

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 475



Introduced by **Representative Jaime R. Fresnedi**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to increase the safety of children in schools by mandating the formulation and implementation of response protocols for various emergencies.

The act of sending a child to school is an act of trust on the part of the parent. The parent trusts that schools are able to protect their children on top of the education that they are supposed to impart. However, there is no clear-cut standard on what the protocols for emergencies should be, with the exception of procedures for earthquakes and natural calamities which are developed in an *ad hoc* manner.

This bill seeks to mandate policies and protocols for all emergencies in schools, even before they happen. This measure compels schools to cooperate with local government units and public safety agencies to protect our schoolchildren. The bill also has a provision for timely and secure communication with parents in case their children are involved in an emergency, preserving the covenant of trust between the school and the parent.

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


JAIME R. FRESNEDI
Representative
Lone District, Muntinlupa City

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AN ACT
ENHANCING THE SAFETY OF SCHOOLS BY REQUIRING EMERGENCY
RESPONSE AND PARENTAL NOTIFICATION PROTOCOLS, ENSURING THE
SAFETY OF THE SCHOOL PREMISES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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 referred to as the "*Safer Schools Act*".

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to ensure a safe learning environment for students through the implementation of physical safeguards and response protocols that can respond to natural and man-made emergencies. To this end, the State shall implement a uniform set of emergency response procedures that will be followed by all basic education schools.

SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.* – For purposes of this Act, the following terms shall be defined as follows:

- (a) *Emergency* is defined as a serious, unexpected, and often dangerous situation requiring immediate action which covers both natural and man-made situations, such as but not limited to earthquakes, fire, medical situations, crimes committed by outsiders, students, teachers or school personnel, and the like; and
- (b) *Hotline* is defined as a method of communication that is resilient and resistant to power outages and other interruptions that is to be exclusively used for emergencies.

SEC. 4. *Coverage.* – This Act shall apply to all basic education institutions teaching Kinder to Grade 12 students.

SEC. 5. *Emergency Response Infrastructure.* – All schools shall have a hotline with the nearest police station, fire station, hospital, and other emergency response units. The hotline

shall be for the exclusive use of schools within the area of jurisdiction of the emergency response unit. The schools may only use this hotline for emergencies.

SEC. 6. *Notification of Parents and Legal Guardians.* – All schools shall have a method to immediately communicate with all or some of the parents or legal guardians, as the case may be, for emergencies involving students. The method of communication must be able to disseminate messages to a large number of people all at once and be readily identified as coming from the school, with protocols for authenticating their messages.

SEC. 7. *Safety Equipment.* – All schools shall have the necessary equipment for emergency use, including but not limited to emergency lights, fire extinguishers, first-aid kits, protective equipment, among others, that are sufficient for use of the students.

SEC. 8. *Safety Infrastructure.* – In addition to the requirements of relevant laws on the resiliency of buildings to natural calamities, schools shall protect their students from man-made threats. To this end, all schools shall be required to have:

- (a) Gates and walls that can keep groups and individuals outside the school and to protect students until the arrival of law enforcement; and
- (b) Closed-circuit television systems (CCTVs) to monitor all entrances, exits, and public areas of schools.

SEC. 9. *Staff Training.* All school staff shall be required to be trained in identifying individuals or groups who may pose a threat to students. This shall include identifying possible cases of kidnapping and other crimes, as well threats of students to other students in the case of bullying or other similar activities. All schools shall have protocols for the identification and reporting of all manner of possible threats to the relevant authorities.

SEC. 10. *Student Training.* – All schools shall ensure that all their students have the appropriate training to deal with various emergencies, which shall be conducted regularly.

SEC. 11. *School Safety Council.* – All cities and municipalities shall have a School Safety Council, hereafter referred to as the Council, consisting of the following:

- (a) The Mayor as Chair;
- (b) The Schools Division Superintendent as Vice-Chair;
- (c) The Chief of Police;
- (d) The City Fire Director or Municipal Fire Marshal; and
- (e) Principals of all public and private basic education institutions.

Heads of departments in the local government unit may also be included as members by the Mayor.

SEC. 12. *Duties and Responsibilities of the Council.* – The Council shall have the following duties and responsibilities:

- (a) Formulate and implement all policies and protocols necessary for the proper implementation of this Act in their city or municipality;
- (b) Monitor compliance of all schools with the policies and protocols provided;
- (c) Identify failures of compliance and recommend corrective actions; and
- (d) Recommend disciplinary action to the relevant regional office of the Department of Education.

SEC. 13. *Penalties.* – Failure to comply with this Act shall be penalized by:

(a) For privately-owned schools:

- 1. A fine not exceeding one hundred thousand pesos (₱100,000) for the first offense;
- 2. A fine not exceeding one hundred fifty thousand pesos (₱150,000) for the second offense;
- 3. A fine not exceeding two hundred thousand pesos (₱200,000) for the second offense; and
- 4. Revocation of all permits allowing them to operate for succeeding violations.

(b) For public schools: The filing of administrative charges under relevant laws for responsible school officials.

SEC. 14. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – The Department of Education shall promulgate the rules and regulations for the proper implementation of this Act within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act.

SEC. 15. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriations of the departments, agencies, and local government units concerned. Thereafter, such amount shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act and the local appropriations ordinance of local government units.

SEC. 16. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act shall be deemed unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not affected there shall remain in force and effect.

SEC. 17. *Repealing Clause.* – All Acts, Presidential Decrees, Executive Orders and Administrative Orders, Rules and Regulations and other such issuances or parts thereof which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 18. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,