

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 9740



Introduced by **Representative Jaime R. Fresnedi**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to digitize all books necessary for public educational consumption by establishing the Philippine Virtual Library. The proposed measure aims to create a centralized and more accessible digital repository of textbooks and other learning materials for learners and teachers. The measure aims to resolve the decades-old problem of textbook shortages in the country and promote digital literacy amongst the youth by equipping the public education system with a more flexible and inclusive learning environment.

In a world largely run by technology, where most of our needs can be conveniently met digitally, it is high time to provide our educational system with sufficient online access to textbook materials. Not only does this make our young learners more computer-literate, which in turn better prepares them for the future, but it also provides them with the convenience of learning in their own space, time, and comfort. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated how technology can facilitate learning, as evidenced by the transition to remote learning—where students attended classes online and were provided with materials digitally—after face-to-face classes were suspended. In haste, this pushed public school teachers to innovate their classes by providing their students with multiple learning materials through their own means.¹²

According to the data provided by the Department of Education (DepEd), over 24.9 million students were enrolled in public schools in School Year 2025-2026.³ With this sheer number of students, the lack of sufficient textbook materials has been a growing concern for the school system over the years. Logistical barriers in the procurement and delivery of textbooks continuously mar the provision of textbooks in public schools. The Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM 2) stated in their Year 2 Report that only 35 out of 90 textbook titles have been fully *delivered* as of January 2025.⁴ Historically, it has also been reported that, on average, around six (6) children share a single textbook for a

¹ Aincena Hani, Yen Ocampo, and Azizah Saffa, "Digital Libraries to Ease Learning in the Philippines - OpenGov Asia," OpenGov Asia -, August 20, 2021, <https://opengovasia.com/digital-libraries-to-ease-learning-in-the-philippines/>.

² Esposo-Betan, Sharon Maria, and Ana Maria Fresnido. 2022. "COVID-19 antextbook-to-studentd Philippine Academic Libraries". *International Journal of Librarianship* 7 (1):3-20. <https://doi.org/10.23974/ijol.2022.vol7.1.215>.

³ Cariaso, B. (2025, Septe). DepEd bares 1.2 million enrollment drop for SY 2025-2026. Philstar.Com. <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/09/05/2470606/depd-bares-12-million-enrollment-drop-sy-2025-2026>

⁴ Areco, A. (2025, February 3). Far from 'matatag': Delayed textbooks worsen learning crisis. Rappler. <https://www.rappler.com/philippines/matatag-curriculum-delayed-textbooks-public-schools-edcom-2-report/>

particular class in elementary school and shared by eight (8) in high school, making the standard textbook-to-student ratio far from ideal.⁵

This bill is envisioned to provide digitized copies of all textbooks and reading materials to all learners through the DepEd. These shall be compiled in the Philippine Virtual Library that will be managed and maintained by the Department of Information and Communication Technology (DICT). The DepEd shall also ensure access to these materials through the provision of computers and other devices. In line with this, the DICT shall ensure that a reliable internet connection is readily available in each primary and secondary public school so as not to hinder the learning process we envision for the future of our public school system.

This proposed legislation also intends to address the expenses to be incurred by procuring necessary devices through the recycling of old but still usable computers from government agencies and private entities that will donate. Additionally, this bill also provides DepEd may seek the support and assistance of the National Library of the Philippines to further increase the abundance of resources within the Philippine Virtual Library through additional reading materials and textbooks representative of Philippine culture and literature.

Digitalization is an inevitable development as technology progresses over time. This legislation ensures that the Philippine education sector will be able to adapt to existing and emerging technologies. This bill ultimately aims to ensure that Filipino students' reading and technological literacy can become up to par with our increasingly digital world.

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


JAIME R. FRESNEDI
Representative
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⁵ "Delivering Educational Textbooks to Schools in the Philippines: Textbook Count 1-2-3," G May 17, 2017, <https://www.g-watch.org/news-release/delivering-educational-textbooks-schools-philippines-textbook-count-1-2-3>.

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AN ACT
ESTABLISHING THE PHILIPPINE VIRTUAL LIBRARY, PROVIDING FUNDS
THEREFOR, 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 "*Philippine Virtual Library Act*".

Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It shall be the policy of the State to ensure that its citizens have the knowledge, skills, competency, and necessary resources to access and navigate an increasingly digitized world. Towards this end, the State shall provide its citizens with the opportunity to increase their adaptability to information and communications technology and to enhance their learning experience by providing access to digitized copies of textbooks necessary for the provision of quality primary and secondary education.

Sec. 3. *Philippine Virtual Library.* – The Department of Education (DepEd) shall create a digitized copy of all textbooks and reference books it deems necessary for the public education of Philippine elementary and secondary students. Previous textbooks and reference books may be made available for archival purposes. These shall be compiled in the Philippine Virtual Library which shall be jointly managed by the DepEd and the Department of Information and Communication Technology (DICT).

Sec. 4. *Access to Digitized Copies of Textbooks.* – The DepEd shall ensure access to the digitized copies of textbooks by providing computers, gadgets, and an updated electronic library system for storing, cataloging, and filing of data and materials, or appropriate wherewithal to all primary and secondary public schools nationwide. The DICT shall provide fast and reliable internet access to each primary and secondary public school to ensure access to the digitized copies of textbooks.

Sec. 5. *Recycling of Computers.* – National government agencies, government-owned and controlled corporations, and other government financial institutions which shall procure new computers shall endorse their old units to the DICT to check if the computers can still be

used for the intent of this Act. All computer units that are still usable shall then be donated to the DepEd for deployment to primary and secondary public schools nationwide.

Sec. 6. *Additional Online Educational Materials.* – The DepEd may seek the assistance and support of the National Library of the Philippines (NPL) to complement the Philippine Virtual Library's digital repository of textbooks with additional materials that is representative of Filipino culture and literature. DepEd shall also be allowed to add other online materials that it deems necessary for expanding the learning opportunities for students.

Sec. 7. *Custody over Digitized Copies of Textbooks.* – The DepEd and the NPL shall have joint custody over the digitized copies of the textbooks. The DICT shall likewise ensure the technological management of the digital repository to ensure the integrity of the system.

Sec. 8. *Protection of Intellectual Property.* – The DepEd and the NPL shall ensure that the digitalized textbooks and other learning materials will be used solely for non-profit educational and archival purposes, in accordance with the Fair Use of a Copyrighted Work under Section 185 of Republic Act No. 8293 or the “Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines”. The DICT shall likewise establish a digital mechanism to protect the repository of books and learning materials as intellectual property.

Sec. 9. *Private Sector Participation.* – The DepEd is hereby mandated to formulate a program that shall encourage the participation of private corporations and civil society organizations in the implementation of this Act. The program shall include, among others, proposals to encourage private sector participation in the digitization of books and in the provision of computers.

Sec. 10. *Appropriations.* – The initial amount of five hundred million (Php 500,000,000.00) shall be appropriated for the immediate implementation of this Act and shall be jointly managed by the DepEd and DICT. The maintenance and operating expenses necessary for the continuous and effective implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

Sec. 11. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days from the approval of this Act, the DepEd, the DICT, and the National Library of the Philippines shall promulgate the necessary implementing rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

Sec. 12. *Separability Clause.* – If, for any reason, any part, section, or provisions of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

Sec. 13. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations, and parts thereof which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

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

Approved,