

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 717

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Introduced by Congressman Alfredo D. Vargas III

EXPLANATORY NOTE

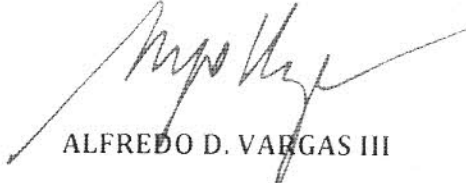
According to the Department of Public Works and Highways, the Philippines has recorded 1,513 deaths due to road accidents in 2013. The World Health Organization, on the other hand, has estimated a much higher number of 10,379 road traffic deaths in the Philippines in 2015.

Highly susceptible to road accidents are the 23.9 million school children¹ in the Philippines, many of which ride in school buses to and from their schools.

The State values life and so shall take all means necessary to ensure the safety of Filipino students.

This bill empowers the Department of Transportation to prescribe safety standards for school buses, set proficiency measures for school bus drivers, require the installation and use of seatbelts in school buses, and determine the practicability and feasibility of certain safety and access requirements for school buses.

In ensuring that our students are safe from vehicular accidents, we are, in a way, safeguarding the future development of our nation. Thus, the immediate approval of this bill is earnestly sought.


ALFREDO D. VARGAS III

¹ Department of Education Data, School Year 2014-15.

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AN ACT
PRESCRIBING SCHOOL BUS SAFETY STANDARDS AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be called the “School Bus Safety Act of 2016”.

SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby the policy of the State to promote safety in order to protect passengers of school buses from injury in case of accidents.

SECTION 3. *Definitions of Terms.* – For purposes of this Act the term:

- (A) “*Bus*” means a motor vehicle with motive power, except a trailer, designed for carrying more than ten (10) persons;
- (B) “*School Bus*” means a bus that is used for purposes that include carrying students to and from public or private school or school-related events on a regular basis, but does not include a transit bus or a school-chartered bus;
- (C) “*School-Chartered Bus*” means a bus that is operated under a short term contract with the school authorities who have acquired exclusive use of the bus at a fixed charge in order to provide transportation for a group of pupils to special school related events;
- (D) “*Secretary*” means the Secretary of Transportation;
- (E) “*Seat Belts*” refer to the combined lap belt and shoulder strap that fasten a rider to a moving vehicle and prevent him from being thrown out or against the interior of the vehicle during sudden stops;

SECTION 4. *Proficiency Standards for School Bus Drivers.* -

- (A) *Requirement.* - Not later than one (1) year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall prescribe proficiency standards for school bus drivers who are required to possess a professional license to operate a school bus.
- (B) *Demonstration of Proficiency.* - Upon the prescription of standards under paragraph (A), each school bus driver referred to in paragraph (A) shall demonstrate at such interval as the Secretary shall prescribe to the employer of the driver, the school, the licensing agency, or other person or agency responsible for regulating school bus drivers, the proficiency of such drivers in operating a school bus, in accordance with the proficiency standards prescribed under paragraph (A) or the proficiency standards established by the State concerned, as the case may be.

SECTION 5. *Seat Belts in School Buses.* -

- (A) *Requirement for Installation.* - Not later than one (1) year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall prescribe regulations requiring driver seat belts and passenger seat belts (including lap safety belts or other child safety devices meeting applicable government safety standards) for each seating position in any newly manufactured school bus. Owners of school buses which are not currently equipped with seat belts shall be given a period of six (6) months from the publication of the regulations by the Secretary to install the necessary seat belts in their school buses.
- (B) *Promotion of Seat Belt Usage.* -
 - (1) *In General.* - The Secretary, in consultation with appropriate safety organizations and parent-teacher organizations, shall conduct a program to promote and encourage the use of seat belts in school buses.
 - (2) *Elements of Program.* - In conducting the program required under this subsection, the Secretary shall -
 - (a) Encourage the local governments to monitor the mandatory usage of seat belts in school buses;

- (b) Develop and disseminate educational materials on the importance of using seat belts to passengers and drivers of school buses; and
- (c) Recognize, in an appropriate manner, schools that achieve a high level of seat belt usage by passengers and drivers of school bus.

SECTION 6. *Determination of Practicability and Feasibility of Certain Safety and Access Requirements for School Buses.* -

- (A) *Commencement of Rulemaking Process.* - Immediately upon the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall begin a rule-making process to determine the feasibility and practicability of a requirement for a decrease in the flammability of the material used in the construction of the interiors of school buses.
- (B) *Final Rule.* - Not later than one (1) year after such date, the Secretary shall promulgate a final rule providing for any requirement or standard that the Secretary determines to be feasible and practicable.

SECTION 7. *Registration.* - No school bus shall be allowed to acquire, maintain and renew registration unless it is equipped with the necessary seat belts.

SECTION 8. *Implementing Authority.* - The Secretary shall be primarily responsible for the enforcement of the provisions of this Act. The Secretary may provide, for a reasonable period, public notices and comments consistent with ensuring the expeditious but full implementation of the prescribed safety requirement of this Act.

SECTION 9. *Separability Clause.* - If any provision or part hereof, is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remainder of the law of the provision not otherwise affected, shall remain valid and subsisting.

SECTION 10. *Repealing Clause.* - Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary to or inconsistent with the provision of this Act is hereby repealed, modified or amended accordingly.

SECTION 11. *Effectivity Clause.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulations.

Approved,