



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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
FIRST REGULAR SESSION

HOUSE BILL NO. 9964



Introduced by Representatives
ZIAUR-RAHMAN "ZIA" ALONTO ADIONG

AN ACT
REQUIRING VIDEO GAME SERVICE PROVIDERS TO DISABLE CHAT
AND AUDIO COMMUNICATION FUNCTIONS FOR MINOR ACCOUNTS,
PREVENTING ADULT USERS FROM CONTACTING OR MESSAGING
MINOR ACCOUNTS, PROVIDING CHILD ONLINE SAFETY DUTIES FOR
VIDEO GAME SERVICE PROVIDERS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The internet has become a permanent part of the daily lives of Filipino children. Online games, in particular, are no longer limited to single-player entertainment. Many video games now operate as social platforms where players, including children, can communicate with strangers through text chat, private messages, voice chat, audio rooms, group invitations, friend requests, and similar features.

While online games may develop creativity, coordination, and problem-solving, their communication features also expose children to risks that existing laws do not fully prevent at the design level. These risks include grooming, sexual predation, cyberbullying, harassment, coercion, recruitment into harmful conduct, exposure to violent or sexual conversations, and unsolicited contact from adult users.

Existing Philippine law already recognizes the need to protect children in digital spaces. Republic Act No. 11930, or the Anti-Online Sexual Abuse or Exploitation of Children and Anti-Child Sexual Abuse or Exploitation Materials Act, penalizes online grooming, luring, sexual exploitation, and related acts. Republic Act No. 11313, or the Safe Spaces Act, penalizes gender-based online sexual harassment, including acts done through direct and private messages. Republic Act No. 10175, or the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012, addresses cybersex, computer-related identity theft, and other cybercrime offenses. Republic Act No. 10173, or the Data Privacy Act of 2012, protects personal data, including children's personal data, and requires accountable and lawful processing of information.

However, these laws generally respond after harmful conduct occurs. They do not impose a clear, affirmative, and uniform duty on video game service providers to design their platforms so that adult users cannot contact minors and minors cannot use high-risk chat and audio communication tools inside games.

This bill adopts a safety-by-design approach. It does not prohibit minors from playing age-appropriate video games. It does not regulate game strategy, gameplay, matchmaking, leaderboards, non-communicative game mechanics, or pre-set non-identifying gameplay signals. Instead, it targets the communication channels most commonly used to reach, groom, harass, or exploit children: free-form text chat, private messaging, voice chat, audio communication, voice messages, and similar user-to-user communication functions.

The bill requires video game service providers making games available in the Philippines to disable chat and audio communication functions for all accounts of users below eighteen (18) years of age. It further requires providers to prevent adult accounts from directly contacting, messaging, inviting, or initiating private communication with minor accounts. It also imposes age assurance, privacy-by-default, transparency, reporting, auditing, and compliance duties, while preserving reporting tools, safety channels, parental controls, customer support, and lawful investigations.

The protection of Filipino children cannot depend solely on parental vigilance or after-the-fact prosecution. Where a platform creates the channel through which adults can reach children, the platform must also bear a legal duty to close that channel for minor accounts.

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



REP. ZIAUR-RAHMAN "ZIA" ALONTO ADIONG
1st District, Lanao del Sur



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SECTION 1. Short Title. This Act shall be known as the "Video Game Minor Communications Safety Act."

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. It is hereby declared the policy of the State to protect the physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual, emotional, psychological, and social well-being of children in digital environments.

The State recognizes that video games and online games may provide lawful recreation, education, creativity, and social development. However, where such games contain communication tools that permit adults or strangers to contact minors, the State has a compelling interest to require safety-by-design measures to prevent grooming, exploitation, harassment, cyberbullying, coercion, and other conditions prejudicial to child development.

This Act shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the Constitution, Republic Act No. 7610, Republic Act No. 10173, Republic Act No. 10175, Republic Act No. 10627, Republic Act No. 11313, Republic Act No. 11930, and other child protection, privacy, consumer protection, and cybercrime laws.

SECTION 3. Definition of Terms. For purposes of this Act:

- (a) "Adult account" refers to a video game account registered to, verified as, declared by, or reasonably determined by the provider to be used by a person eighteen (18) years of age or older.
- (b) "Audio communication function" refers to any function that allows a user to transmit, receive, record, send, hear, join, or participate in real-time or asynchronous voice, audio, or spoken communication with another user,

including voice chat, voice channels, audio rooms, voice messages, proximity voice chat, party voice chat, guild or clan voice chat, and similar features.

- (c) "Chat communication function" refers to any function that allows a user to send, receive, view, post, or participate in free-form text-based communication with another user, whether public, private, group-based, or one-to-one, including text chat, direct messages, private messages, lobby chat, party chat, guild or clan chat, in-game mail, user-generated captions, or similar features.
- (d) "Child" or "minor" refers to a person below eighteen (18) years of age.
- (e) "Contact function" refers to any feature that allows one user to initiate direct communication or direct social connection with another user, including direct messaging, private messaging, friend requests, follower requests, party invitations, voice invitations, group invitations, guild or clan invitations, direct game-session invitations, or other features that may reasonably enable an adult user to initiate contact with a minor account.
- (f) "Minor account" refers to a video game account registered to, verified as, declared by, or reasonably determined by the provider to be used by a minor. Where a provider cannot reasonably determine whether an account belongs to an adult user, the account shall be treated as a minor account until the user is verified as an adult through lawful, proportionate, and privacy-preserving age assurance.
- (g) "Pre-set gameplay signal" refers to a provider-created, non-user-generated, non-identifying, and non-editable signal, icon, ping, emote, or limited phrase that is necessary for gameplay and does not allow a user to send free-form, personalized, sexual, violent, harassing, identifying, or contact-seeking communication.
- (h) "Video game" means any digital, electronic, online, mobile, console, computer, cloud-based, virtual reality, augmented reality, or interactive game, whether free-to-play, paid, subscription-based, downloadable, streamed, or browser-based, that is made available to users in the Philippines.
- (i) "Video game service provider" or "provider" refers to any natural or juridical person that develops, publishes, distributes, operates, hosts, maintains, monetizes, or makes available a video game in the Philippines, including online game platforms, game publishers, developers, server operators, platform operators, app stores, digital storefronts, and other entities that exercise control over communication functions in a video game.

SECTION 4. Coverage. This Act shall apply to all video game service providers that:

- (a) are established, registered, operating, or doing business in the Philippines;
- (b) offer, distribute, publish, operate, or make available video games to users in the Philippines;

- (c) process personal information of Philippine citizens or residents in connection with a video game; or
- (d) maintain platforms, servers, payment systems, app store listings, digital storefronts, or other facilities that enable users in the Philippines to access a video game.

Foreign video game service providers that make video games available to users in the Philippines shall comply with this Act as a condition for continued distribution, access, sale, publication, operation, monetization, or availability of their video games in the Philippines.

This shall apply regardless if the video game offered is Online or Offline, and whether the communication functionality is real-time or asynchronous.

SECTION 5. Mandatory Disabling of Chat and Audio Communication Functions for Minor Accounts. No video game service provider shall allow a minor account to send, receive, view, hear, access, join, or participate in any chat communication function or audio communication function.

The prohibition under this section shall include, but shall not be limited to:

- (a) public, private, lobby, party, guild, clan, team, proximity, or group text chat;
- (b) direct messages, private messages, in-game mail, or user-to-user written messages;
- (c) voice chat, audio rooms, proximity voice chat, voice channels, party voice chat, guild or clan voice chat, and similar functions;
- (d) voice messages, audio messages, voice notes, recorded clips containing user-generated speech, and similar asynchronous audio communication;
- (e) user-generated captions, callouts, written identifiers, or other editable text fields used for direct user-to-user communication; and
- (f) any feature that substantially performs the same function as the foregoing, regardless of the name, label, format, or technology used.

The disabling required under this section shall be automatic, built into the design of the service, and enabled by default. It shall not be capable of being overridden by the minor account, by another player, or by an adult account.

SECTION 6. Prohibition on Adult-to-Minor Contact. No video game service provider shall allow an adult account to directly contact, message, invite, follow, add, or initiate private or direct communication with a minor account through any contact function.

The provider shall implement technical measures to ensure that adult accounts cannot:

- (a) send direct or private messages to minor accounts;
- (b) initiate voice or audio communication with minor accounts;

- (c) invite minor accounts to private chat rooms, audio rooms, party chats, private groups, guilds, clans, closed lobbies, or similar communication spaces;
- (d) send friend requests, follower requests, direct game-session invitations, or similar contact requests to minor accounts, when the request may reasonably lead to direct communication; or
- (e) use any feature, workaround, design pattern, recommendation system, searchable profile, matchmaking label, or discoverability tool to identify, locate, contact, or target minor accounts for communication.

SECTION 7. Permitted Functions.: Nothing in this Act shall prohibit a video game service provider from allowing a minor account to use:

- (a) ordinary gameplay functions that do not allow chat, audio, direct messaging, or adult-to-minor contact;
- (b) matchmaking systems, team assignment systems, leaderboards, achievements, rankings, or game progression systems that do not permit direct communication;
- (c) pre-set gameplay signals, provided that such signals are non-user-generated, non-identifying, non-editable, and cannot be used to transmit sexual, violent, harassing, identifying, or contact-seeking messages;
- (d) reporting, blocking, muting, safety, parental control, and account security tools;
- (e) system-generated notices, safety reminders, and administrative announcements;
- (f) communications between the minor account and the provider's trained safety, moderation, customer support, or trust-and-safety personnel, when necessary for account safety, reporting, security, or legal compliance;
- (g) parental or legal guardian account management tools, subject to the Data Privacy Act of 2012 and applicable rules of the National Privacy Commission; and
- (h) communications required by law, court order, lawful investigation, or competent authority.

SECTION 8. Age Assurance and Treatment of Unknown-Age Accounts.

A video game service provider shall adopt lawful, proportionate, privacy-preserving, and risk-based age assurance mechanisms to determine whether a user is a minor or an adult.

In games that contain chat communication functions, audio communication functions, or contact functions, reliance solely on self-declaration of age shall not be sufficient where the provider knows or reasonably should know that the game is likely to be accessed by minors or that the communication functions create a risk of grooming, exploitation, harassment, or other harm to minors.

Where the provider cannot reasonably determine that a user is eighteen (18) years of age or older, the account shall be treated as a minor account until verified otherwise.

Age assurance under this Act shall:

- (a) collect only the minimum personal information necessary for the declared purpose;
- (b) avoid excessive, intrusive, or disproportionate collection of biometric, government-issued identification, location, or sensitive personal information;

- (c) comply with Republic Act No. 10173 and issuances of the National Privacy Commission;
- (d) provide child-oriented and age-appropriate transparency notices;
- (e) be subject to security safeguards, retention limits, and deletion policies; and
- (f) be reviewed through child privacy impact assessments.

SECTION 9. Privacy-by-Default and Safety-by-Design Duties. Every video game service provider covered by this Act shall:

- (a) set minor accounts to the highest privacy and safety settings by default;
- (b) make minor accounts non-searchable and non-discoverable by adult accounts, except where strictly necessary for ordinary gameplay that does not enable direct communication;
- (c) prohibit public display of a minor's age, location, school, contact details, real name, image, voice, or other identifying information, unless strictly necessary, lawful, and proportionate;
- (d) disable geolocation sharing for minor accounts by default;
- (e) conduct a Child Online Safety Impact Assessment before launching or materially changing any feature that may allow communication, contact, discoverability, profiling, recommendation, or interaction involving minor accounts;
- (f) adopt technical measures to detect, prevent, and respond to attempts to circumvent the disabling of chat and audio communication functions for minor accounts
- (g) maintain an accessible reporting mechanism for suspected grooming, exploitation, harassment, cyberbullying, adult-to-minor contact, and other unsafe conduct;
- (h) act promptly on reports involving child safety; and
- (i) cooperate with competent Philippine authorities in accordance with law

SECTION 10. Duties of App Stores, Digital Storefronts, and Platform Operators. App stores, digital storefronts, console platforms, cloud gaming platforms, and other platform operators that distribute or make video games available in the Philippines shall require covered video game service providers to certify compliance with this Act before listing, distributing, updating, monetizing, or continuing to make available any video game with chat communication functions, audio communication functions, or contact functions.

The implementing rules and regulations shall prescribe the form, frequency, and contents of such certification.

SECTION 11. Transparency and Notice. Every covered provider shall publish, in plain, clear, and age-appropriate language:

- (a) whether the video game contains chat, audio, direct messaging, or contact functions;
- (b) how such functions are disabled for minor accounts;
- (c) how adult-to-minor contact is prevented;
- (d) how age assurance is conducted;
- (e) how parents, guardians, and minors may report unsafe conduct;
- (f) how child safety reports are handled; and
- (g) the provider's child privacy and data retention practices.

The notice required under this section shall be displayed before account creation, before first use, in account settings, and in any store listing or product page where technically feasible.

SECTION 12. Recordkeeping, Audit, and Compliance Reporting.

Covered providers shall maintain records sufficient to demonstrate compliance with this Act, including records of:

- (a) age assurance measures;
- (b) disabling of chat and audio communication functions for minor accounts;
- (c) technical measures preventing adult-to-minor contact;
- (d) child safety impact assessments;
- (e) reports involving child safety and provider action thereon;
- (f) moderation and enforcement actions involving adult-to-minor contact; and
- (g) data protection measures for children's personal information.

Covered providers with more than the threshold number of Philippine users to be determined in the implementing rules and regulations shall submit an annual Child Online Safety Compliance Report to the lead implementing agency. The report shall not disclose personal information of minors and shall be prepared in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

SECTION 13. Prohibited Acts.It shall be unlawful for any covered provider to:

- (a) enable, maintain, offer, or operate chat communication functions or audio communication functions for minor accounts;
- (b) allow adult accounts to directly contact, message, invite, follow, add, or initiate private or direct communication with minor accounts through any contact function;
- (c) design, maintain, or permit any workaround that substantially defeats the disabling required by this Act;
- (d) misrepresent compliance with this Act;
- (e) use deceptive design patterns to encourage minors to disclose age, identity, location, contact details, school, image, voice, or other personal information beyond what is necessary;
- (f) penalize, suspend, or retaliate against a minor, parent, guardian, employee, moderator, contractor, or other person for reporting a suspected violation of this Act; or
- (g) fail to comply with a lawful order issued under this Act.

SECTION 14. Enforcement.The Department of Information and Communications Technology, through the Cybercrime Investigation and Coordinating Center, shall be the lead implementing agency for this Act.

The lead implementing agency shall coordinate with the Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Justice, Department of Social Welfare and Development, National Privacy Commission, National Telecommunications Commission, Philippine National Police Anti-Cybercrime Group, National Bureau of Investigation Cybercrime Division, and other appropriate agencies.

The lead implementing agency may:

- (a) receive complaints;
- (b) conduct compliance audits

- (c) require covered providers to submit compliance documents;
- (d) issue compliance orders;
- (e) order the correction, suspension, or disabling of non-compliant communication or contact functions;
- (f) recommend prosecution or referral under applicable laws;
- (g) coordinate with app stores, digital storefronts, and platform operators for compliance; and
- (h) recommend temporary restriction, suspension, or blocking of access to a non-compliant video game, subject to due process and applicable law.

SECTION 15. Administrative Penalties. After notice and hearing, any covered provider found to have violated this Act shall be subject to the following administrative penalties:

- (a) for the first violation, a fine of not less than Five hundred thousand pesos (P500,000.00) but not more than Five million pesos (P5,000,000.00);
- (b) for the second violation, a fine of not less than Five million pesos (P5,000,000.00) but not more than Ten million pesos (P10,000,000.00)
- (c) for the third and subsequent violations, a fine of not less than Ten million pesos (P10,000,000.00) but not more than Twenty million pesos (P20,000,000.00), and temporary suspension of the non-compliant game, service, feature, listing, or distribution in the Philippines until compliance is established.

Each video game, platform, or service containing a non-compliant communication or contact function may be treated as a separate violation. Continuing non-compliance after receipt of a final compliance order may be penalized as a separate violation for every thirty (30) days of continued non-compliance.

The penalties under this Act shall be without prejudice to liability under Republic Act No. 7610, Republic Act No. 10173, Republic Act No. 10175, Republic Act No. 10627, Republic Act No. 11313, Republic Act No. 11930, the Revised Penal Code, and other applicable laws.

SECTION 16. Emergency Protective Orders. Where the lead implementing agency finds probable cause that a video game communication or contact function creates an imminent risk of grooming, sexual exploitation, recruitment into violence, harassment, or other grave harm to minors, it may issue an emergency protective order requiring the temporary disabling of the specific chat, audio, direct messaging, or adult-to-minor contact function.

The emergency protective order shall be limited to the function necessary to address the imminent risk and shall remain effective for a period not exceeding fifteen (15) days, unless extended after notice and opportunity to be heard.

SECTION 17. Safe Harbor for Good Faith Child Safety Action. No civil, criminal, or administrative liability shall attach to any provider, employee, moderator, contractor, or other person who, in good faith and with reasonable diligence, disables, blocks, removes, reports, preserves, or restricts a chat, audio, messaging, or contact function to comply with this Act or to prevent imminent harm to a minor, provided that such action is proportionate, documented, and consistent with applicable law.

SECTION 18. Prohibition of Waivers. Any waiver, consent, term of service, community guideline, parental permission, user setting, account setting, or contractual stipulation that permits a minor account to access chat communication functions or audio communication functions prohibited under this Act shall be void.

SECTION 19. Implementing Rules and Regulations. Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Department of Information and Communications Technology, through the Cybercrime Investigation and Coordinating Center, in coordination with the Department of Justice, shall promulgate the implementing rules and regulations of this Act.

The implementing rules and regulations shall include:

- (a) technical standards for disabling chat and audio communication functions for minor accounts;
- (b) technical standards for preventing adult-to-minor contact;
- (c) privacy-preserving age assurance standards;
- (d) child online safety impact assessment templates;
- (e) compliance certification requirements;
- (f) audit and reporting procedures;
- (g) emergency protective order procedures;
- (h) coordination procedures with app stores, digital storefronts, and platform operators; and
- (i) procedures for complaints, notices, hearings, and appeals.

SECTION 20. Transitory Period. Covered providers shall comply with this Act within one hundred eighty (180) days from the effectivity of the implementing rules and regulations.

For video games launched, published, distributed, or made available after the effectivity of the implementing rules and regulations, compliance shall be required before such video games are made available to users in the Philippines.

SECTION 21. Separability Clause. If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 22. Repealing Clause. All laws, decrees, executive orders, issuances, rules and regulations, or parts thereof inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

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