

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **9859**



Introduced by Representative LEILA M. DE LIMA

AN ACT
INSTITUTIONALIZING THE GRANT OF STUDENT LOAD DISCOUNT PRIVILEGE
ON MOBILE AND INTERNET SERVICES AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article XIV, Section 1 of the 1987 Constitution provides that, “[t]he State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.” Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) provides that, “States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity.” These emphasize not only the right to quality education but also the necessity of actively making it accessible on an equal basis to all.

In today’s digital age, equal access to quality education is inextricably linked to digital connectivity or access to internet services. This reality was affirmed and acutely felt during the COVID-19 pandemic when schools had to shift their teaching modality to online arrangement, permanently expanding learning space even in the present post-pandemic setting. Even as most schools and classes in the primary, secondary, and tertiary education levels have returned to the face-to-face class modality, the digital tools, resources, and platforms used during the pandemic have remained integral to the delivery of education. However, the increasingly significant role of digital accessibility in education and learning has created a new barrier to access to quality education in the country.

In the Philippines, the deepening digital divide exacerbates deep-rooted injustices in the education sector that leave students from underprivileged families and communities behind as they struggle to keep up with various learning expenses not covered by existing public education, scholarship, and learning subsidy programs.

Among these learning expenses is the access to mobile and internet services that allow students to make use of online tools, resources, and platforms to enhance their learning experience and school performance.

This bill seeks to provide a 20% discount on mobile load, text, call, and internet services to all Filipino students currently enrolled in a duly authorized elementary, secondary, technical-vocational, or higher education institution, excluding post-graduate degree courses. This bill seeks to bridge the digital accessibility gap and address the emerging hindrance to equally accessible, quality education by easing the financial burden on Filipino students for whom internet access is now a basic educational necessity.

In the 20th Congress, similar bills were filed by Representatives Walfredo “Arman” Dimaguila, Jesus “Bong” Suntay, Antolin Oreta III, and Javier Benitez, and Senators Bam Aquino, JV Ejercito, and Mark Villar. This bill fully adopts Senator Bam Aquino’s Senate Bill No. 126.

Early approval of this measure is earnestly sought.



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

1 SECTION. 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Student Discount
2 Para Sa Load Act.”
3

4 SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – The State shall give priority to education,
5 science and technology, arts, culture, and sports to foster patriotism and nationalism,
6 accelerate social progress, and promote total human liberation and development. It
7 also recognizes the vital role of communication and information in nation-building.
8

9 Pursuant to these policies, the State ensures equitable access to education by
10 providing necessary support to students, particularly in their communication and online
11 learning needs. To achieve this, the State shall:
12

13 (a) Establish a mechanism that ensures the mandatory grant of a student load
14 discount privilege;

15 (b) Enlist the cooperation of telecommunication companies (TELCOs) in
16 extending assistance to students through this privilege; and

17 (c) Encourage students, particularly the poor and underprivileged, to utilize
18 digital tools for education.
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20 SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act:
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(a) *Student* refers to any Filipino citizen currently enrolled in a duly authorized elementary, secondary, technical-vocational, or higher education institution, excluding post-graduate degree courses;

(b) *Telecommunication Companies (TELCOs)* refer to companies providing mobile, text, call, and internet services in the Philippines;

(c) *Retailers* refer to individuals or business establishments, whether physical or online, duly authorized to sell or distribute prepaid mobile load, mobile data, call and text services, and other internet services to consumers on behalf of TELCOs;

(d) *Student Load Discount* refers to a twenty percent (20%) discount on prepaid and postpaid mobile load, text, call, and internet services availed by eligible students.

SEC. 4. *Coverage.* – This Act shall cover all telecommunication services, including but not limited to:

(a) Prepaid mobile load for text, call, and data;

(b) Postpaid mobile plans; and

(c) Broadband and internet services used for educational purposes.

SEC. 5. *Student Load Discount Privilege.* – A student shall be entitled to a twenty (20%) discount on mobile load, text, call, and internet services, subject to the following conditions:

(a) The discount shall be applied upon presentation of a valid school ID or proof of enrollment;

(b) The discount shall be available year-round, including weekends and holidays; and

(c) The discount shall apply only to personal educational use and may not be transferred.

SEC. 6. *Prohibition on Double Discounts.* – Students shall not be allowed to avail of multiple discounts at the same time. If a promotional discount from a TELCO is higher than twenty (20%), the student may choose which discount to apply.

SEC. 7. *Tax Deduction for TELCOs.* – TELCOs may claim tax deductions equivalent to the cost of the discount granted, subject to the rules to be promulgated by the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR).

SEC. 8. *Implementation and Monitoring.* – The National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) and the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) shall oversee the implementation of this Act. TELCOs shall submit quarterly reports on their compliance with this Act.

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67 SEC. 9. *Penalties.* – The following penalties shall be imposed for violation of
68 this Act:

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70 (a) TELCOs that refuse to grant the discount provided under this Act shall be
71 fined:

- 72 1. Fifty Thousand Pesos (₱50,000) for the first offense;
- 73 2. One Hundred Thousand Pesos (₱100,000) for the second offense; and
- 74 3. Two Hundred Thousand Pesos (₱200,000) for the third and subsequent
75 offenses.

76
77 (b) Retailers who, without justifiable reason, fail or refuse to provide the student
78 load discount, or who impose conditions contrary to the intent of this Act, shall be
79 subject to the following penalties:

- 80 1. Twenty-Five Thousand Pesos (₱25,000) for the first offense;
- 81 2. Fifty Thousand Pesos (₱50,000) for the second offense; and
- 82 3. One Hundred Thousand Pesos (₱100,000) and possible disqualification
83 or blacklisting from being an accredited load or service retailer for the
84 third and subsequent offenses.

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86
87 *Provided, That* the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), in coordination with the
88 National Telecommunications Commission (NTC), shall maintain a list of erring
89 retailers and may issue orders of disqualification for habitual non-compliance.
90 “Habitual non-compliance” shall be defined in the implementing rules and regulations
91 with appropriate parameters that are aligned with the intent of this Act.

92
93 (c) Any student found using fraudulent documents to avail of the discount shall
94 be disqualified from the privilege without prejudice to the filing of appropriate criminal
95 charges for such act.

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97 SEC. 10. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days from
98 the effectivity of this Act, the NTC, DICT, DTI, Department of Education (DepEd), and
99 the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) shall promulgate the rules and
100 regulations to effectively implement the provisions of this Act.

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102 SEC. 11. *Separability Clause.* – If any section or provision of this Act is declared
103 invalid or unconstitutional, the sections or provisions not affected thereby shall
104 continue to be in full force and effect.

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106 SEC. 12. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, presidential decrees, executive and
107 administrative orders, letters of instruction, rules and regulations, or parts thereof
108 inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, modified, or amended
109 accordingly.

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111 SEC. 13. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its
112 publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation in the
113 Philippines.

Approved,