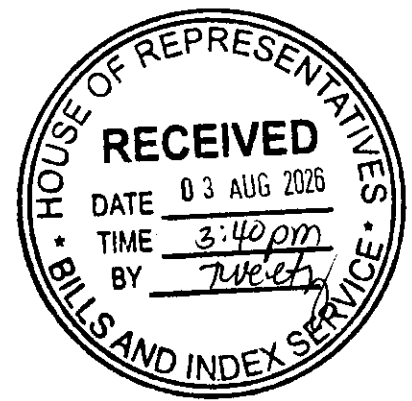


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 10526



Introduced by **Representative Jaime R. Fresnedi**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to address the longstanding gaps in the implementation of Republic Act No. 7743 by reinforcing the establishment, operation, maintenance, modernization of public libraries, as well as barangay reading centers, through regular and adequate funding standards and guidelines from the National Library of the Philippines (NLP). It mandates sufficient appropriations for public libraries and barangay reading centers while recognizing the varying needs and capacities of local government units (LGUs) where these reading facilities are or will be located.

Republic Act No. 7743, otherwise known as the "*An Act Providing for the Establishment of Congressional, City and Municipal Libraries and Barangay Reading Centers Throughout the Philippines*," was enacted in 1994 to institutionalize a nationwide public library system. The law envisioned the establishment of a public library in every congressional district, city, and municipality, and a reading center in every barangay, recognizing these institutions as indispensable components of local development and public education.

More than three decades after its enactment, however, the vision of R.A. No. 7743 remains largely unrealized. According to the NLP, as of 2026, only 1,761 affiliated public libraries have been established nationwide.¹ Considering that the law envisions a public library in every congressional district, city, and municipality, and a barangay reading center in each of the country's more than 42,000 barangays, the Philippines has achieved only about four percent (4%) of the infrastructure envisioned under the law.

At the barangay level, the implementation gap is even more pronounced, with only 963 affiliated barangay reading centers. This persistent shortfall underscores the absence of a dedicated and sustainable funding mechanism to fully implement the mandate of R.A. No. 7743. Many of these libraries likewise continue to operate under severe constraints, including inadequate and irregular funding, outdated facilities, limited collections, insufficient personnel, and the absence of sustained maintenance and modernization.

¹ National Library of the Philippines, *Directory of Public Libraries*, <https://web.nlp.gov.ph/directory-2/>

These gaps have become even more consequential in light of the country's persistent learning crisis. The 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results once again revealed that Filipino learners continue to perform below the global average in reading, mathematics, and science,² reflecting learning deficits that cannot be addressed by schools alone. Strengthening education therefore requires investing not only in classrooms but also in community-based learning institutions that provide continuous opportunities for learning beyond formal education. Public libraries and barangay reading centers fulfill precisely this role. They are more than repositories of books—they are community learning hubs for discovering the joy of reading, finding spaces to study, seeking access to information and digital resources, upgrading of skills, and continuing learning. They serve as safe, inclusive, and accessible “third spaces” that encourage literacy, creativity, civic participation, and lifelong learning regardless of age, income, or educational background.

Yet despite the breadth of these public services, libraries and reading centers have historically remained among the least prioritized public institutions in terms of government investment. Their continued dependence on limited and inconsistent local funding has resulted in unequal access to library services across the country, depriving millions of Filipinos of opportunities to learn, read, and participate fully in an increasingly digital and knowledge-driven society.

This measure recognizes that fulfilling the mandate of R.A. No. 7743 requires more than the mere establishment of libraries and reading centers. It requires a sustained national commitment to ensure that these institutions remain adequately funded, professionally managed, technologically equipped, and responsive to the evolving needs of their communities. Dedicated appropriations will enable libraries and reading centers not only to exist, but to thrive as dynamic centers for learning, innovation, and community engagement.

By prioritizing libraries and reading centers in every local budget, the State affirms that education extends beyond the classroom, that literacy is the foundation of an informed and empowered citizenry, and that every Filipino, regardless of geography or economic circumstance, deserves access to spaces where knowledge is freely available and lifelong learning is nurtured.

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



JAIME R. FRESNEDI
Representative
Lone District, Muntinlupa City

² PhilStar, *Philippines Still Lags Behind World in Math, Reading and Science — PISA 2022*
<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2023/12/06/2316732/philippines-still-lags-behind-world-math-reading-and-science-pisa-2022>

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Introduced by **Representative Jaime R. Fresnedi**

**AN ACT REINFORCING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND
BARANGAY READING CENTERS**

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 “*Public Libraries and Barangay Reading Centers Establishment Reinforcement Act*”

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to accord the highest priority to the moral and intellectual development of every Filipino. In pursuit of this policy, the State shall ensure the establishment, maintenance, modernization, and continuous development of libraries and barangay reading centers as essential institutions for knowledge creation, learning, and public access to information. These institutions shall be recognized as vital components of the country's educational and lifelong learning system and shall be provided with adequate support to promote literacy, intellectual growth, and an enduring culture of learning among all Filipinos.

The State further recognizes the need to provide dedicated appropriations and direct funding for the establishment, operation, maintenance, and development of congressional, city, and municipal libraries, as well as barangay reading centers, through a tailored legal framework that ensures their sustainability, accessibility, and responsiveness to the educational and informational needs of their respective communities.

SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act:

(a) “Public Library” refers to a library established and maintained by a province, city, or municipality, or as otherwise provided by law, which is open to the general public and provides equitable access to books, information resources, digital technologies, educational materials, and other library services to promote literacy, lifelong learning, research, and community development.

(b) “Barangay Reading Center” refers to a community-based reading and learning facility established at the barangay level that provides access to books, educational

materials, digital resources, and reading and literacy programs, and serves as an extension of public library services within the community.

(c) “Mobile Library” refers to a library service delivered through vehicles, portable facilities, or other movable means that provides access to library collections, digital resources, and educational programs to communities with limited or no access to permanent public library facilities.

(d) “Digital Library” refers to an organized collection of digital information resources, including electronic books, journals, multimedia materials, databases, and other electronic content, which are managed and made accessible through information and communications technology (ICT) for educational, research, and public information purposes.

(e) “Modernization” refers to the upgrading and continuous improvement of public libraries and barangay reading centers through the adoption of current library standards, ICT, digital resources, internet connectivity, accessible infrastructure, innovative library services, and other measures that enhance the quality, accessibility, efficiency, and sustainability of library operations and services.

(f) “Community Learning Hub” refers to a public library, barangay reading center, or other library facility that serves as an inclusive space for reading, learning, digital access, cultural activities, skills development, and community engagement through both physical and digital resources.

(g) “Library Personnel” refers to licensed librarians and other personnel employed or engaged by a public library or barangay reading center who perform professional, technical, administrative, or support functions necessary for the effective delivery of library services.

SEC. 4. Minimum Standards and Guidelines of Libraries and Barangay Reading Centers. – The National Library of the Philippines (NLP) shall formulate, prescribe, and periodically update the minimum standards and guidelines for the establishment, operation, maintenance, and modernization of public libraries and barangay reading centers. Such standards and guidelines shall include, but shall not be limited to, the minimum requirements on:

- (a) library facilities and floor area;
- (b) seating capacity and accessibility;
- (c) library collections and other learning resources;
- (d) ICT facilities and internet connectivity;
- (e) furniture, equipment, and other essential infrastructure;
- (f) library personnel and staffing requirements;
- (g) library services, programs, and community outreach activities; and

(h) such other standards as may be necessary to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of library services.

The NLP shall likewise develop budgetary guidelines based on such minimum standards, which shall serve as the basis for the annual appropriations of local government units (LGUs) for the establishment, operation, maintenance, and modernization of public libraries and barangay reading centers. The standards prescribed shall take into account the income classification, population, geographic location, and service requirements of the LGUs to ensure that compliance is both reasonable and attainable.

SEC. 5. Expansion and Modernization of Existing Library Services. – LGUs are encouraged to expand and modernize public library services by establishing and operating alternative and innovative modes of library service delivery, including, but not limited to, mobile libraries, digital and virtual libraries, community learning hubs, and other accessible library facilities designed to serve geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas and other underserved communities.

The NLP shall provide technical assistance and issue appropriate guidelines to support the development, modernization, and sustainable delivery of library services under this section.

SEC. 6. Partnership for Library Development. – LGUs may enter into partnerships, collaborations, and other cooperative arrangements with national government agencies, state universities and colleges (SUCs), local universities and colleges (LUCs), private educational institutions, private sector entities, non-government organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), professional associations, foundations, international development partners, and other stakeholders to support the establishment, operation, maintenance, modernization, and expansion of public libraries and barangay reading centers.

Partnerships established under this section shall supplement, and shall not be construed to replace, the annual budgetary appropriations required of LGUs under this Act.

The NLP shall facilitate and promote partnerships among LGUs and relevant stakeholders and may provide technical assistance in the development and implementation of collaborative library programs and projects. In providing technical assistance, grants, and other forms of support under this Act, priority shall be given to fourth (4th), fifth (5th), and sixth (6th) class municipalities, geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDAs), and other LGUs with limited fiscal capacity.

SEC. 7. Compliance and Monitoring. – The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), in coordination with the NLP, Department of Budget and Management (DBM), and the Commission on Audit (COA), shall monitor the compliance of LGUs with the provisions of this Act.

The Local Chief Executive shall ensure the timely submission of the annual accomplishment and financial report required under this Act. Within ninety (90) days after the end of every fiscal year, every LGU shall submit to the DILG and the NLP an annual accomplishment and financial report containing, at a minimum:

(a) the annual budget appropriated and utilized for public libraries and barangay reading centers;

- (b) the programs, projects, and activities implemented during the fiscal year;
- (c) the status of compliance with the minimum standards and guidelines prescribed by the NLP;
- (d) partnerships and other sources of technical or financial assistance established pursuant to this Act; and
- (e) such other information as may be required under the implementing rules and regulations.

The DILG shall consolidate the reports submitted by LGUs and evaluate their compliance with the requirements of this Act. On the other hand, the NLP shall assess the compliance of LGUs with the minimum standards and guidelines prescribed under this Act, provide technical recommendations to improve library services, and identify areas requiring additional assistance or intervention.

Within one hundred twenty (120) days after the end of every fiscal year, the DILG and the NLP shall jointly submit to the Senate and the House of Representatives an annual report on the implementation of this Act, including the status of compliance of LGUs, the utilization of appropriated funds and the condition of public libraries and barangay reading centers nationwide.

SEC. 8. *Incentives for Compliance.* – Subject to the availability of funds and existing laws, rules, and regulations, LGUs that substantially comply with the provisions of this Act and the minimum standards prescribed by the NLP shall be given priority in the provision of grants, technical assistance, library resources, capacity-building programs, digitalization initiatives, ICT support, and other library development programs administered by the NLP and other appropriate national government agencies.

The NLP may likewise establish a system of recognition and awards to acknowledge exemplary public libraries and barangay reading centers that demonstrate innovation, excellence in library services, and significant contributions to literacy, lifelong learning, and community development.

SEC. 9. *Required Appropriation.* – Every province, city, municipality, and barangay required by law to establish and maintain a public library or barangay reading center shall appropriate the necessary funds to comply with the establishment, operation, maintenance, repair, and modernization of public libraries and barangay reading centers. Such appropriation shall be consistent with the minimum standards, guidelines, and requirements prescribed by the NLP pursuant to Section 4 of this Act.

To augment local resources, LGUs may avail themselves of financial assistance from the Local Government Support Fund (LGSF), subject to the availability of funds and the applicable laws, rules, regulations, and guidelines governing its utilization. The implementing agencies shall endeavor to prioritize eligible library development projects of fourth (4th), fifth (5th), and sixth (6th) class municipalities, geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDAs), and other LGUs with limited fiscal capacity.

SEC. 10. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within sixty (90) days from the approval of this Act, the National Library, in coordination with the DILG and the DBM, shall promulgate the implementing rules and regulations.

SEC. 11. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act shall be deemed unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not affected thereof shall remain in force and effect.

SEC. 12. *Repealing Clause.* – All Acts, Presidential Decrees, Executive Orders and Administrative Orders, Rules and Regulations and other such issuances or parts thereof which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 13. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.