

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 472



Introduced by **Representative Jaime R. Fresnedi**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to regulate, rather than prohibit, the use of mobile devices and electronic gadgets in schools by promoting responsible screen time management. Research has consistently shown that while limited and controlled use of technology in education can be beneficial, excessive and unregulated screen time negatively affects students' academic performance, attention span, and overall well-being.

A 2024 study by the *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development* (OECD) found that students who use smartphones for more than one-hour daily experience diminishing academic benefits, with excessive screen time correlating with lower educational outcomes¹. Similarly, UNESCO has recommended that smartphones in schools should be used only when they clearly support learning, emphasizing the need for structured policies on technology use².

Another study published in the *American Family Physician* journal in 2017 underscores the negative health effects of excessive screen time, including disrupted sleep patterns, reduced physical activity, and increased anxiety³. Meanwhile, research conducted in the Philippines has highlighted the challenges of unregulated digital access among students. A 2024 paper published in the *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research* found that unmoderated screen time among Filipino students contributes to declining focus and academic performance⁴. Similarly, another study in the *International Journal of*

¹ OECD: Study imposes a one hour limit in students' smartphone use – Up to 60' is considered beneficial for them (<https://en.protothema.gr/2024/04/03/oecd-study-imposes-a-one-hour-limit-in-students-smartphone-use-up-to-60-minutes-is-considered-beneficial-for-them/>)

² To ban or not to ban? Monitoring countries' regulations on smartphone use in school (<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/smartphones-school-only-when-they-clearly-support-learning>)

³ Use of Media by School-Aged Children and Adolescents: A Policy Statement from the AAP (<https://www.aafp.org/pubs/afp/issues/2017/0701/p56.html>)

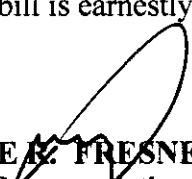
⁴ The Mobile Phone use of Senior High School Learners (<https://ejournals.ph/function/reader1/read2/web/reader.php?id=uploads%2Farchive%2FUMABER%2FVol.+5+No.+7+%282024%29%2FArticles%2FArticle34.pdf&di=24332>)

Learning, Teaching and Educational Research identified the need for digital literacy programs to equip students with self-regulation skills in using mobile devices effectively⁵.

Recognizing these concerns, the Department of Education (DepEd) has already taken steps through its Digital Rise Program, which aims to integrate technology while ensuring responsible usage in the learning environment⁶. This proposed measure complements and strengthens such initiatives by establishing clear guidelines on gadget use, ensuring age-appropriate regulations, and promoting digital literacy education.

By striking a balance between technological integration and student well-being, this proposed measure ensures that mobile devices in schools serve as tools for learning rather than distractions. It is imperative that policies adapt to the realities of digital education while safeguarding students from the adverse effects of excessive screen time. Through this measure, we aim to create an academic environment that fosters both technological competence and holistic student development.

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


JAIME E. FRESNEDI
Representative
Lone District, Muntinlupa City

⁵ Potential Use of Mobile Devices in Selected Public Senior High Schools in the City of Manila Philippines
(<https://www.ijlter.org/index.php/ijlter/article/view/1144>)

⁶ DepEd highlights Digital Rise Program as key player in addressing challenges in education equality
(<https://www.deped.gov.ph/2022/05/10/deped-highlights-digital-rise-program-as-key-player-in-addressing-challenges-in-education-quality>)

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 472

Introduced by **Representative Jaime R. Fresnedi**

AN ACT
PROMOTING RESPONSIBLE USE OF MOBILE DEVICES AND OTHER
ELECTRONIC GADGETS IN ALL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE BASIC EDUCATION
INSTITUTIONS

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 “*Screen Time Management in Schools Act.*”

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to promote and protect the physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual, and social well-being of our youth and learners. Towards this end, policies must be crafted to safeguard their well-being and enhance their potentials and skills through responsible use of mobile devices and other electronic gadgets, integrating digital well-being education, and creating controlled environments for technology use.

SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.* – For purposes of this Act, the following terms shall mean:

a) Mobile Device refers to any form of portable electronic devices such as but not limited to smartphones, cellular phones, tablet computers, pocket personal computer (PC), palmtops, smartwatches, virtual reality (VR) headsets, smart glasses, wearable cameras, and other similar devices which can store, send, receive, and move data through the internet or wireless connection.

b) Electronic Gadget refers to any portable electronic device that can enable its user to make calls, capture photos, stream video, and play games such as but not limited to laptops, video games consoles, virtual reality headsets, smart glasses, wearable cameras and other similar contraptions.

c) Digital Well-being Programs refers to any educational initiatives aimed at teaching learners the responsible use of technology, self-regulation, and understanding the impact of digital device use on health and learning outcomes.

d) Designated Technology Zones refers to specific areas within the school premises where students can use mobile devices and electronic gadgets responsibly under teacher supervision for educational purposes.

SEC. 4. *Coverage.* – This Act shall apply to all public and private basic education institutions offering any level of the basic education curriculum.

SEC. 5. *Promotion of Responsible Use of Mobile Devices and Electronic Gadgets by Learners.* – The Department of Education (DepEd) shall promulgate guidelines on the regulation of the use of mobile devices and electronic gadgets by learners from Kindergarten to Senior High School within the school premises during class hours. In formulating the guidelines, the DepEd shall, at all times, bear in mind the rights and best interests of the child. Said guidelines shall include the following:

a) Implement digital well-being and media literacy programs to educate learners from Kindergarten to Senior High School on responsible gadget use, self-regulation, and the potential effects of excessive device use on health and learning outcomes;

b) Establish designated technology zones within school premises where learners can use mobile devices and electronic gadgets responsibly under teacher supervision for educational purposes; and

c) Ensure that private educational institutions formulate guidelines in accordance with this Act and include the same in their respective handbooks and school policies.

SEC. 6. *Mobile Devices and Electronic Gadgets Guidelines for Teachers and Faculty Members.* – Teachers and faculty shall:

a) Integrate digital well-being and media literacy into their teaching practices to promote responsible gadget use among learners;

b) Utilize designated technology zones for instructional activities that require the use of mobile devices and electronic gadgets; and

c) Participate in professional development programs focused on managing technology use in classrooms and promoting digital well-being.

SEC. 7. *Age-Appropriate Regulations.* – DepEd shall develop age-appropriate guidelines for the use of mobile devices and electronic gadgets in schools, applying the following restrictions:

a) Kindergarten to Grade 3 (Ages 3-9):

i. Mobile devices and electronic gadgets shall be prohibited during class hours except for emergencies or specific learning accommodations.

ii. Schools shall promote non-digital learning materials such as books, physical activities, and interactive classroom engagement.

b) Grades 4 to 6 (Ages 9-12):

i. Mobile devices shall be stored in designated areas (e.g., lockers or teacher-supervised stations) and may only be used during designated times, such as recess or lunch breaks.

ii. Controlled use of educational technology may be permitted for supervised classroom activities.

c) Junior High School (Grades 7-10, Ages 13-16):

i. Students may use mobile devices for educational purposes under teacher supervision.

ii. Non-educational use shall be restricted to break times and prohibited inside classrooms unless in emergency situations.

d) Senior High School (Grades 11-12, Ages 17-18):

i. Students may be allowed to use personal devices for research, note-taking, and educational activities during class hours, subject to teacher approval.

ii. Responsible digital behavior shall be integrated into the curriculum, promoting self-regulation in technology use.

SEC. 8. *Establishment of an Emergency Hotline Number.* – To ensure immediate contact between parents and students in case of emergencies, all basic educational institutions shall:

a) Allow students to access their mobile devices for emergency purposes;

b) Designate an emergency hotline number within the school premises, accessible to both students and parents, including both cellular and landline options;

c) Develop clear protocols for school administrators and teachers to facilitate emergency communication, including proper handling of urgent calls from parents; and

d) Ensure coordination with local emergency response units to establish direct communication channels, including both cellular and landline options, for faster response during emergencies.

SEC. 9. *Alternative Sanctions for Non-compliance.* – Educational institutions shall adopt restorative approaches for violations of said policies, such as:

a) Participation in Digital Detox Programs where students may be required to attend workshops or activities promoting healthy screen time habits, including outdoor learning sessions, sports, and arts-based engagements.

b) Engagement in Community Service

c) Parental Involvement and Agreements – For repeated violations, parents may be required to attend digital parenting workshops or sign agreements reinforcing responsible gadget use at home.

SEC. 10. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – The DepEd, in consultation with the Department of Health (DOH), representatives from the Parent-Teacher Associations, relevant government agencies, and other private stakeholders shall promulgate the rules and regulations within ninety (90) days after the effectivity of this Act.

SEC. 11. *Separability Clause.* – If any portion or provision of this Act is subsequently declared invalid or unconstitutional, other provisions hereof which are not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 12. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, ordinances, administrative order, rules and regulations, or any part thereof, which are inconsistent with this Act are repealed or amended accordingly.

SEC. 13. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette and at least two (2) newspapers of national circulation.

Approved,