

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 5396



Introduced by Representative Kenneth T. Gatchalian

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The 1987 Constitution mandates the State to provide a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education relevant to the needs of the people and society. In line with this, the State must ensure computer literacy and access to the digital world for all Filipinos.

The 2024 Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS) reports that while 93.1% of Filipinos aged 10 to 64 are basically literate, only 70.8% are functionally literate. This gap underscores the need for accessible, relevant, and modern learning resources.

The COVID-19 experience revealed how limited access to online materials worsened learning losses, especially in underserved and remote areas. A government-operated e-library of digitized textbooks and reference materials will bridge this gap, expand learning opportunities, and support both learners and teachers.

The Philippine Institute for Development Studies' SERP-P has proven the feasibility of a centralized online portal. Building on this model, the proposed Philippine Online Library will serve as the official digital repository of all textbooks and reference books needed in elementary and secondary education, accessible for free to every learner nationwide.

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



KENNETH T. GATCHALIAN

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AN ACT
DIGITIZING ALL BOOKS NECESSARY FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION,
ESTABLISHING THE PHILIPPINE ONLINE LIBRARY, AND
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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

1 **SECTION 1.** *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Philippine
2 Online Library Act”.

3 **SEC. 2.** *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to establish,
4 maintain, and support a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education
5 relevant to the needs of the people and society. The State shall also ensure that its
6 citizens are computer-literate and are provided access to an increasingly digitized
7 world. Thus, the State shall provide its citizens with the opportunity to increase their
8 adaptability to information and communications technology, and to enhance their
9 learning experience by providing access to digitized copies of textbooks and
10 reference books necessary for the provision of quality elementary and secondary
11 education.

12 **SEC. 3.** *Philippine Online Library.* – The Department of Education
13 (DepEd) shall create a digitized copy of all textbooks and reference books it deems

1 necessary for the public education of Philippine elementary and secondary learners:
2 Provided, That the DepEd shall ensure that the necessary authorization shall be
3 obtained from the authors or publishers, in accordance with existing intellectual
4 property laws. The digitized copy of all textbooks and reference books shall be
5 compiled in the Philippine Online Library, which shall be jointly managed by the
6 DepEd and the Department of Information and Communications Technology
7 (DICT).

8 **SEC. 4.** *Provision for Access to the Digitized Copies of Textbooks.* – The
9 DepEd shall ensure access to the digitized copies of textbooks and reference books
10 by providing computers, laptops, or other appropriate devices to all elementary and
11 secondary public schools nationwide. Similarly, in order to ensure access to the
12 digitized copies of textbooks, the DICT shall provide free, reliable, and secure
13 internet access to each elementary and secondary public school pursuant to the
14 provisions of Republic Act No. 10929 or the “Free Internet Access in Public Places
15 Act”.

16 **SEC. 5.** *Recycling of Computers.* – In order to offset expenses related to
17 the procurement of computers, laptops, or other appropriate devices necessary for
18 the implementation of the provisions of this Act, national government agencies,
19 government-owned and controlled corporations, and other government financial
20 institutions which have procured new computers shall endorse their old units to the
21 DICT to check if the computers can still be used for the intent of this Act and
22 thereafter shall be given to the DepEd for deployment to elementary and secondary
23 public schools nationwide.

24 **SEC. 6.** *Additional Online Educational Materials.* – The DepEd may
25 utilize the National Library of the Philippines to complement the Philippine Online
26 Library's digital repository of textbooks with additional materials that are
27 representative of Filipino culture and literature. DepEd shall also be allowed to add

1 other online materials that it deems necessary for expanding the learning
2 opportunities for students.

3 **SEC. 7. *Custody over Digitized Copies of Textbooks.*** – The DepEd and the
4 National Library of the Philippines shall have joint custody over the digitized copies
5 of the textbooks. The DICT shall likewise ensure the technological management of
6 the digital repository to ensure the integrity of the system.

7 **SEC. 8. *Appropriations.*** – The initial amount of Five Hundred Million
8 Pesos (Php 500,000,000.00) shall be appropriated for the immediate implementation
9 of this Act and shall be jointly managed by the DepEd and the DICT. An annual
10 budget of One Hundred Million Pesos (Php 100,000,000.00) shall be included in the
11 annual budget of the DepEd to ensure that the equipment and internet connection of
12 public schools for the purpose of this Act will be maintained.

13 **SEC. 9. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – Within ninety (90) days
14 from the effectivity of this Act, the DepEd, the DICT, and the National Library of
15 the Philippines, in close coordination with the Department of Science and
16 Technology, and other stakeholders, shall jointly issue the rules and regulations
17 implementing its provisions. The implementing rules and regulations (IRR) issued
18 pursuant to this section shall take effect thirty (30) days after its publication in a
19 newspaper of general circulation.

20 **SEC. 10. *Separability Clause.*** – If any provision or part of this Act is
21 declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions or parts not affected
22 shall remain in force and effect.

23 **SEC. 11. *Repealing Clause.*** – All other laws, executive orders, presidential
24 decrees, administrative orders, rules and regulations, issuances, or parts thereof
25 contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or
26 amended accordingly.

1 **SEC. 12. *Effectivity.*** - Notwithstanding the non-issuance of the IRR, this Act
2 shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a
3 newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,