

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 6303



Introduced by Representative PABLO JOHN F. GARCIA

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The efficient, speedy, and inexpensive provision of government services and information is a goal which every sovereignty must aspire to achieve, especially during this age of lightspeed global telecommunications.

The advent of smartphones and mobile applications has certainly changed the world forever. Statista, a German statistics company, reports that the Philippines had around 36.35 million smartphone users as of September 2019¹ – a little more than one smartphone for every three Filipinos. We Are Social and Hootsuite, social network and media companies based in London and Vancouver respectively, also report that for 2018 “[i]n the Philippines, time spent online daily soared [x x x] to 10 hours and 2 minutes this year, the highest in the world.”² It is also interesting to note that social media penetration among Filipinos is at 99% of internet users and that we also spend the most time on social media at 4 hours and 12 minutes per day.³ “Fixed internet speed grew from 15.19 mbps [on] average to 19 Mbps.”⁴

Not taking advantage of these existing realities to facilitate the wider access to government services would be a travesty. Inadequate access to information, administrative red tape, and service inefficiency are problems which must be addressed in every way possible.

¹ Available at <https://www.statista.com/statistics/748053/worldwide-top-countries-smartphone-users/> (last accessed 04 February 2020).

² Gelo Gonzales, *Filipinos spend most time online, on social media worldwide – report*, available at <https://www.rappler.com/technology/news/222407-philippines-online-use-2019-hootsuite-we-are-social-report> (last accessed 04 February 2020).

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

This bill aims to establish one general government mobile application, called “*Tugma*” (Transcendent Unified Government Mobile Application), for the benefit of all Filipinos so that government services and information may be made available to them quickly at the tap of a screen or the click of a button. The consolidation of existing government gateways into a comprehensive application would undoubtedly reduce inefficiency and save the nation valuable resources as well. The measure likewise desires to set up common standards for all government applications to observe in addition to establishing an integrated framework.

The bill envisions government applications to be a rich user-friendly multimedia experience filled with resources on major frontline government services. “*Tugma*” is sought to be a comprehensive portal which empowers users with ease of access and by being a treasure trove of information. It focuses on open data and content, user-friendliness, ease of data exchange, and user safety and privacy.

The Constitution provides that the State “shall give priority to education, science and technology, arts, culture, and sports to foster patriotism and nationalism, accelerate social progress, and promote total human liberation and development”⁵ and “recognizes the vital role of communication and information in nation-building.”⁶ Likewise it extols that, “Science and technology are essential for national development and progress. The State shall give priority to research and development, invention, innovation, and their utilization [x x x].”⁷

The proposed Government Mobile Applications Act embodies these ideals.

The urgent passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



Rep. PABLO JOHN F. GARCIA
3rd District, Province of Cebu

⁵ CONST. art. II, § 17.

⁶ CONST. art. II, § 24.

⁷ CONST. art. XIV, § 10.

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 6303

Introduced by Representative PABLO JOHN F. GARCIA

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A TRANSCENDENT UNIFIED GOVERNMENT MOBILE
APPLICATION FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES, SETTING A FRAMEWORK AND
COMMON STANDARDS FOR GOVERNMENT MOBILE APPLICATIONS. AND
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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

Section 1. Short Title. - This Act shall be known as the "Government Mobile Applications Act of 2020."

Section 2. Declaration of Policy. - The State values the efficient, speedy, and inexpensive provision of local and national government services to all its constituents. The State likewise values the ready accessibility and reliability of government information and resources. It is thus the policy of the State to exert utmost efforts in democratizing information, streamlining transactions, and ensuring that all major and frontline government services are available to the Filipino people via various media such as the internet through software applications which can be navigated by a general application as created herein, in coordination with all government agencies and instrumentalities.

The State values open data and content, user-friendliness, ease of data exchange, and user safety and privacy in the pursuit of these ideals.

Section 3. Government Mobile Application Defined. - A government mobile application (hereinafter referred to as "GMA") is hereby defined as a software program created and implemented by a government agency or instrumentality that can be run on a mobile phone, tablet, or other similar device and is designed to provide or facilitate the acquisition of government information, services, or some other benefit.

A GMA may be agency-centric or citizen-centric. Agency-centric GMAs are applications intended for the internal use of a government agency or instrumentally to improve its efficiency and effectiveness. Citizen-centric GMAs are for the general public to enable real-time public engagement and service.

Section 4. Government Mobile Applications Steering Committee. - There is hereby established a Steering Committee composed of the following members:

1. Secretary of Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), as Chairperson;
2. National Statistician and Head of Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA); and
3. Commissioner of the National Privacy Commission (NPC)

and representatives from:

1. Philippines Communications Operations Office (PCOO);
2. Presidential Communications Development and Strategic Planning Office (PCDSCO);
3. Department of Science and Technology (DOST);
4. Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG);
5. Department of Budget and Management (DBM);
6. Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA);
7. Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE);
8. Department of Tourism (DOT);
9. Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD);
10. Department of Trade and Industry (DTI);
11. Department of Justice (DOJ); and
12. Department of Finance (DOF).

Section 5. Functions of the Steering Committee. - The Steering Committee shall:

- a. Develop and implement policies for GMAs to pursue within the framework of Philippine law;
- b. Detail the uniform standards to be observed by all GMAs and digital service platforms, guided by the principles enunciated in this Act;
- c. Prescribe what pieces of information and interface GMAs shall contain and display;
- d. Serve as the overall implementing body of the Transcendent Unified Government Mobile Application, as will be hereinafter created;
- e. Monitor and require compliance from government agencies and centers with respect to the policies, guidelines, and standards prescribed by the Steering Committee;
- f. Conduct periodic reviews of the administration, operation, policies, rules, and regulations governing GMAs, and update the same in order to reflect the best practices and standards; and
- g. Perform other functions germane or related to the above-mentioned primary functions and the declared policy of this Act.

Section 6. Uniform Standards. - In line with the declared policy of this Act, all GMAs shall hereby observe the following uniform standards and characteristics:

- a. Open data and content;
- b. User-friendliness;
- c. Ease of internal and external data exchange;
- d. User safety and privacy;
- e. Economical use of budget and resources;
- f. Intelligibility;
- g. Correctness;
- h. Dependability;
- i. Efficiency;
- j. Adaptability;
- k. Wide-compatibility; and
- l. Any other standard or quality that will be set by the Steering Committee, which shall be consistent with this Act.

Section 7. Standardization of Data Structure. - The DICT shall prescribe a standardized framework of data and data infrastructure which shall be observed among government agencies and instrumentalities and shall facilitate the efficient exchange of data in a useful format based on common standards. This shall ensure that all of the data can be used reliably for different types of analyses and purposes, including the creation of GMAs.

Section 8. Transcendent Unified Government Mobile Application. - The Transcendent Unified Government Mobile Application (hereinafter referred to as "Tugma") is hereby created and shall be an online comprehensive portal designed to provide users with basic things such as the contact details, requirements, citizen's charters, news, bulletins, and other helpful information about the country's major frontline government services and their associated agencies. It shall also be used to redirect users to specific government applications, websites, or other platforms to streamline transactions, process requests, provide information, and extend any other beneficial use made possible through the implementation of modern technologies and systems.

Section 9. Lead Developer. - The Department of Information and Communication Technology (DICT) shall be the lead agency tasked with the design, development, implementation, distribution, maintenance, and improvement of Tugma. In line with the agency's "Philippine Digital Transformation Strategy 2022", the creation of Tugma shall pave way to delivering an environment wherein government agencies will be encouraged and incentivized to create their own applications for all major frontline services and collaborate in the context of their respective functions and objectives

Section 10. Services and Features of Tugma - Tugma shall:

- a. Provide information and details regarding the different national agencies, local governments, and their frontline programs such as the services that they offer, their contact information, addresses, service requirements, and citizen's charters, among others;
- b. Enable its users to apply, register, or otherwise avail of frontline government services and other facilities by being directed to specific applications, websites, or platforms that directly cater to their needs;
- c. Facilitate government transactions by streamlining appointments with government offices and the processing of documents, papers, reports, certificates, deeds, information, and other requests;
- d. Contain and/or provide access to information regarding available public services, facilities, functions, and other benefits of the government;
- e. Produce a versatile interface with a focus on maximizing usability and enriching user experience;
- f. Reduce unnecessary expenditures by consolidating into itself, if deemed prudent by the Steering Committee, various services and GMAs already being provided;
- g. Function as an avenue wherein one may raise complaints, comments, and/or suggestions concerning governmental functions; and
- h. Fulfill any other function the Steering Committee may hereinafter provide consistent with the aforementioned declaration of policy.

Section 11. Philippine Identification System Integration. - The Philippine Identification System, as established by Republic Act No. 11055, shall be integrated with *Tugma* and shall form as the basis for registering and/or authenticating the identity of a particular person for purposes of using the *Tugma* and to ensure security and privacy.

Section 12. National Government Portal Integration. - The National Government Portal (NGP) of the DICT is hereby integrated, combined, or otherwise absorbed by *Tugma* and shall thus also include access to local government services and information. To ensure maximum reach, access, and usability, the DICT shall make *Tugma* available on a website and as a desktop application, aside from the mobile interface.

Government agencies and instrumentalities, if directed by the Steering Committee, shall:

- a. Integrate their online services and GMAs with *Tugma*;
- b. Form or designate an agency web administration team from permanent personnel;
- c. Operate, maintain, and manage their respective online services integrated into the NGP; and
- d. Produce regularly updated content for integration with *Tugma*.

Section 13. Appropriation. - Congress shall appropriate the amount of Fifty Million pesos (P50,000,000.00) for the initial implementation of this Act. After the initial implementation, the amount necessary to carry out the Program is hereby authorized to be appropriated under the regular budget of DICT.

Section 14. Implementing Rules and Regulations. - The Steering Committee shall convene within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act and shall promulgate the necessary implementing rules and regulations within six (6) months thereafter.

Section 15. Repealing Clause. - All other laws, decrees executive order, rules and regulations, or parts or provisions thereof which are not affected shall continue to remain in full force and effect.

Section 16. Separability Clause. - If any part or provision of this Act is held unconstitutional or invalid, other parts or provisions thereof which are not affected shall continue to remain in full force and effect.

Section 17. Effectivity. - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following completion of its publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,