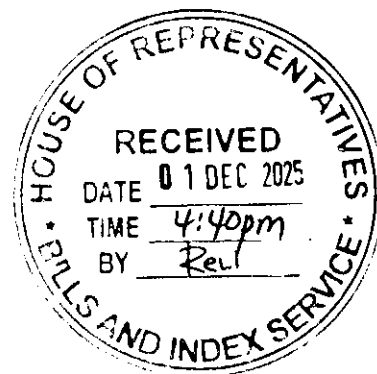


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **6531**



**Introduced by Representative CHING BERNOS
and Representative JB BERNOS**

**AN ACT
PROMOTING DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP AND RESPONSIBLE USE OF
TECHNOLOGY, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Digital technology has become indispensable to the daily lives of Filipinos. It is central to education, employment, commerce, and civic participation. As online engagement continues to expand, so do the risks posed by cyberbullying, identity theft, online sexual exploitation, misinformation, and most urgently, the alarming rise of cyber-scams and cyber-scam trafficking targeting individuals and communities across the country.

The Philippines has witnessed a surge in fraudulent online recruitment schemes, investment scams, phishing attacks, fake job offers, and human trafficking operations that lure victims through digital platforms. These cyber-scams have resulted in significant financial losses, psychological harm, and in some cases, cross-border exploitation. Vulnerable groups—including the youth, jobseekers, OFWs, and the elderly—are particularly susceptible to manipulation due to limited digital literacy and insufficient awareness of evolving online threats.

While the State has enacted the Data Privacy Act, the Cybercrime Prevention Act, and has adopted the National Cybersecurity Plan, these frameworks primarily address enforcement and security. There remains a critical gap in preventive education—in building the capacity of citizens to recognize, avoid,

and report cyber-scams and deceptive online practices. Without a strong digital citizenship foundation, Filipinos remain vulnerable to increasingly sophisticated digital manipulation and fraud.

This measure seeks to close that gap through the establishment of a National Digital Citizenship Program that systematically equips citizens with essential skills and protective awareness. Specifically, the Program aims to:

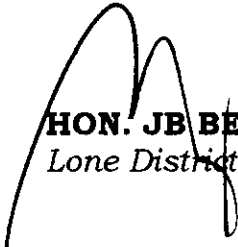
1. Integrate digital citizenship, online safety, and cyber-scam prevention modules into the K-12 curriculum, higher education, and technical-vocational programs;
2. Strengthen nationwide public education on cyber-scam prevention—including identifying fraudulent recruitment, recognizing phishing and impersonation tactics, verifying online job postings, detecting investment scams, and reporting suspicious digital activity;
3. Enhance digital literacy to enable citizens to evaluate information, authenticate digital transactions, and make informed decisions in online environments;
4. Promote ethical and responsible digital behavior through digital etiquette and critical thinking;
5. Support law enforcement efforts against cyber-scam trafficking by encouraging transparent reporting mechanisms from platforms and strengthening community-level awareness and early detection; and
6. Build coordinated prevention networks through an Inter-Agency Council that unites government agencies, schools, local governments, technology companies, and civil society.

By empowering Filipinos to protect themselves from cyber-scams and digital exploitation, the State not only safeguards individual rights and welfare but also secures communities, strengthens public trust, and protects the integrity of the digital economy. A digitally literate and vigilant citizenry is one of the strongest defenses against large-scale online fraud and manipulation.

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



HON. CHING B. BERNOS
Solid North Party-List



HON. JB BERNOS
Lone District, Abra

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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 “Digital Citizenship Act.”

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* The State recognizes the role of technology in the pursuit of national development and progress. Furthermore, it recognizes an inherent role in the modern times to protect its citizens from fraudulent and suspicious activities on the internet.

Towards this end, in alignment with the Data Privacy Act, Cybercrime Prevention Act, and the National Cybersecurity Plan, it is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote responsible, ethical, and informed use of technology among citizens, especially the youth; protect the rights of Filipinos in the digital environment while ensuring their accountability as responsible digital citizens; and support schools, communities, and workplaces in fostering a safe and inclusive digital ecosystem.

SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.* For the purposes of this Act, the following terms shall be used and shall be defined as indicated:

- a. **Critical Thinking** – the capacity to analyze information and form reasoned judgments based on evidence.
- b. **Digital Citizenship** – the ability to find, access, use and create information effectively; engage with other users and with content in an active, critical, sensitive and ethical manner; and navigate the online and information and communications technology (ICT) environment safely and responsibly, while being aware of one's own rights.
- c. **Digital Etiquette** – electronic standards of conduct or procedures, involving thinking about others when using digital devices.
- d. **Digital Literacy** – involves the confident and critical use of a full range of digital technologies for information, communication and basic problem-solving in all aspects of life. It is underpinned by basic skills in ICT: the use of computers to retrieve, assess, store, produce, present and exchange information, and to communicate and participate in collaborative networks via the Internet.
- e. **Online Safety** – practices and measures that ensures the protection, empowerment, and responsible participation of individuals in digital environments.

SEC. 4. *National Digital Citizenship Program.* There is hereby created a National Digital Citizenship Program under the joint implementation of the Department of Information of Communications Technology (DICT) and the Department of Education (DepEd) that shall serve as the government's comprehensive framework for promoting responsible, ethical, and critical participation in the digital environment.

The Program shall:

- a. Institutionalize digital citizenship education across all sectors of society through age-appropriate and inclusive learning materials, community workshops, and mass media campaigns;

- b. Strengthen digital literacy by providing opportunities for citizens to develop skills in accessing, evaluating, creating, and communicating information using digital tools and platforms;
- c. Ensure online safety through public awareness, protection mechanisms, and preventive education against cyberbullying, identity theft, cyber-scam trafficking, online exploitation, and other digital threats;
- d. Promote digital etiquette by encouraging respectful, ethical, and culturally sensitive communication and behavior in online interactions;
- e. Foster critical thinking and media discernment to combat misinformation, disinformation, and online manipulation; and
- f. Empower youth and communities as champions of digital responsibility and innovation through volunteer programs, digital literacy drives, and recognition awards.

SEC. 5. *Integration into Education.* The DepEd, Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) shall integrate Digital Citizenship modules into the K-12 curriculum, tertiary education general education courses, and skills training programs, respectively, embedding digital literacy, online safety, digital etiquette, and critical thinking skills.

SEC. 6. *Capacity-Building and Public Programs.* The DICT, in partnership with relevant national government agencies, shall develop and implement nationwide campaigns and training programs on online safety, digital literacy, and responsible use of social media. These campaigns and programs shall raise public awareness on the ethical and secure use of technology, promote protection against cybercrimes and online exploitation, and strengthen citizens' ability to recognize and resist misinformation, digital manipulation, and fraudulent online recruitment.

To ensure inclusivity and sustainability, the DICT shall establish community-based digital empowerment programs that provide accessible learning materials, workshops, and digital help desks in coordination with barangay

information centers and youth development offices. Public-private partnerships with technology companies, internet service providers, and social media platforms shall likewise be encouraged to support responsible digital engagement, promote online safety tools, and enhance access to verified digital learning resources, especially in underserved communities.

SEC. 7. *Protection and Enforcement.* The National Bureau of Investigation and the Philippine National Police shall intensify efforts to safeguard citizens, especially minors, from cyber threats, scams, and trafficking.

Victims of online abuse and exploitation shall be entitled to psychosocial support, legal assistance, and reintegration services. Online platforms operating in the Philippines are encouraged to adopt transparent reporting mechanisms for harmful content and fake job recruitment schemes.

SEC. 8. *Formation of Inter-Agency Council.* An Inter-Agency Council (IAC) is hereby formed to ensure the effective coordination, implementation, and monitoring of the National Digital Citizenship Program.

The IAC shall be composed of the following agencies:

- a. Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) as Chair;
- b. Department of Education as Co-Chair;
- c. Department of the Interior and Local Government;
- d. Department of Justice;
- e. Department of Labor and Employment;
- f. Department of Science and Technology;
- g. Department of Social Welfare and Development
- h. Commission on Higher Education;
- i. National Privacy Commission;
- j. National Youth Commission; and
- k. Technical Education and Skills Development Authority;

SEC. 9. *Functions of the Inter-Agency Council.* The Inter-Agency Council shall have the following powers and functions:

- a. Formulate, harmonize, and update national policies, frameworks, and action plans on digital citizenship, digital literacy, and online safety, consistent with existing laws, national development goals, and international standards;
- b. Oversee the implementation of the National Digital Citizenship Program and ensure the timely fulfillment of responsibilities by all participating agencies and stakeholders;
- c. Lead nationwide information, education, and communication campaigns that promote responsible and ethical digital behavior, critical media literacy, and safe online engagement across schools, workplaces, and communities;
- d. Develop measurable indicators and performance standards to evaluate the progress and impact of digital citizenship initiatives, and submit an annual report to Congress detailing accomplishments, challenges, and recommendations;
- e. Facilitate cooperation, data-sharing, and joint capacity-building among national and local government units, consistent with data privacy, cybersecurity, and good governance principles;
- f. Strengthen collaboration with private technology companies, academic institutions, and international development partners to promote innovation, inclusion, and access to verified digital learning tools;
- g. Coordinate the integration of digital citizenship competencies into curricula, general education courses, and teacher training programs;
- h. Recommend immediate and coordinated measures to address emerging online threats such as cyberbullying, cyber-scam trafficking, online sexual exploitation, and misinformation campaigns;

- i. Establish a Digital Citizenship Excellence Recognition System to acknowledge schools, local governments, and organizations demonstrating exemplary commitment to ethical and responsible digital practices; and
- j. Perform such other acts as may be necessary to effectively implement the provisions of this Act and its implementing rules and regulations.

SEC. 10. *Funding.* The amount necessary to implement this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 11. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DICT and the DepEd shall formulate the necessary rules and regulations for its effective implementation.

SEC. 12. *Separability Clause.* If any part of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the remaining provisions shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 13. *Repealing Clause.* All laws, decrees, orders, or regulations inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 14. *Effectivity.* This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.