

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. **1169**



Introduced by Representative Arturo B. Robes

AN ACT
BANNING THE USE OF MOBILE PHONES AND OTHER ELECTRONIC
GADGETS BY CHILDREN LESS THAN SIXTEEN YEARS OF AGE IN ALL
PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article II, Section 13 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution provides, "The State recognizes the vital role of the youth in nation-building and shall promote and protect their physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual, and social well-being....."

The dawn of computer, smartphones and electronic gadgets, has brought a myriad of benefits to all people from all walks of life. It improved communication, made information more accessible and has provided various tools. In advanced and emerging economies alike, majority of young people own a smartphone and are more connected online than older generations. In the Philippines, more than 70% of those who own a smartphone are young people who spend at least five hours a day on the internet.

During the pandemic, electronic gadgets were deemed a necessity for distance learning. However, with this dramatic increase in usage came a plethora of health hazards adversely affecting the youth. Evidence showed that unabated use of smartphone in young people may cause thumb arthritis, nerve and back pain, sleep deprivation, anxiety, and depression.

In May 2015, the London School of Economics and Political Science published a study which showed that test scores improved significantly at schools that banned mobile phone use. Similarly, in September 2018, France adopted a nationwide smartphone ban in all primary and middle schools in order to promote pupil achievement and healthy social development. Medical experts have called on parents to push back the age at which children get their first smartphones to 16 years, considering the possible maturity for a supervised cellular phone use.

This bill seeks to ban mobile phone use in elementary and middle school for school-aged children fifteen years old and below. As a nation and responsible parents, we owe it to our future generation to shield them from unnecessary dangers and factors that hinder their full growth.

In view of the foregoing, the passage of this measure is urged.

ARTURO B. ROBES

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 1169

Introduced by Representative Arturo B. Robes

AN ACT
BANNING THE USE OF MOBILE PHONES AND OTHER ELECTRONIC
GADGETS BY CHILDREN LESS THAN SIXTEEN YEARS OF AGE IN ALL
PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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 "Electronic Gadget-Free 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. A national policy must be established to eliminate academic distractions, protecting the youth towards the unwarranted effects of gadget use in the academic setting.

SEC. 3. *Definitions.* - As used in this Act, the following terms are defined as follows:

- a. Electronic Gadgets - any portable electronic device that can enable its user to make calls, stream video, and/or play virtual games, send, receive and move data or electronic messaging, through the internet or wireless connection, such as but not limited to: smartphones, cellular phones, tablet computers, pocket personal computer (PC), palmtops, smartwatches, laptops, video game consoles, virtual reality headsets, smart glasses, wearable cameras and other similar devices.
- b. School premises - Any part of the school premises including playground, emergency exits, assembly area, and other such areas over which the school has control and supervision.

SEC. 4. *Coverage.* - This Act shall cover all public and private pre-primary, primary and secondary educational institutions.

SEC. 5. *Exceptions.* - The use of electronic gadgets inside school premises may be allowed :

- a. In cases of emergency, or natural disasters, or in response to a perceived threat or danger;
- b. When necessary for educational instruction and/or in a particular lesson, subject to limitations and adult supervision; and
- c. When the possession of any electronic gadget is necessary for the health monitoring of a student, as certified by a licensed physician;

SEC. 6. *Enforcement.* – All educational institutions shall form a governing body to implement the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 7. *Liabilities.* – Any educational institution and/or private individual in violation of this Act shall be held administratively liable.

SEC. 9. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days after the effectivity of this Act, the Department of Education, in coordination with the Department of Health and representatives from the Parent-Teacher association of the educational institution, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the implementation of this Act.

SEC. 10. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act shall be held unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not otherwise affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 11. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, executive orders, proclamations, rules and regulations, and other issuances, or parts thereof which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 12. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved.