

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 4571



Introduced by Representative **MARLYN L. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

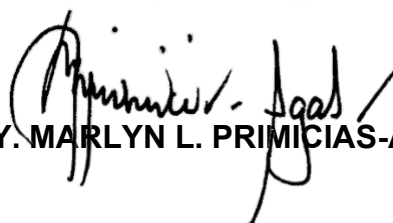
The Philippine educational system has long recognized the value of exposing students to texts and ideas that have shaped our national identity, culture, and moral sensibilities. The Bible, as a foundational work of literature, has influenced not only religious thought but also language, art, and the broader currents of world history. Its stories, themes, and literary forms are deeply woven into the fabric of global and Filipino culture.

This bill seeks to mandate the reading and study of the Bible as literature in all schools, colleges, and universities, public and private, not as a tool for religious instruction, but as a means to appreciate its literary, historical, and cultural significance. In doing so, the measure draws inspiration from *Republic Act No. 1425*, which requires the academic study of the life and works of Jose Rizal, while providing for religious exemptions and safeguarding against sectarian teaching.

The bill is crafted with full respect for the constitutional principle of separation of church and state, as well as the right to religious freedom. It expressly prohibits the use of public funds to promote or denigrate any particular faith, and ensures that the approach to the Bible in the classroom is academic, not devotional. Students who, for reasons of religious belief, object to participation are granted the right to exemption, consistent with the benevolent neutrality adopted by Philippine jurisprudence (*Estrada vs. Escritor, A.M. No. P-02-1651, August 4, 2003*).

By situating the Bible within the context of literature, the bill aims to foster critical thinking, cultural literacy, and a deeper understanding of the texts that have shaped human civilization. It also affirms the State's duty to provide a balanced and inclusive education, mindful of the diverse beliefs of the Filipino people.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought to enrich the intellectual and cultural formation of our youth, while upholding the constitutional guarantees of religious liberty and the separation of church and state.


ATTY. MARLYN L. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS

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AN ACT

**MANDATING THE INCLUSION OF THE BIBLE AS LITERATURE IN THE
CURRICULUM OF ALL SCHOOLS, COLLEGES, AND UNIVERSITIES, PROVIDING
FOR ITS ACADEMIC STUDY, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

*Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines
in session assembled:*

SEC. 1. *Title.* - This Act shall be known as the "*Bible Reading Act of 2022*".

SEC. 2. *Statement of Policy.* While it is constitutional for schools to teach about religion, it is unconstitutional to use public funds to advance particular religious beliefs. Thus, the school's approach to religion should be academic, not devotional. This Act, therefore, sets out the following basic policies:

The schools may strive for student awareness of religions but should not press for student acceptance of any religion.

The schools may teach the Bible NOT for religious purposes, but only as they would teach literature in order to understand its influence, language, and artistic legacy. The schools may educate about all religions, but may not promote or denigrate any religion.

SEC. 3. The Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) shall include in religions curricula of all schools, colleges and universities, public or private — the reading and study of the Bible as literature.

SEC. 4. The DepEd and the CHED is hereby authorized and directed to adopt forthwith measures to implement and carry out the provisions of this Act, including the writing and printing of appropriate primers, readers and textbooks. The DepED and CHED shall, within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, promulgate rules and regulations, including those of a disciplinary nature, to carry out and enforce the provisions of this Act. They shall promulgate rules and regulations providing for the exemption of students for reasons of religious belief stated in a sworn written statement, from the requirement of this Act. Said rules and regulations shall take effect thirty (30)

days after their publication in the Official Gazette.

SEC. 5. It shall be obligatory on all schools, colleges and universities to keep in their libraries an adequate number of copies of the Bible. The Bible shall be included in the list of approved books for required reading in all public or private schools, colleges and universities.

SEC. 6. *Repeating Clause.* All laws, decrees, orders, rules and regulations, and other issuances inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

SEC. 7. *Effectivity.* This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following its publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,