

TWENTIETH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

House Bill No. 5032



**Introduced by REPRESENTATIVES LANI MERCADO-REVILLA,
BRYAN B. REVILLA AND RAMON JOLO REVILLA III**

**AN ACT
SEEKING TO PROMOTE EARLY LITERACY DEVELOPMENT AS AN INTEGRAL
PART OF PEDIATRIC PRIMARY CARE AND TO FOSTER A NATIONAL
CULTURE OF READING**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Students in the Philippines continue to rank among the lowest globally in math, reading and science, according to the latest results from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA).¹ Conducted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) every three years since 2000, PISA evaluates the literacy of 15-year-olds. Despite various interventions, the country's performance has shown no significant improvement since 2018.

In response, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. directed then newly appointed Department of Education (DepEd) Secretary Sonny Angara to prioritize improving the country's PISA performance.²

This bill offers a practical step toward that goal. It mandates the DepEd, in coordination with the Department of Health (DOH), local government units (LGUs), and other partners to implement programs that help parents and children, especially

¹Chi, C. (2023, December 6). Philippines still lags behind world in math, reading and science — pisa 2022. *Philstar Global*. Retrieved 2024, from <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2023/12/06/2316732/philippines-still-lags-behind-world-math-reading-and-science-pisa-2022>.

² GMA Integrated News. (2024, July 2). *Marcos instructs Angara: Improve history teaching, global ranking in education*. GMA News Online. <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/912025/marcos-instructs-angara-improve-history-teaching-global-ranking-in-education/story/>

from disadvantaged backgrounds, develop a love for reading, thereby preparing children for school and easing their transition into formal education.³

This measure draws inspiration from Reach Out and Read (ROR), the first pediatric, evidence-based program designed to prevent early childhood development and learning challenges.⁴ Established in 1989, ROR grew through the advocacy of paediatricians, community champions, and public support. Research confirms that reading aloud in early childhood stimulates brain development, strengthens parent-child bonds, and builds language, literacy, and emotional skills.⁵ Such activities also nurture a child's motivation to learn.⁶

In the Philippines, ROR has been adopted since 2006 in institutions such as the Philippine Children's Medical Center, Philippine General Hospital, AFP Medical Center/V. Luna General Hospital, and other hospitals and community centers.⁷

This bill seeks to expand and strengthen such efforts nationwide, giving every Filipino child the foundation for lifelong learning and academic success. It also complements National Reading Month every November, currently observed through DepEd Memorandum No. 472, s. 2011. By embedding early literacy in pediatric care and legislating a permanent observance of Reading Month, we can sustain a culture of reading not just in schools, but in homes and communities as well.

The immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought to make early literacy a lasting foundation of our education system and a lifelong benefit for every Filipino.



REP. LANI MERCADO-REVILLA
2nd District of Cavite



REP. BRYAN B. REVILLA
AGIMAT Partylist



REP. RAMON JOEL REVILLA III
1st District of Cavite

³ An important reference for the formulation of this bill is SBN 2709, entitled "An Act to Aid and Support Pediatric Involvement in Reading and Education", introduced during the 14th Congress by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago.

⁴ Zuckerman, B. (2009). Promoting Early Literacy in Pediatric Practice: Twenty Years of Reach Out and Read. *Pediatrics*, 124(6). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2009-1207>

⁵ Delgado-Alvarez, A., Mancini, E., & Marsicek, S. (2022). *Promoting Literacy and Developmental Milestones: Teaching Primary Care Pediatricians via the Reach Out and Read Program Model*. The Florida Pediatrician. <https://floridapediatrician.org/publications/promoting-literacy-and-developmental-milestones-teaching-primary-care-pediatricians-via-the-reach-out-and-read-program-model/>

⁶ Vallido, C. L. (2021, July 21). [OPINION] *Ang unang aklat: Early literacy in a child's first 1,000 days*. Rappler. <https://www.rappler.com/voices/thought-leaders/opinion-first-book-early-literacy-child-first-thousand-days/>

⁷ *EARLY LITERACY - Reach Out and Read Philippines (RORP)*. Philippine Ambulatory Pediatric Association. (n.d.). <https://papainc.org/programs.do?id=9950>

TWENTIETH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

House Bill No. 5032

**Introduced by REPRESENTATIVES LANI MERCADO-REVILLA,
BRYAN B. REVILLA AND RAMON JOLO REVILLA III**

**AN ACT
SEEKING TO PROMOTE EARLY LITERACY DEVELOPMENT AS AN INTEGRAL
PART OF PEDIATRIC PRIMARY CARE AND TO FOSTER A NATIONAL
CULTURE OF READING**

*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 “Early Literacy Act”.

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the declared policy of the State to recognize early literacy development as fundamental to the right to quality education, child development, and lifelong learning. Towards this end, the State shall institutionalize literacy interventions within pediatric primary care and foster a national culture of reading, ensuring that parents and children, especially from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, have access to books, reading resources, and guidance from trained professionals.

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

- a. “Early literacy” refers to the development of foundational reading and language skills in early childhood through exposure to books, storytelling, and literacy-rich environments.
- b. “Pediatric Primary Care” refers to the comprehensive healthcare for children from infancy through adolescence, including preventive services, developmental screening, and health education.
- c. “Culture of Reading” refers to the sustained habit and appreciation for reading as a shared value among families, schools, and communities.

SEC. 4. *Development and Implementation of Programs.* – The Department of Education (DepEd), in coordination with the Department of Health (DOH), the National Library of the Philippines (NLP), local government units (LGUs), other relevant agencies, and the private sector, shall develop and implement early literacy programs that include the following components:

- a. Book Distribution – Provision of age-appropriate and culturally relevant books to children during pediatric primary care visits, particularly in public hospitals, health centers, and rural health units.
- b. Parent Engagement and Screen Time Education – Training for healthcare providers to counsel parents on the importance of reading aloud and incorporating reading into daily routines, and strategies to delay or limit children’s exposure to mobile applications and social media, and replace such screen time with literacy-rich and interactive activities.
- c. Clinic and Community Reading Spaces – Establishment of mini-libraries or reading corners in health facilities, in partnership with the NLP and local libraries.
- d. Outreach and Collaboration – Joint efforts with schools, libraries, non-governmental organizations, and community groups to organize reading events, storytelling sessions, and book donation drives.
- e. Digital Access – Development of online platforms for free children’s e-books and literacy resources, with technical support from the NLP, ensuring that digital literacy materials promote healthy and age-appropriate use of technology.

SEC. 5. *National Reading Advocacy.* – To reinforce early literacy development and ensure its continuity into later stages of learning, the State shall foster a national culture of reading, with the annual observance of National Reading Month every November as a central platform for nationwide advocacy. Public awareness initiatives, including the use of mass media and digital platforms, shall emphasize the importance of reading in the earliest years of life as the foundation of lifelong learning and nation-building.

SEC. 6. *Monitoring and Evaluation.* – The DepEd and DOH, in partnership with the NLP, shall establish a monitoring and evaluation system to measure program reach, reading engagement, and developmental impact. An annual report shall be submitted to Congress and the President.

SEC. 7. *Appropriations.* – Funds necessary for the implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act. Additional resources may be sourced from grants, donations, and other lawful funding mechanisms.

SEC. 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DepEd, DOH, and NLP shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SEC. 9. *Separability Clause.* – If for any reason, any provision is declared unconstitutional, the other sections or provisions hereof which are not hereby affected shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SEC. 10. *Repealing Clause.* – All law, decrees, orders, rules and regulations or portions thereof inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 11. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation, whichever comes earlier.

Approved,