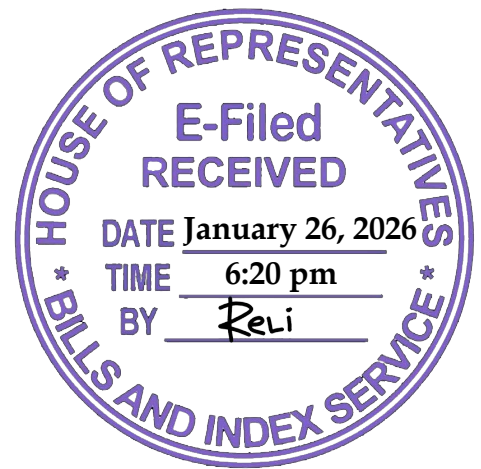


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 7369



Introduced by **REP. JAVIER MIGUEL L. BENITEZ**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

As of January 2025, the average Filipino spends 3 hours and 34 minutes per day on social media, which is higher than the global average. Internet users make up 83.8% of the population, which is 97.5 million individuals, and 93.1% of these internet users are active on social media platforms (DataReportal, 2025). This large digital presence highlights the impact that online platforms have on shaping social narratives, business, and even national security.

The Philippines has been referred to as the "petri dish of disinformation" and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom has stated that the country is losing the war against disinformation. This is because platforms are largely unaccountable for spreading falsehoods, such as unverified claims about cures and vaccines, which has led to public confusion, vaccine hesitancy, and delayed health-seeking behavior during the pandemic.

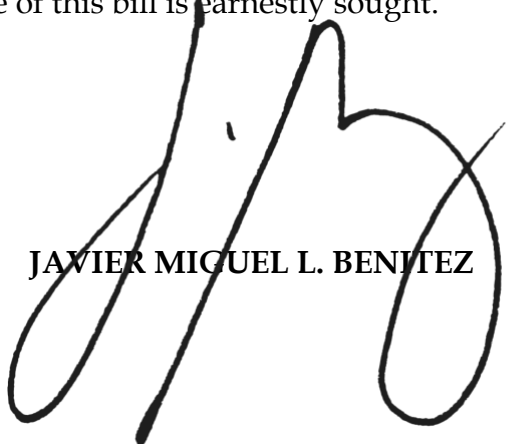
Many platforms operate without a formal, local accountability mechanism, which makes it difficult to enforce data privacy, moderate harmful content, and ensure that platforms respond to the concerns of Filipino users and public institutions. Currently, there is no central system that requires large-scale digital platforms to register or disclose their governance practices.

This bill suggests a transparency-based framework for large-scale platforms that have at least one million monthly Filipino users. The bill would require these platforms to register with the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), appoint a representative based in the Philippines, submit regular transparency reports, and work with government agencies for lawful enforcement. If platforms do not comply, they may face administrative sanctions, access restrictions, or legal referrals under relevant laws.

This measure does not authorize censorship, content takedown based on opinion, or suppression of lawful discourse. Instead, it ensures that platforms with a large influence

over public information act with transparency and accountability, and have a duty of care to the Filipino public. The proposed law aims to uphold the right of every Filipino to a safe, transparent, and responsive online environment while also allowing digital innovation to continue.

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



JAVIER MIGUEL L. BENITEZ

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HOUSE BILL NO. 7369

Introduced by **REP. JAVIER MIGUEL L. BENITEZ**

**AN ACT ESTABLISHING A REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR THE
REGISTRATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF LARGE-SCALE ONLINE
PLATFORMS, PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY IN DIGITAL
GOVERNANCE, AND OTHER PURPOSES**

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “*Bantay SocMed Act*”.

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to foster a secure, inclusive, and transparent digital environment. The State acknowledges the significant societal impact of large-scale digital platforms and aims to ensure their responsible operation, without compromising freedom of expression, data protection, or digital innovation.

SEC. 3. *Scope and Coverage.* – This Act will apply to all Digital Platforms that meet the following criteria:

- (a) They operate in or are accessible in the Philippines; and,
- (b) They have one million (1,000,000) or more monthly active users within the Philippines.

SEC. 4. *Definition of Terms.* –

- (a) **Digital Platform** refers to any web-based or mobile application that allows users to create, share, view, or interact with digital content or with other users.

- (b) **Large-Scale Platform** refers to any Digital Platform with at least one million (1,000,000) monthly active users in the Philippines.
- (c) **Regulatory Authority** refers to the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) or any other agency designated by the President.
- (d) **Local Representative** refers to a person or entity based in the Philippines, authorized to act on behalf of the platform in legal and regulatory matters.
- (e) **Transparency Report** refers to a publicly disclosed summary of a platform's content moderation activities, algorithmic decision-making, and risk mitigation practices.

SEC. 5. Registration. – All Large-Scale Platforms must:

- (a) Register with the DICT's designated registration system within ninety (90) days of reaching the user base threshold.
- (b) Appoint a Local Representative who will serve as the official point of contact for the platform in the Philippines. This representative will coordinate responses to lawful government inquiries, represent the platform in regulatory proceedings or consultations, and submit a description of its content governance policies, including any automated decision-making or profiling operations.
- (c) Submit and keep up-to-date documentation on their content moderation policies, data governance practices, and any automated decision-making systems.
- (d) If applicable, provide proof of compliance with NPC Circular No. 2022-04, including the registration of their Data Processing System and the appointment of a Data Protection Officer.

Failure to register will lead to the removal or blocking of access to the platform in the Philippines, in addition to other enforcement actions under this Act or existing laws.

SEC. 6. Powers and Functions of the Department of Information and Communications Technology. – The DICT will have the power to:

- (a) Conduct active investigations and compliance checks on platforms operating in the Philippines.
- (b) Undertake technical monitoring to find unregistered platforms serving Filipino users.
- (c) Verify the accuracy of submitted registration data and take appropriate action if the information is false or misleading.
- (d) Coordinate with other government agencies, internet service providers, and regulatory bodies to implement takedown measures or other interventions for non-compliant platforms.

SEC. 7. *Transparency and Public Accountability.* – Registered platforms will publish biannual transparency reports that include:

- (a) The number of user content removals, broken down by type;
- (b) The number of user reports and appeals;
- (c) A description of the algorithms or processes used for moderation and content curation; and
- (d) Disclosures on data sharing and advertising practices that affect Filipino users.

SEC. 8. *Enforcement.* – The DICT has the authority to implement the following enforcement measures against platforms that fail to register or violate the Act:

- (a) Takedown or access restriction orders for platforms operating without registration or repeatedly violating compliance requirements. These orders will be coordinated with internet service providers, web hosting providers, and other technical intermediaries.
- (b) Administrative fines or penalties, as outlined in guidelines issued by the DICT and subject to due process.
- (c) Suspension of eligibility to receive government advertisements or participate in official public information campaigns until full compliance is met.

(d) Referral to the appropriate law enforcement or regulatory agencies, which can include but are not limited to:

- (i) The National Privacy Commission (NPC) for violations related to data processing, profiling, or failure to register under NPC Circular No. 2022-04 and the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (R.A. No. 10173).
- (ii) The Cybercrime Investigation and Coordinating Center (CICC) and/or the Philippine National Police Anti-Cybercrime Group (PNP-ACG) for offenses under the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012 (R.A. No. 10175), such as cyber libel, identity theft, or unauthorized access.
- (iii) The Department of Justice (DOJ) or the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) for criminal offenses under existing laws, including the Revised Penal Code, E-Commerce Act of 2000 (R.A. No. 8792), or other relevant statutes.

(e) Publicly listing non-compliant entities through an official DICT registry or advisory bulletin.

In cases where a non-compliant or unregistered platform's continued operation poses an immediate risk to public safety, national security, or the digital ecosystem's integrity, the DICT may take immediate preventive action, which will be subject to post-action justification and review.

SEC. 9. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* — Unless otherwise stated, the DICT and NPC, in consultation with other national government agencies, civil society organizations, NGOs, private sector representatives, and other stakeholders, will create the necessary rules and regulations to effectively implement this Act within ninety (90) days of its effectivity.

SEC. 10. *Separability Clause.* — If any provision of this Act is deemed invalid, the rest of the Act will remain in effect.

SEC. 11. *Repealing Clause.* — All laws, decrees, orders, regulations, and issuances, or parts thereof, that are inconsistent with this Act, are repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SEC. 12. *Effectivity.* — This Act will take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,