to lay the foundations for the integration of Filipinos who are deaf to mainstream society.

SECTION 3. National Week of the Deaf. – Every last full week of September of each year is hereby declared as the National Week of the Deaf for the purposes of instilling public awareness of the plight of the deaf.

SECTION 4. Filipino Sign Language Day. – September Twenty-Three of each year is hereby declared as the Filipino Sign Language Day for the purposes of promoting recognition and acceptance of the Filipino Sign Language as a symbol of the need of the deaf for inclusion and as a reminder of the individual's and the State's duty to accord due respect to people who are deaf.

SECTION 5. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – The Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino shall, in coordination with the Council for the Welfare of Children, the Philippine Commission on Women, the Commission on Human Rights, all education agencies and its attached agencies, the Department of Health, the Department of Social Welfare and Development, the National Council on Disability Affairs, and the Presidential Communications Operations Office issue rules and regulations to effectively implement the provisions of this Act.

SECTION 6. 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 7. 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 8. 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 9. 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,