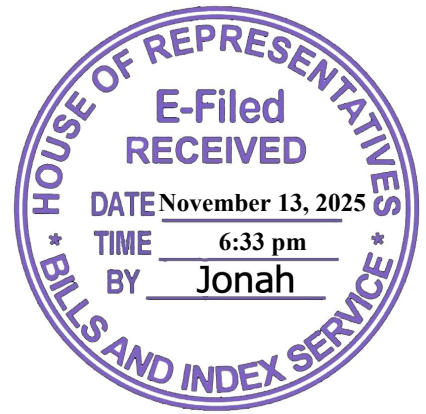


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 5976



Introduced by Representative ANTOLIN “LENLEN” A. ORETA III

AN ACT
INSTITUTIONALIZING THE GRANT OF STUDENT LOAD DISCOUNT
PRIVILEGE ON MOBILE AND INTERNET SERVICES AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

It is the duty of the State to ensure equitable access to quality education for all. In the contemporary era, where digital connectivity and technological tools have become integral to the teaching and learning process, no student should be deprived of educational opportunities merely on account of financial incapacity to remain connected online.

Despite various government initiatives to expand digital access, the Philippines continues to face substantial challenges in bridging the digital divide. Based on the GSMA Mobile Connectivity Index, the country registered a score of 60.5 in the affordability of mobile data in 2024. This underscores persistent barriers in infrastructure, affordability, and digital adoption. For countless Filipino learners, especially those hailing from low-income families, the cost of mobile data and internet services constitutes a significant burden. Consequently, this hampers their participation in online and blended learning modalities and adversely affects learning outcomes, particularly in remote, rural, and underserved areas.

This proposed measure seeks to institutionalize a mandatory twenty percent (20%) discount on mobile load, text, call, and internet services for all duly enrolled students from elementary to tertiary levels. By lowering the cost of connectivity, the bill aims to provide direct and meaningful financial relief to students and their families, while recognizing and reinforcing the indispensable role of digital access in modern education.

In order to guarantee the sustainability of the program and foster private sector cooperation, the proposed measure further provides that telecommunications companies (TELCOs) shall be entitled to claim tax deductions equivalent to the value of the discounts granted. Such an incentive duly acknowledges the vital contribution of the telecommunications industry in advancing digital inclusion, social equity, and educational opportunity.

To further ensure the success and long-term impact of this initiative, the bill also emphasizes the importance of ongoing monitoring and evaluation. This would involve tracking the effectiveness of the discount program in improving students' access to online learning and measuring the resulting academic performance in both urban and rural areas. By establishing a clear framework for accountability, the government can adjust the program as needed to address emerging challenges and ensure that every student, regardless of their socio-economic background, has the tools and resources necessary to thrive in today's digital learning environment.

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


ANTOLIN "LENLEN" A. ORETA III
Lone District of Malabon City

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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 "Student Discount Para Sa Load Act."

2 **SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.*** —The State shall give priority to education, science and
3 technology, arts, culture, and sports to foster patriotism and nationalism, accelerate social
4 progress, and promote total human liberation and development. It also recognizes the vital role
5 of communication and information in nation—building. Pursuant to these policies, the State
6 ensures equitable access to education by 8 providing necessary support to students, particularly
7 in their communication and 9 online learning needs. To achieve this, the State shall:

8 (a) Establish a mechanism that ensures the mandatory grant of a student load discount
9 privilege;

10 (b) Enlist the cooperation of telecommunication companies (TELCOs) in extending
11 assistance to students through this privilege; and

12 (c) Encourage students, particularly the poor and underprivileged, to utilize digital tools
13 for education.

14 **SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.*** —As used in this Act:

15 (a) Student refers to any Filipino citizen currently enrolled in a duly authorized
16 elementary, secondary, technical-vocational, or higher education institution excluding
17 post-graduate degree courses;

18 (b) Telecommunication Companies (TELCOs) refer to companies providing mobile,
19 text, call, and internet services in the Philippines;

- (c) Retailers refer to individuals or business establishments, whether physical or online, duly authorized to sell or distribute prepaid mobile load, mobile data, call, and text services, and other internet services to consumers on behalf of TELCOs;
- (d) Student Load Discount refers to a twenty percent (20%) discount on prepaid and postpaid mobile load, text, call, and internet services availed by eligible students.

SEC. 4. Coverage. — This Act shall cover all telecommunication services, including but not limited to:

- (a) Prepaid mobile load for text, call, and data;
- (b) Postpaid mobile plans; and
- (c) Broadband and internet services used for educational purposes.

SEC. 5. Student Load Discount Privilege. — A student shall be entitled to a twenty (20%) discount on mobile load, text, call, and internet services, subject to the 19 following conditions:

- (a) The discount shall be applied upon presentation of a valid school ID or proof of enrollment;
- (b) The discount shall be available year—round, including weekends and holidays; and
- (c) The discount shall apply only to personal educational use and may not be transferred.

SEC. 6. Prohibition on Double Discount. — Students cannot avail of multiple discounts at the same time. If a promotional discount from a TELCO is higher than twenty (20%), the student may choose which discount to apply.

SEC. 7. Tax Deduction for TELCOs. — TELCOs may claim tax deductions equivalent to the cost of the discount granted, subject to the rules to be promulgated by the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR).

SEC. 8. Implementation and Monitoring. — The National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) and the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) shall oversee the implementation of this Act. TELCOs shall submit quarterly reports on compliance.

SEC. 9. Penalties. —The following penalties shall be imposed for violation of this Act:

- (a) TELCOs that refuse to grant the discount provided under this Act shall be fined:

1. Fifty Thousand Pesos (P50,000) for the first offense;
2. One Hundred Thousand Pesos (P100,00) for the second offense; and
3. Two Hundred Thousand Pesos (P200,000) for the third and subsequent offenses.

- (b) Retailers who, without justifiable reason, fail or refuse to provide the student load discount, or who impose conditions contrary to the intent of this Act, shall be subject to the following penalties:

1. Twenty-Five Thousand Pesos (P25,000) for the first offense;
2. Fifty Thousand Pesos (P50,000) for the SECond offense; and
3. One Hundred Thousand Pesos (P100,00) and possible disqualification or 24 blacklisting from being an accredited load or service retailer for the third and subsequent offenses.

Provided, That the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), in coordination with the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC), shall maintain a list of erring retailers and may issue orders of disqualification for habitual non-compliance.

(c) Any student found using fraudulent documents to avail of the discount shall be disqualified from the privilege without prejudice to the filing of appropriate criminal charges for such act.

SEC. 10. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* — Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the NTC, DICT, Department of Education (DepEd), and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) shall promulgate the rules and regulations to effectively implement the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 11. *Separability Clause.* — If any provision or part hereof is declared unconstitutional, the remainder of this Act or any provision not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 12. *Repealing Clause.* — All laws, acts, decrees, executive orders, issuances, and rules and regulations or parts thereof which are contrary to and inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

SEC. 13. *Effectivity.* — This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,