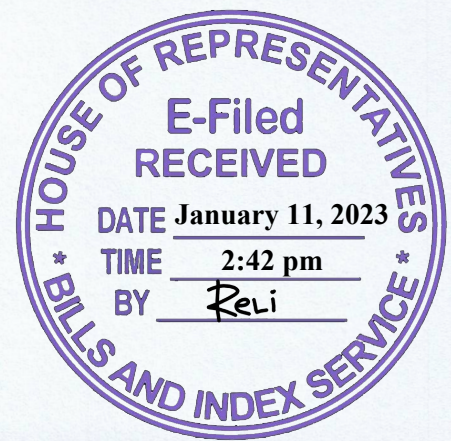


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 6749



Introduced by Representative Rex Gatchalian

AN ACT
INSTITUTIONALIZING A NATIONAL READING MONTH IN NOVEMBER OF
EVERY YEAR, PROVIDING FOR MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION IN
THE INCULCATION OF A CULTURE OF READING IN BASIC EDUCATION,
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR,
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Reading is a foundational skill that enables the building of context and acquisition of knowledge. It allows children to develop perspectives and empathy for characters in a story.¹

Our economy is enhanced when learners have higher literacy levels. Effective literacy skills open the doors to more educational and employment opportunities so that people are able to pull themselves out of poverty and chronic underemployment.² In our increasingly complex and rapidly changing technological world, it is essential that individuals continuously expand their knowledge and learn new skills in order to keep up with the pace of change.³

Unfortunately, learning poverty in the Philippines is at 90.9 percent as of June 2022.⁴ Learning poverty is defined as the percentage of children aged 10 who cannot read or understand a simple story.⁵ It means that 9 out of 10 children in the Philippines at late primary age are not proficient in reading.⁶

¹ Adres Horvai Kommersant, Reading Performance as a Basis for Economic Growth. See <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/opinion/2018/02/05/reading-performance-as-a-basis-for-economic-growth#:~:text=The%20answer%20is%20fairly%20straightforward,for%20characters%20in%20a%20story>. Last accessed on 11 January 2023.

² Project Literacy, The Importance of Literacy. See <https://projectliteracy.ca/about/the-importance-of-literacy/#:~:text=The%20Importance%20of%20Literacy%20to,of%20poverty%20and%20chronic%20underempl> oyment. Last accessed on 11 January 2023.

³ *Id.*

⁴ Philippine News Agency, Nat'l program needed to avert learning poverty: solon. See <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1183313>. Last accessed on 11 January 2023.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Daphne Oseña-Paez, Why 9 out of 10 Filipino children can't read. See <https://www.manilatimes.net/2022/08/10/opinion/columns/why-9-out-of-10-filipino-children-cant-read/1854046>. Last accessed on January 11, 2023.

This bill aims to develop the habit and inculcate a culture of reading in our basic education learners and their communities through the following policy innovations:

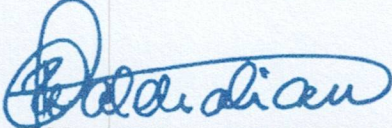
First, the month of November of every year will be declared as the “National Reading Month”, during which the DepEd shall formulate strategies and conduct reading activities and endeavors;

Second, purchases of any reading materials during the said month shall be discounted at a rate of not lower than 20%;

Third, Public Telecommunications Entities shall provide free access to DepEd’s online educational platforms, digital libraries, and other online knowledge hubs and sites; and

Lastly, any donation, contribution, or grant in support of DepEd’s reading initiatives, programs and activities shall be exempt from donor’s tax and the cost of which shall be considered as an allowable deduction from the gross income of the donor.

In view of the foregoing considerations, approval of this bill is earnestly sought.


HON. REX GATCHALIAN
Representative
1st District, Valenzuela City

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

1 **SECTION 1. Short Title.** – This Act shall be known as “*The National Reading*
2 *Month Act*”.

3
4 **SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy.** – It is the declared policy of the State to
5 promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, take appropriate
6 steps to make such education accessible to all, and assign the highest budgetary
7 priority to education. Under Article II, Section 17 of the 1987 Constitution, the State
8 shall give priority to education to foster patriotism and nationalism, accelerate social
9 progress, and promote total human liberation and development. Further, Article
10 XIV, Section 2(4) thereof mandates the State to encourage non-formal, informal, and
11 indigenous learning systems, as well as self-learning, independent, and out-of-
12 school study programs particularly those that respond to community needs.

13
14 **SEC. 3. Objectives.** – This Act aims to declare the month of November of every
15 year as the “National Reading Month” in order to develop the habit and inculcate a
16 culture of reading in our basic education learners and their communities. Towards
17 this end, the Department of Education (DepEd) shall adopt policies and formulate
18 strategic initiatives that foster reading not only for information and entertainment,
19 but for the purpose of equipping learners with knowledge, skills and character that
20 will prepare them for policy-making, nation-building, and other means of
21 contributing to economic, social and cultural development.

22
23 **SEC. 4. November as National Reading Month; DepEd as Implementing**
24 **Agency.** – The entire month of November of every year is hereby declared as
25 “National Reading Month” which shall be celebrated through the conduct of
26 nationwide reading programs and activities to further the objectives of this Act. For
27 this purpose, the DepEd shall:

- a) act as the lead coordinating body in the formulation of strategies and conduct of reading activities and endeavors during the National Reading Month;
- b) seek the cooperation, assistance and support of relevant government agencies, local government units (LGUs), and private individuals and organizations involved in reading or literacy advocacies; and
- c) maximize public participation to organize and strengthen both formal and informal support structures at the regional, provincial, city, municipal and barangay levels, such as the engagement of the expertise, services, and resources of the media, book publishers, private libraries, and other stakeholders, as well as the involvement of the learners' parents and families.

SEC. 5. Public Libraries and Barangay Reading Centers. – The National Library and all congressional, city and municipal libraries and barangay reading centers throughout the Philippines established pursuant to Republic Act (RA) No. 7743 shall actively participate in the celebration of the National Reading Month. In collaboration with the DepEd, they shall provide the necessary services, assistance, and intervention in accordance with their respective mandates and functions under RA No. 7743.

SEC. 6. National Reading Month Discount; November Book Fair. – All purchases of any reading material, whether in traditional, digital or audio format, made in the month of November shall be discounted at a rate not lower than twenty percent (20%) of the regular price.

Further, the DepEd, in coordination with the National Book Development Board, shall host a book fair during the National Reading Month as a means to encourage reading, promote reading habits, and further the objectives of this Act.

SEC. 7. Free Public Access to DepEd's Online Platforms. – To contribute in making reading inclusive and accessible, Public Telecommunications Entities (PTEs) shall provide free access to DepEd's online educational platforms, digital libraries, and other online knowledge hubs and sites without any additional financial burden on all subscribers. No data charges shall be incurred in the download of data from these sites and applications upon the effectivity of this Act.

PTEs refer to entities that are duly authorized to offer voice, short messaging system or text, mobile data, value added services, or any other mobile telecommunications services to the public for a fee.

SEC. 8. DepEd Portal for Reading Donations; Tax Incentives. – The DepEd shall maintain an online portal for donations in support of its reading initiatives, programs and activities. The portal shall contain the necessary information and procedures to make the donation process simple, efficient and responsive to the

1 reading needs of the learners.

2 Any donation, contribution, or grant, in cash or in kind, made by individuals
3 or organizations, public or private, local or foreign, shall be exempt from the donor's
4 tax and the cost of which shall be considered as an allowable deduction from the
5 gross income of the donor in accordance with the provisions of the National Internal
6 Revenue Code of 1997, as amended.

7
8 **SEC. 9. Mandatory Review and Impact Assessment.** – The DepEd shall
9 conduct a mandatory review of the implementation of this Act and submit an
10 assessment report to Congress on its impact and effectiveness, not later than three
11 (3) years from its effectivity and every three (3) years thereafter.

12
13 **SEC. 10. Appropriations.** – The amount necessary for the implementation of
14 this Act shall be charged against those authorized in the current appropriations of
15 the DepEd. Thereafter, the amount necessary for its continued implementation shall
16 be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

17
18 **SEC. 11. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** – Within ninety (90) days
19 from the effectivity of this Act, the DepEd shall issue the rules and regulations
20 implementing its provisions. The Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) issued
21 pursuant to this section shall take effect thirty (30) days after its publication in a
22 newspaper of general circulation.

23
24 **SEC. 12. Separability Clause.** – If any provision of this Act is held invalid or
25 unconstitutional, the other provisions not so declared shall remain in force and
26 effect.

27
28 **SEC. 13. Repealing Clause.** – All other laws, executive orders, presidential
29 decrees, administrative orders, rules and regulations, issuances, or parts thereof
30 contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or
31 amended accordingly.

32
33 **SEC. 14. Effectivity.** – Notwithstanding the non-issuance of the IRR, this Act
34 shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a
35 newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,