

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 10368



Introduced by **Representative AGATHA PAULA "AGAY" A. CRUZ**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Government documents should be clear enough to understand and accessible enough to use. Many official documents, however, are couched in legalese, technical terms, long sentences, undefined acronyms, and instructions that only the issuing office can fully understand.

The proposed Clear Language and Accessible Records in Official Communications (CLARO) Act seeks to make government-issued documents clear, accurate, understandable, and accessible to the people they are meant to serve. It promotes the use of plain language so that the public can easily find the needed information, understand what it means, and act on it accordingly.

The 1987 Constitution recognizes the people's right to information on matters of public concern and the State policy of full public disclosure. These principles lose force when information is available only in form, but not in fact, because the document is too confusing, too technical, or too inaccessible for the ordinary reader. Transparency and access should not require a translator or a lawyer.

Clear and accessible government documents also improve public service. Confusing forms and unclear instructions lead to incomplete applications, wrong submissions, repeated inquiries, missed deadlines, and avoidable disputes. These waste the time of citizens and public servants alike.

This bill requires covered agencies to use common words, short sentences, clear headings, readable formatting, and explanations of necessary technical terms. It allows plain-language summaries for documents that cannot be simplified in full without loss of legal or technical precision. It also promotes the use of English, Filipino, appropriate Philippine languages, and accessible formats for persons with disabilities and other sectors requiring assistance.

At its core, this legislative measure is about respect: respect for the citizen's time,

respect for the public servant's work, and respect for the law itself. Government cannot expect people to comply with what they cannot understand, claim what they cannot find, or trust what they cannot access.

Government documents should be clear enough to understand and accessible enough to use. This bill makes that standard a clear obligation, not only a mere aspiration.

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


AGATHA PAOLA "AGAY" AGUILAR CRUZ
Representative, Fifth Legislative District of Bulacan

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HOUSE BILL NO. **10368**

Introduced by Representative AGATHA PAULA “AGAY” A. CRUZ

AN ACT
PROMOTING CLEAR, ACCESSIBLE, AND PLAIN LANGUAGE IN
GOVERNMENT-ISSUED PUBLIC ADVISORIES, NOTICES, FORMS, CITIZENS’
CHARTERS, AND OTHER PUBLIC-FACING DOCUMENTS, PROVIDING
STANDARDS AND MECHANISMS FOR COMPLIANCE, AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES

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

1 **Section 1. Short Title.** – This Act shall be known as the “Clear Language and
2 Accessible Records in Official Communications (CLARO) Act.”
3

4 **Section 2. Declaration of Policy.** – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to
5 promote transparency, accountability, public participation, and efficient public service by
6 ensuring that government communications intended for public dissemination or public
7 use are clear, concise, comprehensible, accurate, and accessible in language and format.
8

9 Consistent with the right of the people to information on matters of public concern
10 and the policy of full public disclosure, the State shall ensure that the citizenry can easily
11 find, understand, and use information contained in government-issued documents,
12 communications, forms, advisories, notices, announcements, and other public-facing
13 materials.
14

15 **Section 3. Definition of Terms.** – As used in this Act:
16

17 (a) *Plain language* refers to communication that enables the intended audience to
18 find, understand, and use the information they need. It includes the use of clear
19 structure, common and familiar words, concise sentences, active voice where
20 appropriate, logical headings, readable formatting, and explanations of
21 technical, legal, or specialized terms when their use is necessary.
22

- 1 (b) *Covered agencies* refer to all departments, bureaus, offices, agencies, and
2 instrumentalities of the National Government, including government-owned
3 or -controlled corporations (GOCCs), government financial institutions, state
4 universities and colleges, local government units (LGUs), local water districts,
5 and other government instrumentalities, insofar as they issue covered
6 documents intended for public dissemination or public use.
7
- 8 (c) *Covered documents* refer to government-issued documents, communications,
9 forms, advisories, notices, announcements, and other public-facing materials
10 intended for public dissemination, distribution, use, or compliance.
11
- 12 (d) *Public-facing document* refers to any written, printed, digital, electronic, audio-
13 visual, or other communication issued by a covered agency and intended to
14 inform, guide, instruct, warn, notify, or require action from the public or a
15 segment thereof.
16
- 17 (e) *Accessible format* refers to a format that enables persons, including persons with
18 disabilities, older persons, persons with limited literacy, and persons with
19 limited access to digital technologies, to access, understand, and use
20 information contained in covered documents.
21
- 22 (f) *Philippine languages* refer to Filipino and other languages used in the
23 Philippines, including regional languages, as may be appropriate to the
24 intended audience of the covered document.
25

26 **Section 4. Coverage.** – This Act shall apply to covered agencies that issue covered
27 documents intended for public dissemination, distribution, use, or compliance.
28

29 The Judiciary, Congress, constitutional commissions, and other independent
30 constitutional bodies are encouraged to adopt plain language standards in their public-
31 facing documents, consistent with their respective constitutional powers, fiscal autonomy,
32 administrative independence, and internal rules.
33

34 **Section 5. Plain Language Requirement.** – All covered agencies shall adopt and
35 use plain language in covered documents to ensure the accessibility, clarity, and
36 comprehensibility of public information.
37

38 Covered documents shall be written in English, Filipino, the appropriate
39 Philippine language, or any combination thereof, as may be necessary, taking into account
40 the nature of the information, the intended audience, the location of dissemination, and
41 the purpose of the document.
42

43 The use of plain language shall not diminish, expand, or alter any substantive
44 right, obligation, procedure, remedy, requirement, or penalty provided by law, rule,

1 regulation, contract, or official issuance. In case of conflict between a plain-language
2 summary and the controlling legal text, the latter shall prevail: Provided, That the issuing
3 agency shall promptly correct any misleading, inaccurate, or unclear plain-language
4 version or summary.

5
6 **Section 6. Covered Documents.** – The following documents issued by covered
7 agencies and intended for public dissemination, distribution, use, or compliance shall be
8 covered by this Act:

- 9
10 (a) Advisories;
11 (b) Notices;
12 (c) Announcements;
13 (d) Bulletins;
14 (e) Forms and other papers for the application, request, availment, or enjoyment
15 of a public service, right, privilege, benefit, license, clearance, permit,
16 certification, or other similar government authorization;
17 (f) Citizens' charter;
18 (g) Documents detailing and explaining a government program, activity, project,
19 service, benefit, or assistance;
20 (h) Replies and responses to inquiries, complaints, applications, or requests for
21 assistance or information;
22 (i) Public safety, health, disaster risk reduction, emergency, and social welfare
23 advisories;
24 (j) Documents stating requirements, procedures, deadlines, fees, penalties,
25 remedies, or consequences affecting the public; and
26 (k) Such other public-facing documents as may be identified in the implementing
27 rules and regulations or by the appropriate implementing agency, in
28 consultation with the agency or office concerned.

29
30 **Section 7. Plain Language Standards.** – Covered documents shall, as far as
31 practicable:

- 32
33 (a) State the purpose of the document at the beginning;
34 (b) Identify the intended audience, where appropriate;
35 (c) Use common, familiar, and precise words;
36 (d) Avoid unnecessary legalese, jargon, acronyms, and technical terms;
37 (e) Explain unavoidable legal, technical, scientific, financial, or specialized terms;
38 (f) Use short sentences and logically organized paragraphs;
39 (g) Use headings, tables, checklists, examples, step-by-step instructions, or question-
40 and-answer formats, where appropriate;
41 (h) State requirements, procedures, deadlines, fees, penalties, remedies, and
42 consequences clearly;
43 (i) Use active voice where it improves clarity;
44 (j) Provide contact details, help desks, hotlines, websites, or other channels for

- clarification or assistance;
- (k) Use readable formatting in print and digital versions; and
- (l) Ensure consistency between plain-language versions and the controlling legal or official text.

Section 8. Plain-Language Summaries. – For technical, legal, scientific, financial, or specialized documents that cannot reasonably be rewritten in full without loss of accuracy, precision, or legal effect, the issuing agency shall provide a plain-language summary.

The summary shall state, at a minimum, the purpose of the document, the persons affected, the required action, the applicable deadline, the consequences of non-compliance, and the office or channel for assistance.

Section 9. Priority Documents and Phased Implementation. – Covered agencies shall prioritize the plain-language review and revision of documents that directly affect the exercise of rights, compliance with obligations, access to public services, receipt of benefits, payment of fees, observance of deadlines, exposure to penalties, or public safety.

All new covered documents issued after the effectivity of the implementing rules and regulations shall comply with this Act. Existing covered documents shall be reviewed and revised in accordance with the agency’s Plain Language Compliance Plan, giving priority to high-volume, high-impact, and rights-affecting documents.

Within one hundred eighty (180) days from the effectivity of the implementing rules and regulations, covered agencies shall prepare and submit a Plain Language Compliance Plan to the appropriate implementing agency. The Plan shall identify the covered documents for review, timelines for revision, responsible officers or units, training needs, and mechanisms for public feedback.

Section 10. Accessibility and Use of Philippine Languages. – Covered agencies shall ensure that covered documents are made available, where appropriate and practicable, in accessible formats, including screen-reader compatible digital text, large-print formats, captions, audio formats, Filipino Sign Language interpretation for audio-visual materials, and such other formats as may be prescribed in the implementing rules and regulations.

Covered agencies shall use Filipino or the appropriate Philippine language, or provide translations or summaries in such language, when necessary to ensure effective public understanding, especially in communities where such language is commonly used.

Section 11. Institutional Responsibilities. – The Civil Service Commission (CSC) shall serve as the lead agency for monitoring compliance by national government agencies, offices, instrumentalities, state universities and colleges, LGUs, and other covered agencies, unless otherwise provided in this Act.

1
2 The Governance Commission for Government-Owned or -Controlled Corporations
3 (GCG) shall monitor compliance by GOCCs.
4

5 The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) shall coordinate and
6 monitor the implementation of this Act by LGUs, consistent with the constitutional policy
7 of local autonomy and the President's power of general supervision over local
8 governments. For this purpose, the DILG shall provide technical assistance, issue
9 appropriate advisories or guidelines, facilitate capacity-building activities, consolidate
10 compliance reports from local government units, and promote the adoption of plain-
11 language standards in local public-facing documents, citizens' charters, ordinances,
12 advisories, notices, forms, and digital publications.
13

14 The Philippine Information Agency (PIA) shall provide technical guidance on public
15 communication, dissemination standards, templates, and public information practices.
16

17 The Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino (KWF) shall provide technical guidance on the use
18 of Filipino and Philippine languages, including translation, localization, and capacity-
19 building for plain language in Filipino and other Philippine languages.
20

21 The National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA), in coordination with relevant
22 agencies, may provide technical guidance on accessibility requirements for persons with
23 disabilities.
24

25 **Section 12. Training and Capacity-Building.** – The CSC, GCG, DILG, PIA, KWF, and
26 NCDA shall develop and conduct regular training programs, seminars, workshops, and
27 other capacity-building activities for covered agencies.
28

29 Such training programs shall include plain-language writing, translation and
30 localization, accessible communication, legal accuracy in simplified documents, digital
31 readability, and user-centered public communication.
32

33 For LGUs, the DILG shall coordinate the conduct of training and capacity-building
34 activities, in consultation with the CSC, PIA, KWF, NCDA, and other relevant agencies.
35

36 **Section 13. Monitoring, Compliance, and Public Feedback.** – Covered agencies shall
37 designate an office, unit, or officer responsible for coordinating compliance with this Act.
38

39 Covered agencies shall establish a mechanism by which the public may report unclear,
40 confusing, inaccessible, inaccurate, or misleading covered documents. Feedback received
41 shall be considered in the periodic review and revision of covered documents.
42

43 For national government agencies, offices, instrumentalities, state universities and
44 colleges, and other covered agencies, compliance reports shall be submitted to the CSC.

1 For GOCCs, compliance reports shall be submitted to the GCG. For LGUs, compliance
2 reports shall be submitted to the DILG, which shall consolidate and transmit the same to
3 the CSC for inclusion in the national implementation report.

4
5 Non-submission of the Plain Language Compliance Plan or unjustified failure to
6 implement the same shall be reflected in the agency's compliance report and may be
7 considered in applicable performance governance, quality management, or
8 administrative accountability systems, subject to existing civil service, administrative, and
9 governance rules.

10
11 **Section 14. *Digital Publication.*** – Covered agencies shall ensure that digital versions
12 of covered documents posted on official websites, portals, mobile applications, and social
13 media channels comply with the plain-language and accessibility standards prescribed
14 under this Act and its implementing rules and regulations.

15
16 **Section 15. *Report to Congress.*** – Within one (1) year after the effectivity of this Act
17 and every three (3) years thereafter, the CSC, GCG, and DILG, in coordination with the
18 PIA and KWF, shall submit a report to the Senate President and the Speaker of the House
19 of Representatives, through the appropriate committees of both Houses of Congress, on
20 the status of implementation of and compliance with this Act.

21
22 The report shall include, at a minimum, the number of covered agencies that have
23 submitted compliance plans, the status of implementation of such plans, training and
24 capacity-building activities conducted, common compliance issues, public feedback
25 received, recommended corrective measures, and proposed legislative or administrative
26 reforms.

27
28 The report shall be made available to the public through official websites or other
29 appropriate platforms.

30
31 **Section 16. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – Within ninety (90) days from the
32 effectivity of this Act, the CSC, GCG, and DILG, in coordination with the KWF, PIA,
33 NCDA, Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA), and other relevant government agencies and
34 stakeholders, shall issue the necessary rules and regulations to implement this Act.

35
36 The implementing rules and regulations shall include plain-language standards,
37 model templates, compliance indicators, accessibility requirements, timelines for phased
38 implementation, reporting mechanisms, procedures for receiving and acting on public
39 feedback, and mechanisms for coordination among the CSC, GCG, DILG, PIA, KWF,
40 NCDA, ARTA, and covered agencies.

41
42 **Section 17. *Separability Clause.*** – If any part or provision of this Act is held
43 unconstitutional or invalid, the remainder thereof not otherwise affected shall remain in
44 full force and effect.

1
2 **Section 18. *Repealing Clause.*** – All laws, executive orders, presidential decrees,
3 administrative orders, rules and regulations, issuances, or parts thereof inconsistent with
4 or contrary to the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.
5

6 **Section 19. *Effectivity.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
7 complete publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.
8

9 *Approved,*