

Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
Quezon City

**EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS**  
First Regular Session

**House Bill No. 6661**



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Introduced by CIBAC Party-List Representatives  
Eduardo "Bro. Eddie" C. Villanueva and Domingo C. Rivera

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**AN ACT**

**AUTHORIZING THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION TO POSTPONE THE START OF SCHOOL YEAR IN CASE OF A DECLARATION OF A STATE OF EMERGENCY, STATE OF CALAMITY OR SIMILAR OCCURRENCE, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7977, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "AN ACT TO LENGTHEN THE SCHOOL CALENDAR FROM TWO HUNDRED (200) DAYS TO NOT MORE THAN TWO HUNDRED TWENTY (220) CLASS DAYS"**

**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

Pursuant to Proclamation No. 922 issued on March 8, 2020, President Rodrigo Duterte declared a state of public health emergency throughout the Philippines due to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

After the Code Alert System for COVID-19 was raised to Code Red Sublevel Two (2), President Duterte issued Proclamation No. 929 on March 16, 2020, declaring a state of calamity throughout the Philippines and imposed an Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) in the entire Luzon effective from March 17 to April 13, 2020.

On April 7, 2020, the President extended the duration of the ECQ in the entire Luzon to April 30, 2020. Again on April 24, 2020, the President further extended the ECQ in Metro Manila, Central Luzon and CALABARZON and other high-risk provinces until May 15, 2020.

Meanwhile, as of May 1, 2020, 4:00 pm, the Department of Health reported that there are 8,722 total number of COVID-19 cases in the country. Of this number, 1,084 or 12.43% recovered, while 579 or 6.64% died.

In light of the COVID-19 situation, classes in all levels and school activities have been suspended since March 2020 as among the preventive measures against the spread of the coronavirus disease. Preparations for the schools' openings have also been deferred due to ECQ protocols.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, the Department of Education has raised a concern that they are mandated by Republic Act No. 7977 or "An Act to Lengthen the School Calendar from Two Hundred (200) Days to Not More Than Two Hundred Twenty (220) Class Days" to open the school year between the first Monday of June and the last day of August only. This will, thus, limit their ability to comply with the President's directive to move the opening of classes in areas under General Community Quarantine to September.<sup>2</sup>

This bill seeks to amend Republic Act No. 7977 to allow the Secretary of Education, in case of a declaration of a state of emergency, state of calamity or similar occurrence, to move the opening of the school year to a later date per area or region, with due regard to the safety of students, faculty and staff.

This bill will give the Secretary of Education the flexibility to open the school year 2020-2021 any time after August, especially considering that experts from the UP Resilience Institute have pointed out that the suspension of classes until December or the end of the year would be an effective way to limit further COVID-19 infections.<sup>3</sup> According to Dr. Lagmay, the Executive Director of the Institute, 56% or majority of physical interactions among age groups happen among the 0-19 age group and that this age group is most

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<sup>1</sup> CNN. (2020). *UP experts propose no classes until December to stop COVID-19 spread*. Retrieved from <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/4/21/UP-experts-class-suspensions-December-COVID-19.html> (date last accessed: April 25, 2020).

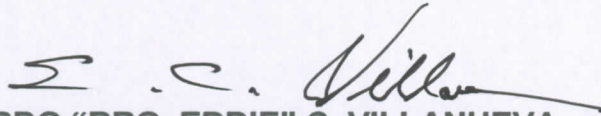
<sup>2</sup> Philstar. (2020). *DepEd to present school opening recommendation to COVID-19 task force in May*. Retrieved from <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/04/24/2009517/schools-opening-moved-september-some-areas-due-covid-19-risk> (date last accessed: April 25, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> CNN. (2020). *UP experts propose no classes until December to stop COVID-19 spread*. Retrieved from <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/4/21/UP-experts-class-suspensions-December-COVID-19.html> (date last accessed: April 25, 2020).



likely to interact with the elderly, who are considered to be vulnerable to the coronavirus disease.<sup>4</sup>

For the sake not only of our children and youth but also of teaching and non-teaching personnel in our schools and the public in general, approval of this bill is earnestly sought.



HON. EDUARDO "BRO. EDDIE" C. VILLANUEVA



HON. DOMINGO C. RIVERA

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<sup>4</sup> Rappler. (2020). *To stop coronavirus spread, suspend classes till December 2020 – U.P. experts*. Retrieved from <https://www.rappler.com/nation/258584-stop-coronavirus-spread-no-classes-till-december-2020-up-experts> (date last accessed: April 25, 2020).

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

1 **SECTION 1. Declaration of Policy.** – It is the policy of the State to protect  
2 and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, and shall  
3 take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.

4  
5 Towards this end, the State, in developing educational policies such as  
6 planning and instituting the academic calendar, shall take into account not  
7 only national and global opportunities that encourage or facilitate learning, but  
8 also national and regional conditions that affect the safety and health of  
9 students, faculty, and staff.

10 **SEC. 2. Coverage.** – This Act shall cover all public and private basic  
11 education institutions nationwide.

1 **SEC. 3. Postponing the Start of School Year.** – Section 3 of Republic Act  
2 No. 7977, otherwise known as “An Act to Lengthen the School Calendar from  
3 Two Hundred (200) Days to Not More Than Two Hundred Twenty (220) Class  
4 Days,” is hereby amended to read as follows:

5  
6 “SEC. 3. Start of the School Year. – The school year shall start  
7 on the first Monday of June but not later than the last day of  
8 August; *PROVIDED, THAT IN THE EVENT OF A*  
9 *DECLARATION OF STATE OF EMERGENCY, STATE OF*  
10 *CALAMITY OR SIMILAR OCCURRENCE, THE SECRETARY*  
11 *OF EDUCATION SHALL BE AUTHORIZED TO PRESCRIBE A*  
12 *DIFFERENT DATE FOR THE START OF THE SCHOOL YEAR*  
13 *PER REGION OR PER AREA, WITH DUE REGARD TO THE*  
14 *SAFETY OF THE CONCERNED STUDENTS, FACULTY AND*  
15 *STAFF; PROVIDED FURTHER, THAT FOR THE SCHOOL*  
16 *YEAR 2020-2021, THE START OF THE SCHOOL YEAR*  
17 *SHALL BE BASED UPON THE ASSESSMENT AND*  
18 *RECOMMENDATION OF THE INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCE*  
19 *FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF EMERGING INFECTIOUS*  
20 *DISEASES RELATIVE TO THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE*  
21 *2019 (COVID-19) SITUATION.*

22  
23 In the implementation of this Act, the Secretary of  
24 Education[, Culture and Sports] shall determine the end of the  
25 regular school year, taking into consideration the Christmas and  
26 summer vacations, and the peculiar circumstances of each  
27 region.

28  
29 In the exercise of this authority, the Secretary of  
30 Education[, Culture and Sports] may authorize the holding of  
31 Saturday classes for elementary and secondary levels for public  
32 and private schools.”

33 **SEC. 4. Alternative Modalities of Learning.** – The Department of Education  
34 shall ensure educational continuity in terms of national emergency or similar  
35 occurrence, including the COVID-19 pandemic, by utilizing alternative  
36 modalities of learning such as, but not limited to, modular instruction, online,  
37 digital or mobile learning, radio or television-based instruction, and blended  
38 learning or a combination of various modalities.



1 **SEC. 5. Report to Congress.** – The Department of Education, in coordination  
2 with relevant agencies and sectors, shall submit a Report to Congress with  
3 regard its decision on the opening of school year within one (1) month from  
4 making such decision, through the Senate Committee on Basic Education,  
5 Arts and Culture and the House of Representatives Committee on Basic  
6 Education and Culture.

7  
8 With regard its report on the opening of school year 2020-2021, such report  
9 shall include the actions taken by the Department relative to the COVID-19  
10 situation.

11  
12 The report shall also be posted on the official website of the Department of  
13 Education.

14 **SEC. 6. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** – The Department of  
15 Education, in coordination with relevant agencies and sectors, shall  
16 promulgate the implementing rules and regulations as may be necessary to  
17 carry out the provisions of this Act.

18 **SEC. 7. Separability Clause.** – If any portion or provision of this Act is  
19 subsequently declared invalid or unconstitutional, other provisions hereof  
20 which are not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

21 **SEC. 8. Repealing Clause.** – All other laws, acts, presidential decrees,  
22 executive orders, presidential proclamations, issuances, rules and regulations,  
23 or parts thereof which are contrary to or inconsistent with any of the provisions  
24 of this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

25 **SEC. 9. Effectivity.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its  
26 publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

27  
28 **Approved,**