AN ACT GRANTING UTILITY ALLOWANCE FOR TEACHERS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Merely a few weeks into the lockdown brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, one question quickly made rounds: paano na ang pag-aaral? As it became apparent that physical classes were not to be seen for a while, students, parents, and teachers alike expressed concerns over alternative arrangements for school and the viability thereof.

Along with online classes, one of the more brought up solutions is that of having teachers utilize cyber means to create and share their materials. Either of the said solutions are inarguably demanding on internet resources. However, there have been countless reports of teachers constrained by their household budgets from acquiring internet services. The current health situation in the country has proven to mean costlier everyday expenses: the additional internet costs are simply not an option for many households. Thus, in an effort to minimize the digital divide, this bill seeks to address this problem to whatever extent possible.

The Teachers’ Utility Allowance law, as proposed herein, will grant to our honored teachers an extra means to facilitate their teaching. This bill seeks to broaden the horizon for teachers, and to further welcome their creative input in solving these modern challenges we face.

Incidentally, the passage of this bill will not only provide teachers with additional repositories for their materials but would also better facilitate communication between teachers and students, and between teachers and other teachers.
This legislation, should it become law, will work hand-in-hand with the several various measures forwarded by the different sectors of society so that when we are asked "puano na ang pag-aaral?", we will be prepared with a concrete and positive answer.

MARIA FE R. ABUNDA
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Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in Congress assembled:

Section 1. This Act shall be known as the “Teachers’ Utility Allowance Act.”

Section 2. Declaration of Policy. - In line with the standing policy of the State to protect and promote the rights of all citizens to quality education at all levels and to take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all, the State shall guarantee that it shall continuously enable and assist teachers in conducting their respective classes at any given time especially during a pandemic.

Section 3. Objective. - The general objective is to provide teachers in public schools with the necessary funds to procure stable internet connection in order to conduct their classes which is set to be online due the Covid-19 pandemic limiting schools to online learning.

The specific objectives are:

a. To augment the teaching force in areas affected by Covid-19 which have shifted classes from the traditional face-to-face to online classes;

b. To encourage teachers to effectively hold classes without the additional burden of procuring from their personal funds to use as an expense for stable internet connection;
c. To ensure that students will be able to effectively learn from their teachers through the alternative modes of online learning;

d. To provide monthly internet allowance for public school teachers in addition to their salary and other allowance

Section 4. Appropriations. - The Secretary of the Department of Education (DepEd) shall immediately include in the DepEd program the implementation of this Act, the funding of which shall be included in the Annual General Appropriations Act.

Section 5. Implementing Rules and Regulations. - The DepEd District Supervisor, in coordination with the Local Government Unit, shall promulgate and issue the guideline and implement rules and regulations for the proper implementation and execution of this Act within sixty (60) days after the effectivity thereof.

Section 6. Repealing Clause. - All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations contrary or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Section 7. Effectivity. - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved.