

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

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. **2264**



INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVE PM VARGAS

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING DIGITAL PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND READING CENTERS,
AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7743, OTHERWISE
KNOWN AS “AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF
CONGRESSIONAL, CITY, AND MUNICIPAL LIBRARIES AND BARANGAY
READING CENTERS THROUGHOUT THE PHILIPPINES”, AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article XIV, Section 1 of the 1987 Constitution mandates that:

“The State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take the appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all”.

However, the Philippines is currently grappling with a literacy and learning crisis, as evidenced by national and international studies. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), the country’s functional literacy rate declined from 91.6% in 2019 to 90.1% in 2020, with significant gaps in reading comprehension and application, especially in less urbanized regions.

The 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) places the Philippines at the lowest rank in reading among 79 countries, more than 80% of Filipino 15-year-old students unable to reach minimum proficiency in reading. Likewise, the 2022 Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) showed that only 10% of Grade 5 students in the country met reading standards appropriate for their level.

These findings were reinforced by EDCOM II (Second Congressional Commission on Education), which identified “crisis-level” performance in

foundation skills, such as reading, math and critical thinking. Is its 2024 Baseline Report, EDCOM II reported that 90% of Filipino learners cannot read at their level, citing systemic underinvestment in learning spaces, teacher development, and access to educational materials—especially in remote and underserved areas.

One of the urgent recommendations of EDCOM II is the strengthening of community-based support systems for literacy such as libraries and reading centers, particularly those that utilize modern tools and digital technology to close access gaps and support both in-school and lifelong learning.

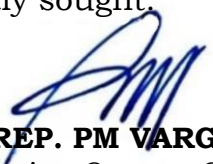
Republic Act No. 7743 (1994) paved the way for establishing public libraries and barangay reading centers. However, it is now outdated in addressing the scale and complexity of today's digital learning environment. There is a critical need to modernize this law and integrate it with current realities, particularly digital and internet-based education delivery.

This proposed bill, "Digital Public Libraries and Reading Centers Act", seeks to amend RA 7743 to establish digitally equipped public libraries and barangay reading centers nationwide. These centers shall include e-books, and online research tools to create inclusive spaces for learning, literacy development, and access to quality information.

The bill mandates support and coordination from the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) to ensure that all public schools are equipped with computers, digitized copies, and have internet connectivity.

By institutionalizing digitally equipped libraries and reading centers, this bill responds directly to the nation's learning crisis and affirms the State's duty to make education accessible, equitable, and relevant in the digital age.

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


REP. PM VARGAS
Fifth District, Quezon City

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS

First Regular Session

House Bill No. **2264**

INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVE PM VARGAS

**AN ACT
ESTABLISHING DIGITAL PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND READING CENTERS,
AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7743, OTHERWISE
KNOWN AS “AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF
CONGRESSIONAL, CITY, AND MUNICIPAL LIBRARIES AND BARANGAY
READING CENTERS THROUGHOUT THE PHILIPPINES”, 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 “*Digital Public Libraries and Reading Centers Act*”.

SECTION 2. *Section 2 of RA 7743 is hereby amended to read as follows:*

SECTION 2. Establishment of Public Libraries and Reading Center. The National Library in coordination with the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) shall undertake the establishment of additional public libraries to serve all congressional districts, cities and municipalities in the Philippines and reading centers in every barangay except in cities or municipalities, where there are existing public libraries or in barangays where there are existing reading centers: Provided, That the ~~establishment of such libraries and reading centers shall be based on the development programs of the National Library~~ **ESTABLISHMENT OF SUCH PROGRAM FOR THE NATIONAL LIBRARY SHALL BE BASED ON THE LATEST COMPUTER AND ELECTRONIC LIBRARY TECHNOLOGY**, in coordination with the development council of each city or municipality and in the case of the barangay reading centers, in coordination with the respective barangay councils: Provided, further, That were these public

libraries and reading centers exist, the National Library shall continue to upgrade the facilities thereof **[.] WITH COMPLETE STANDARD SETS OF BOOKS, E-BOOKS, ONLINE RESEARCH RESOURCES AND OTHER MATERIALS AS PROVIDED UNDER SEC. 3 OF THIS ACT AS WELL AS THE LATEST ELECTRONIC LIBRARY SYSTEM USING COMPUTERS FOR STORING, CATALOGING, AND FILING OF DATA AND MATERIALS: PROVIDED, FINALLY THAT AFTER THREE (3) YEARS, ALL THE CITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES OF THE PHILIPPINES WILL BE PROVIDED WITH ELECTRONICALLY-OPERATED LIBRARY SYSTEM”.**

SECTION 3. *Section 7 of RA 7743 is hereby amended to read as follows:*

“Section 7. Appropriation. The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act shall be included in the General Appropriations Act of the year following the enactment into law ~~{and for the next five (5) years: thereafter the local government units shall undertake the maintenance of public libraries and reading centers while the National Library shall continue to provide reading materials and supplies to the said libraries and reading centers}~~. **IN ORDER TO PROVIDE FUNDS NECESSARY FOR THE ELECTRONIC LIBRARY SYSTEM TO BE IMPLEMENTED, THE BUDGET OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY SHALL BE INCREASED IN THE AMOUNT OF FIVE HUNDRED MILLION PESOS (P 500, 000.00) PER YEAR UNTIL ALL CITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES IN THE PHILIPPINES ARE PROVIDED AND HAVE ACCESS TO FULL ELECTRONIC LIBRARY FACILITIES.**

SECTION 4. Provision for Access to the Digitized Copies of Textbooks. - The DepEd shall ensure access to the digitized copies of textbooks by providing computers, laptops, or appropriate wherewithal to all primary and secondary public schools nationwide. Similarly, in order to ensure access to digitized copies of textbooks, the DICT shall provide fast and reliable internet access to each primary and secondary public school.

SECTION 5. Role of the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) . – The Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) shall assist in the provision of cutting-edge computer and electronic library technology, as well as fast and reliable internet connection, through the Department’s flagship program, the Technology for Education, Employment, Entrepreneurs, and Economic Development (Tech4ED) Project.

SECTION 6. Repealing Clause. - All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations, and parts thereof which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 7. Effectivity. - This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following the completion of its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,