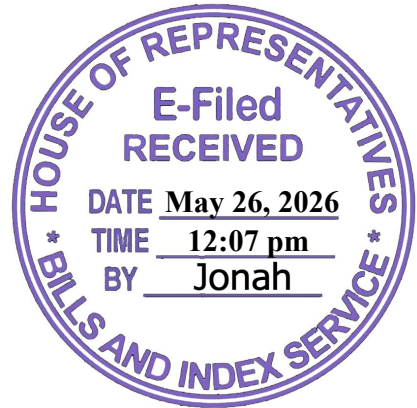


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 9438



INTRODUCED BY **HONORABLE JANICE V. DEGAMO**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article XIV of the 1987 Philippine Constitution provides the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and to ensure that such education is accessible to all. Public libraries and study hubs support the education of our learners through free, equitable access to information and technology, and safe learning environments, regardless of their socioeconomic status.

Despite the passage of Republic Act No. 7743, or “*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*,” that mandates the establishment of congressional, city, and municipal libraries, as well as barangay reading centers throughout the Philippines, implementation remains significantly behind schedule.

Data from the National Library of the Philippines (NLP) reveals a severe implementation gap: a 2023 study reported that public libraries constitute only 3% of the ideally prescribed statutory target¹. Subsequent reporting highlights that out of 44,000 local government units, only 1,721 maintained NLP affiliation in 2024², a number that rose only slightly to 1,754 by February 2026³. These figures fall considerably short of what would be expected given the country's population and geographic distribution. Furthermore, many of these existing facilities operate during limited hours, with some failing to offer extended evening or 24/7 access for learners who rely on library resources after working or attending school during the day.

¹4 libraries for the people-and why we need more of them, Erin Alcala, Nathalie Grace Adalid, inquirer.net, December 9, 2024, <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2013392/4-libraries-for-the-people-and-why-we-need-more-of-them> (last accessed 3 April 2026)

² Why our reading crisis is a public library crisis, Arnold Almacan, 5 July 2025, Rappler, <https://www.rappler.com/life-and-style/arts-culture/why-reading-public-library-crisis/> (last accessed 3 April 2026)

³ Statistical Number of Affiliated Public Libraries, National Library of the Philippines, <https://web.nlp.gov.ph/directory-2/> (last accessed 3 April 2026)

The lack of 24/7 public libraries or learning hubs forces students and young professionals to rely on commercial venues like coffee shops and fast-food chains, incurring unnecessary costs to access safe and conducive environments for study and work.

A 2018 study on extended library hours in the Philippines⁴ reveals that the main reason library users study during extended library hours is the lack of availability during the day making nighttime the most practical period for their study and research work. Furthermore, respondents recommended extending library operating hours to 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

This measure seeks to address the challenges faced by many Filipino learners and young professionals: the lack of access to free, well-equipped, and safe learning hubs at any time of day. The proposed establishment of 24/7 public libraries or learning hubs constitutes a strategic initiative designed to significantly enhance educational accessibility and efficacy, alleviating the financial constraints and scheduling conflicts learners face.

Furthermore, this bill envisions 24/7 public libraries or learning hubs as safe and secure, creating the perfect environment for focused study or research. By providing this reliable infrastructure, we can make education fairer for everyone, use resources more effectively, and help learners achieve better results through consistent, barrier-free access to quality learning spaces.

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


JANICE V. DEGAMO
Representative, 3rd District, Negros Oriental

⁴ Mariano, ABC, & Janio, RV (2018). Above and Beyond: A Look at Library Clients Past Regular Hours, *Philippine Association of Academic/ Research Librarians, Inc. Research Journal*, Vol. 5: 98-111, <https://ejournals.ph/function/reader1/read2/web/reader.php?id=uploads%2Farchive%2FPAARLRJ%2FVol.+5+No.+1+%282018%29%2FArticles%2FArticle6.pdf&di=18462> (last accessed 3 April 2026)

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Introduced by **HONORABLE JANICE V. DEGAMO**

AN ACT
INSTITUTIONALIZING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF 24/7 PUBLIC
LIBRARIES OR LEARNING HUBS IN ALL CITIES AND CLUSTERED
MUNICIPALITIES IN THE COUNTRY TO PROVIDE SAFE, SUSTAINABLE,
AND ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC STUDY SPACES, AND FOR 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 “24/7 Public Libraries or Learning Hubs Act”

Section 2. Declaration of Policy.- It is the declared policy of the State to protect and promote the right of citizens to quality education and safe, inclusive learning environments; to elevate the literacy level of every Filipino through support for learner productivity; and to recognize the vital role of knowledge and information in nation building.

Section 3. Mandatory establishment of 24/7 Public Libraries or Learning Hubs.- All cities and cluster municipalities in the country shall establish and operate at least one (1) public library or learning hub that remains open and operational twenty-four (24) hours a day, seven (7) days a week. Priority shall be given to underserved, low-income communities, and geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas.

These facilities must be safe, well-lit, and equipped with essential amenities such as broadband internet, charging stations, study desks, proper ventilation, and clean restroom facilities. They shall be designed and retrofitted in accordance with recognized green building standards, incorporating energy-efficient lighting, solar panels, rainwater harvesting systems, and other sustainability features to reduce their environmental footprint and operational costs.

Section 4. Accessible Location and Active Transport Integration.- To promote inclusive mobility, 24/7 public libraries or learning hubs shall be located in accessible areas and supported by active transport infrastructure, including but not limited to bicycle

racks, pedestrian walkways, and proximity to public transportation stops to ensure ease of access for users at all hours.

Section 5. Green and Climate- Resilient Infrastructure and Procurement- To encourage sustainability and resilience in public infrastructure, local government units (LGU) are strongly encouraged to design, retrofit, and operate the hubs in accordance with green building principles and climate-adaptive features. This may include energy-efficient lighting, passive cooling systems, solar energy, water-saving technologies, and disaster-resilient design, particularly in flood- or earthquake-prone areas.

LGUs are further encouraged to adopt environmentally and culturally responsive procurement practices. This includes prioritizing locally sourced, renewable, or recycled- materials such as sustainably harvested bamboo, rattan, abaca, and other indigenous and heritage-based materials- for furniture, furnishings, and finishes used within the hubs.

In support of these efforts, national government agencies may provide technical assistance, knowledge-sharing platforms, or grant incentives to LGUs that adopt innovative or exemplary green and cultural design practices in their implementation of this Act.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), in coordination with the Climate Change Commission (CCC), the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCAA), National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), shall develop supplemental guidelines or incentive programs to support local governments in adopting sustainable and culturally respectful standards under this section.

Section 6. Social Inclusions and Accessibility.- No person shall be denied access to 24/7 public libraries or learning hubs on the basis of age, gender, disability, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sexual characteristics (SOGIESC), or socioeconomic status.

All facilities shall adopt gender-responsive and disability-inclusive designs including but not limited to:

- Separate and secure restrooms for all genders;
- Ramps, tactile surfaces, and assistive technology for persons with disabilities; and
- Well-lit and safe premises with trained security personnel and surveillance systems.

Section 7. 24/7 Public Libraries or Learning Hubs as Zones of Peace- To ensure the protection and continuity of education of learners, all 24/7 public libraries or learning hubs are hereby declared as zones of peace consistent with the provisions of Republic Act No. 7610, Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act; Republic Act No. 10821, the Children's Emergency Relief and

Protection Act; and Republic Act No. 11188, the Special Protection of Children in Situations of Armed Conflict Act.

Section 8. Child Protection Policy. - All 24/7 public libraries or learning hubs shall adopt a child protection policy and guidelines for the prevention of violence against children. Staff shall be trained to detect and respond to any form of child abuse, and relevant information on reporting cases of child abuse shall be posted in a visible area inside the premises.

Section 9. Safe Spaces and Anti-Harassment Protocols. -The 24/7 public libraries or learning hubs shall implement safety measures in accordance with Republic Act No. 11313, or the Safe Spaces Act. Library staff and security personnel shall undergo gender sensitivity and anti-sexual harassment training. Each facility shall post clear safe spaces guidelines, and provide accessible mechanisms for reporting and addressing violations.

Section 10. Community Participation and Feedback Mechanisms.- LGUs shall ensure meaningful community engagement in the planning and operation of 24/7 public libraries or learning hubs. Consultation with different stakeholders, including children and youth, women's organizations, organizations of persons with disabilities, civil society organizations, and the academe shall be conducted. Each facility shall maintain an anonymous feedback system, both on-site and online, to continuously monitor safety, accessibility, and service delivery.

Section 11. Support from National Agencies.- The Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), in coordination with the Department of Education (DepEd), the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), and the National Library of the Philippines (NLP), shall assist the LGUs in the planning, technical implementation, staffing, and sustainability of these facilities.

Section 12. Implementation Plan and Reporting. - Within six (6) months from the effectivity of this Act, covered LGUs shall submit to the DILG a library development and operations plan that includes site identification, facility design, sustainability components, budget allocation, and staffing arrangements for overnight operations.

The DILG shall consolidate and submit an annual progress report to Congress on the status of implementation, challenges encountered, and best practices, for a period of five (5) years.

Section 13. Implementing Rules and regulations.- Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DILG, in coordination with DepEd, DICT, DENR, CCC, NLP, PCW, NCDA, NCIP, CHR, in consultation with relevant stakeholders including civil society organizations, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

Section 14. Appropriations.- The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current appropriations of the concerned local government units. Thereafter, such amounts necessary for the continued implementation shall be included in the annual budgets for the concerned LGUs.

Section 15. Separability Clause.- If any part or provision of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining parts or provisions not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 16.. Repealing Clause.- All laws, executive orders, presidential decrees or issuances, letters of instruction, administrative orders, rules and regulations contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

Section 17. Effectivity.- This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,