

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Constitution Hills, Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH (17th) CONGRESS

First Regular Session

House Bill No. **4321**



Introduced by REPRESENTATIVE ERIC L. OLIVAREZ

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Because much of society does not naturally understand the culture of the Filipino Deaf, or are equipped to do so, many Deaf individuals are left without proper communication or access to information. Worse, because of this large communication gap, Deaf individuals have become more vulnerable to abuse.

In a nationwide survey on hearing disability and ear disorders conducted by Better Hearing Philippines, Inc., (2005 Martinez et.al.) the prevalence of hearing disability was established at 8.8% of the general population with wax problem, otitis media and non-infectious conditions as the leading cause. Further, hearing impairment, including mild forms of hearing loss was at 28%. Prior to the national survey cited earlier, the Department of Health and the University of the Philippines conducted, in 2003, a general survey on disability, which sought to identify the problems in relation to disability in the country. The study categorized disabilities into moving, speaking, hearing, mental and seeing. Percent distributions of the types of disability are as follows: movement disability (39%), speaking (10%), hearing (33%), mental (10%) and vision (8%). Prevalence of different types of

disability by age groups showed that disability was most prevalent among the following age groups: 70 and above (16.18%), 60-69 (3.66%) and 50-59 (1.45%). As part of the disability being assessed by the study, it was found that the prevalence of hearing impairment nationwide using the screening and functional assessment tools developed by the study was 2.04% while for hearing disability, results showed a 1.10% prevalence rate. Furthermore, hearing disability was found to be the 2nd highest form of disability next to moving disability.

According to the DOH National Registry in 1997, hearing impairment was said to be 17% or 97,957 per 577,345 population. A similar survey in 1995 by the Philippine Consensus of Population showed that prevalence rate of hearing diseases were estimated to be 12.55% or 115,357 per 919,292 individuals. At that time, based on the criteria set by the Employees' Compensation Commission of the Department of Labor and Employment, cases of hearing loss were categorized into partially deaf (7.57%), totally deaf (2.50%), poor hearing ability (2.48%).

Sign languages are visual languages and can therefore gain exposure through visual media. Whereas other mediums and technologies such as captions and subtitles depend and vary greatly in terms of level of literacy, sign language is more universally comprehensible. Such a language would not only produce highly successful learners, it would also respect the Filipino Deaf community's rights to identity, access to education, and direct communication, among others.

We fervently believe that a humane, just, and inclusive society protects the vulnerable, integrates the marginalized, breaks down the barriers of discrimination, and gives equal access to opportunity for every Filipino. Mandating and promoting the use of sign language in Philippine television, we believe, is a step toward social justice for the Filipino Deaf community.

This legislation will significantly attend to the accessibility needs of the Filipino deaf community. Significantly, this bill is also a counterpart to the Filipino Sign language Act of 2014 by Senator Bam Aquino.


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

**AN ACT MANDATING THE USE OF INSET FILIPINO SIGN LANGUAGE
INTERPRETATION IN TELEVISION PROGRAMS OF VARIOUS NATURE
FOR THE MAINSTREAMING OF THE DEAF IN BROADCAST MEDIA**

Section 1. Short Title. - This Act shall be known as "Filipino Sign Language in Broadcast Television of 2016".

Section 2. Declaration of Policy. - It is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities. Thus, national and local state agencies shall uphold respect for their inherent dignity, individual autonomy and independence by guaranteeing accessibility and eliminating all forms of discrimination in all public interactions and transactions thereby ensuring their full and effective participation and inclusion in society.

The State shall also take all appropriate measures to provide accessible communication to develop productive and responsible citizens, equipped with the essential competencies, skills and values for both life-long

learning and employment. Pursuant to this, communication accessibility that meets the needs of Filipinos who are deaf and hard of hearing shall be provided.

Section 3. *Definition of Terms.*-

1. Deafness - a hearing impairment that is so severe that the individual is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification;
2. Hearing impairment - an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a person's educational performance but that is not included under the definition of deafness;
3. Sign language - convey meaning through manual communication and body language instead of acoustically conveyed sound patterns. This involves the simultaneous combination of hand shapes, orientation and movement of the hands, arms or body, and facial expressions to express a speaker's thoughts;

Section 4. *Use of Filipino Sign Language in Broadcast Media.* Television stations shall ensure communication access through the provision of an inset sign language interpretation on all television programs including news, public affairs, features, variety and drama shows; skilled professional interpreters must be hired to ensure precision and correctness in the medium of instruction;

Section 5. *Implementation.* The Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) shall ensure and monitor the compliance of television stations in establishing sign language interpretation insets in their programs to effectively mainstream the deaf and the hearing impaired in society. Upon consultation with the Philippine Institute for the Deaf, it shall determine the appropriate standards from which sign language interpretation can be executed and shall determine the appropriate sanctions for the degree of violations television programs can make;

Section 6. *Repealing Clause.* - All existing laws or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Section 5. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect thirty (30) days after the completion of its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least three (3) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,