

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 3725



Introduced by: **REP. RACHEL MARGUERITE "CUTIE" DEL MAR**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

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

The proliferation of computers, smartphones, and electronic gadgets has yielded significant benefits across all sectors of society. These technologies have transformed communication, enhanced access to information, and provided indispensable tools for education and productivity. Across both developed and developing countries, the majority of young people own smartphones and are more digitally connected than previous generations. In the Philippines, over 70% of smartphone users are young individuals, many of whom spend a minimum of five hours online daily.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the indispensable role of digital technology, particularly in enabling remote learning. Nevertheless, the substantial increase in screen time has also triggered serious health concerns among the youth. Empirical studies have linked excessive smartphone use to ailments such as thumb arthritis, nerve and back pain, sleep disturbances, anxiety, and depression.

A 2015 study by the London School of Economics and Political Science found that schools banning mobile phone use experienced significant improvements in student test scores. Likewise, in 2018, France enacted a nationwide ban on smartphone use in primary and middle schools to foster academic excellence and healthy social interaction. Medical professionals similarly advise delaying the introduction of smartphones to children until at least age sixteen, emphasizing the necessity of maturity and parental guidance in mobile device usage.

This proposed bill aims to prohibit the use of mobile phones in primary and middle schools for children aged fifteen (15) years and below. As a responsible nation and mindful guardians of our youth, we must protect our children from unnecessary risks and influences that may adversely affect their holistic development.

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


RACHEL MARGUERITE "CUTIE" DEL MAR

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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 gadgets use in the academic setting.

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

- a. *Electronic Gadgets* refers to 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 (PC), palmtops, smartwatches, laptops, video games consoles, virtual reality headsets, smart glasses, wearable cameras and other similar devices.
- b. *Primary education* refers to the stage of schooling for children ages five years old up to grade 6.

- c. *Secondary education* refers to the stage of schooling for children from grade 7 up to Grade 10.
- d. *School premises* refers to 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 primary and secondary educational institutions.

SEC. 5. Exceptions. – The use of electronic gadgets inside school premises may be allowed only on the following circumstances:

- a. In case 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. 8. 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. 9. 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. 10. 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. 11. Effectivity. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulations.

Approved,