

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



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

House Bill No. 7422

Introduced by Hon. Antonio B. Legarda Jr.

AN ACT
MODERNIZING PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND BARANGAY READING CENTERS AS
COMMUNITY LEARNING SPACES, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC
ACT NO. 7743, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF CONGRESSIONAL, CITY, AND MUNICIPAL LIBRARIES,
AND BARANGAY READING CENTERS THROUGHOUT THE PHILIPPINES,
APPROPRIATING THE NECESSARY FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES", AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

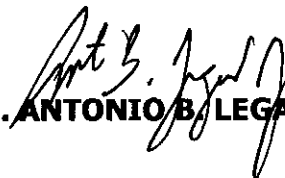
Public libraries and barangay reading centers were originally established to provide people with free access to books and spaces for learning. However, the way students' study and access information has changed significantly, and many of our libraries have not kept pace. Today, numerous public libraries continue to operate in outdated facilities, with limited collections and environments that are neither welcoming nor conducive to learning. Most are also open only during office hours, making them inaccessible to the very people who rely on them the most.

Students today need more than physical books. They require reliable internet access, digital learning resources, and quiet, safe spaces where they can focus and study. This gap has pushed many students to spend long hours in coffee shops simply to access a desk and an internet connection. This situation is problematic, as it effectively limits access to suitable study spaces to those who can afford to pay for them.

This bill seeks to modernize public libraries and barangay reading centers by transforming them into modern, functional, and safe community learning spaces. It recognizes that libraries are no longer just places for books, but also important hubs for digital access and lifelong learning.

This bill also responds to the growing need for safe and accessible public spaces. Extended operating hours, well-lit and secure facilities, and inclusive designs will allow students to use libraries without discomfort. Ensuring that at least one public library remains open beyond regular hours will make learning spaces more accessible to those who need them the most. Finally, this bill aims to bring public libraries closer to the people by making them relevant and responsive to present-day needs.

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


HON. ANTONIO B. LEGARDA, JR.

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21 **ESTABLISHMENT OF CONGRESSIONAL, CITY, AND MUNICIPAL LIBRARIES,**
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25

26
27 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in*
28 *Congress assembled:*
29

30 **Section 1. Short Title.** – This Act shall be known as the "Public Library and Community
31 Learning Spaces Modernization Act."

32 **Section 2.** Section 2 of Republic Act No. 7743 is hereby amended to read as follows:

33 "Section 2. *Establishment of Public Libraries and Reading Centers.* – The National
34 Library in coordination with the Department of the Interior and Local Government
35 (DILG) shall undertake the establishment of additional public libraries to serve all
36 congressional districts, cities, and municipalities in the Philippines and reading centers
37 in every barangay except in cities or municipalities where there are existing public
38 libraries or in barangays where there are existing reading centers: Provided, that the
39 establishment of such libraries and reading centers shall be based on the development
40 program of the National Library, in coordination with the development council of each

city or municipality and in the case of the barangay reading centers, in coordination with the respective barangay councils: Provided, further, that where these public libraries and reading centers already exist, ~~the National Library shall continue to update the facilities thereof~~ **SAID FACILITIES SHALL BE UPGRADED BASED ON THE LATEST COMPUTER, DIGITAL, AND ELECTRONIC LIBRARY TECHNOLOGIES, AND BE EQUIPPED WITH UPDATED COLLECTIONS OF BOOKS, ELECTRONIC BOOKS, ONLINE RESEARCH RESOURCES, AND MODERN ELECTRONIC LIBRARY SYSTEMS FOR STORING, CATALOGING, AND ACCESSING INFORMATION.**

THERE SHALL BE AT LEAST ONE PUBLIC LIBRARY IN ALL HIGHLY URBANIZED CITY (HUC) AND FIRST-CLASS COMPONENT CITY THAT REMAINS OPEN BEYOND REGULAR HOURS, AND WHERE FEASIBLE, OPERATE TWENTY-FOUR (24) HOURS A DAY, SEVEN (7) DAYS A WEEK. THE PUBLIC LIBRARY MUST BE SAFE, WELL-LIT, AND CONDUCTIVE FOR ACADEMIC LEARNING, AND SHALL BE EQUIPPED WITH ESSENTIAL AMENITIES SUCH AS RELIABLE INTERNET ACCESS, CHARGING STATIONS, STUDY DESKS, ADEQUATE LIGHTING, AND CLEAN RESTROOM FACILITIES."

Section 3. Section 5 of Republic Act No. 7743 is hereby amended to read as follows:

"Section 5. *Period of Implementation.* - The ~~overall~~ national plan of implementation shall ~~cover initially a period of~~ **BE UPDATED EVERY** five (5) years: *Provided,* That those congressional districts, cities and municipalities with no existing public libraries, as well as barangays situated in remote, isolated and rural areas, shall have priority in the allocation of resources.

X X X "

Section 4. Section 6 of Republic Act No. 7743 is hereby amended to read as follows:

"Section 6. *Functions of the Public Libraries and Barangay Reading Centers.* - The public libraries and barangay reading centers shall have the following functions:

- a. To make available to the members of the community reading materials of wide array, **CONTENT AND FORMAT, WHETHER PHYSICAL OR DIGITAL,**

1 including **BUT NOT LIMITED TO** reading materials prescribed by the
2 Department of Education, **COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION, AND**
3 **TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**
4 ~~Culture, and Sports~~ and national newspapers of general circulation and others;

- 5 b. To be used as a venue for audio-visual presentations in the community and
6 other kinds of exhibitions, **SEMINARS, TRAINING MODULES,**
7 **WEBINARS,** and activities **WITH OBJECTIVES THAT INCLUDE BUT ARE**
8 **NOT LIMITED TO THE FOLLOWING:**

9 i. **INCREASING THE FUNCTIONAL LITERARY RATE;**

10 ii. **ENCOURAGING A CULTURE OF READING, SELF-STUDY AND**
11 **LIFELONG LEARNING;**

12 iii. **PRESERVING THE LONG HERITAGE AND HISTORY; AND,**

13 iv. **PROMOTING NATIONALISM, SOCIO-CIVIC CONSCIOUSNESS,**
14 **AND HARMONY THROUGHOUT THE LOCAL COMMUNITY;**

- 15 c. **TO SERVE AS ACCESS POINTS FOR FREE FAST INTERNET**
16 **CONNECTIVITY, IN LINE WITH THE POLICIES, PROGRAMS AND**
17 **PROJECTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION AND**
18 **COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (DICT);**

- 19 d. **TO PROVIDE MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY, ESPECIALLY**
20 **STUDENTS, TEACHERS, PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWD), AND**
21 **SENIOR CITIZENS, AFFORDABLE AND RELIABLE RENTAL SERVICES**
22 **FOR INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**
23 **AND EQUIPMENT SUCH AS BUT NOT LIMITED TO SMARTPHONES,**
24 **TABLETS, LAPTOPS, DESKTOP COMPUTERS, AND MOBILE WIFI**
25 **HOTSPOTS;**

- 26 e. To offer such other related services in the furtherance of this Act.”

27 **Section 5.** A new Section 7 is hereby inserted to read as follows:

28 **'SECTION 7. ACCESSIBILITY, SAFETY, AND SOCIAL INCLUSION. – TO**
29 **PROMOTE INCLUSIVE MOBILITY, PUBLIC LIBRARIES SHALL BE LOCATED**
30 **IN ACCESSIBLE AREAS AND SUPPORTED BY ACTIVE TRANSPORT**
31 **INFRASTRUCTURE, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO BICYCLE RACKS,**

1 PEDESTRIAN WALKWAYS, AND PROXIMITY TO PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
2 STOPS TO ENSURE EASE OF ACCESS FOR USERS AT ALL HOURS.

3 NO PERSON SHALL BE DENIED ACCESS TO PUBLIC LIBRARIES OR READING
4 CENTERS ON THE BASIS OF AGE, GENDER, DISABILITY, RELIGION,
5 ETHNICITY, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY OR EXPRESSION,
6 OR SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS. ALL FACILITIES SHALL ADOPT CHILD-
7 FRIENDLY, GENDER-RESPONSIVE, AND DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE DESIGNS,
8 AND INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO: SEPARATE AND SECURE
9 RESTROOMS FOR ALL GENDERS; RAMPS, TACTILE SURFACES, AND
10 ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES; AND WELL-
11 LIT, SAFE PREMISES WITH TRAINED SECURITY PERSONNEL AND
12 SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS.”

13 **Section 6.** A new Section 8 is hereby inserted to read as follows:

14 **“SECTION 8. *GREEN AND CLIMATE-RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE AND***
15 ***PROCUREMENT.* – PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND READING CENTERS SHALL, AS**
16 **FAR AS PRACTICABLE, BE DESIGNED OR RETROFITTED IN ACCORDANCE**
17 **WITH GREEN BUILDING PRINCIPLES AND CLIMATE-ADAPTIVE**
18 **STANDARDS, INCLUDING ENERGY-EFFICIENT LIGHTING, PASSIVE**
19 **COOLING SYSTEMS, SOLAR ENERGY, WATER-SAVING TECHNOLOGIES, AND**
20 **DISASTER-RESILIENT DESIGN, PARTICULARLY IN FLOOD- OR**
21 **EARTHQUAKE-PRONE AREAS.**

22 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS (LGUS) ARE FURTHER ENCOURAGED TO**
23 **ADOPT ENVIRONMENTALLY AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE**
24 **PROCUREMENT PRACTICES. THIS INCLUDES PRIORITIZING LOCALLY**
25 **SOURCED, RENEWABLE, OR RECYCLED MATERIALS – SUCH AS**
26 **SUSTAINABLY HARVESTED BAMBOO, RATTAN, ABACA, AND OTHER**
27 **INDIGENOUS AND HERITAGE-BASED MATERIALS- FOR FURNITURE,**
28 **FURNISHINGS, AND FINISHES USED WITHIN THE HUBS.**

29 **IN SUPPORT OF THESE EFFORTS, NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES MAY**
30 **PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, KNOWLEDGE-SHARING PLATFORMS,**

1 OR GRANT INCENTIVES TO LGUS THAT ADOPT INNOVATIVE OR
2 EXEMPLARY GREEN AND CULTURAL DESIGN PRACTICES IN THEIR
3 IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS ACT.”

4 **Section 7.** A new Section 9 is hereby inserted to read as follows:

5 **“SECTION 9. *STAFFING AND CAPACITY BUILDING.* – EACH PUBLIC**
6 **LIBRARY SHALL BE HEADED BY A QUALIFIED LIBRARIAN, PREFERABLY A**
7 **LICENSED LIBRARIAN, AND SHALL BE STAFFED IN ACCORDANCE WITH**
8 **CIVIL SERVICE LAWS AND REGULATIONS. LIBRARY PERSONNEL SHALL**
9 **UNDERGO CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN LIBRARY**
10 **SUBJECTS, DIGITAL SYSTEMS, COMMUNITY EDUCATION, AND SAFE-SPACE**
11 **MANAGEMENT.”**

12 **Section 8.** A new Section 10 is hereby inserted to read as follows:

13 **“SECTION 10. *ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS.* – LGUS SHALL**
14 **SUPPORT THE OPERATION, MAINTENANCE, SECURITY AND**
15 **SUSTAINABILITY OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES, AND READING CENTERS WITHIN**
16 **THEIR JURISDICTION, INCLUDING THE PROVISION OF PERSONNEL,**
17 **UTILITIES, AND COUNTERPART FUNDING, SUBJECT TO APPLICABLE**
18 **LAWS.”**

19 **Section 9.** A new Section 11 is hereby inserted to read as follows:

20 **“SECTION 11. *SUPPORT OF NATIONAL AGENCIES.* - THE DEPARTMENT OF**
21 **THE INTERIOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT (DILG), IN COORDINATION**
22 **WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (DEPED), THE DEPARTMENT OF**
23 **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (DICT), THE**
24 **DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES (DENR), AND**
25 **THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF THE PHILIPPINES (NLP), SHALL ASSIST THE**
26 **LGUS IN THE PLANNING, TECHNICAL IMPLEMENTATION, STAFFING, AND**
27 **SUSTAINABILITY OF THESE FACILITIES.”**

28 **Section 10. *Appropriations.*** – The funding necessary to implement the provisions of
29 this Act shall be charged against the current appropriations of NLP, DepED, DILG and

1 concerned LGUs. Thereafter, such amounts as may be necessary for the continuous
2 implementation of this Act shall be allocated and charged against the respective local
3 funds of concerned LGUs.

4 **Section 11. *Implementation Monitoring.*** – The NLP and DILG shall establish a
5 Monitoring System for the implementation of this Act, in coordination with relevant
6 government agencies and LGUs. Within six (6) months from the effectivity of this Act,
7 HUCs shall submit to the DILG a library development and operations plan that includes
8 site identification, facility design, sustainability components, budget allocation, and
9 staffing arrangements for overnight operations. The DILG shall consolidate and submit
10 an annual program report to Congress on the status of implementation, challenges
11 encountered, and best practices, for a period of five (5) years.

12 **Section 12. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** - Within ninety (90) days from the
13 effectivity of this Act, the NLP and DILG, in consultation with HUCs, DepEd, CHED,
14 TESDA and DICT shall promulgate the rules and regulations necessary for the effective
15 implementation of the provisions of this Act.

16 **Section 13. *Separability Clause.*** - Any portion or provision of this Act that may be
17 declared unconstitutional shall not have the effect of nullifying other portions or
18 provisions hereof as such remaining provisions can still subsist and be given effect.

19 **Section 14. *Repealing Clause.*** - All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders,
20 letters of instruction, proclamations, or administrative orders, rules or regulations or
21 parts thereof that are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed
22 or modified accordingly.

23 **Section 15. *Effectivity.*** - This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following its
24 publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,