

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 955



Introduced by HON. MA. LOURDES T. ARROYO

A RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE INTER-AGENCY COUNCIL CREATED UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11106 OR THE FILIPINO SIGN LANGUAGE ACT, TO SUBMIT TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES A COMPREHENSIVE REPORT ON THE MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS ACT AND FOR THE HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES TO INVESTIGATE, INQUIRE, AND LOOK INTO, THE DELAY IN THE ISSUANCE OF ITS IMPLEMENTING RULES AND REGULATIONS WITH THE END IN VIEW OF ENSURING THE RIGHTS OF THE DEAF COMMUNITY IN THE COUNTRY SUCH AS BUT NOT LIMITED TO ACCESS TO INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND HEALTH SERVICES UNDER R.A. NO. 11106 DURING COVID-19 CRISIS.

WHEREAS, it is the declared 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 in compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights 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;

WHEREAS, to this end, Republic Act No. 11106, An Act Declaring the Filipino Sign Language (FSL) as the National Sign Language of the Filipino Deaf and The Official Sign Language of Government in All Transactions Involving the Deaf, and Mandating Its Use in Schools, Broadcast Media, And Workplaces or *The Filipino Sign Language Act* was signed into law by President Duterte in November 2018;

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 global pandemic has changed the way we live and we are all learning to adapt to the crisis. The Department of Health informs our citizens regarding the health situation of the country and the government announces rules and guidelines on ECQ, MECQ and GCQ. During this crisis when information is constantly changing, getting information to the deaf and people with hearing loss is not easy;

WHEREAS, in an article by the Manila Bulletin entitled, "*Filipino Deaf community's access to information in the time of COVID-19*" it was reported that an alliance was formed by Deaf and hearing advocates to provide equal access to Deaf Filipinos. **Volunteer interpreters** gather online, virtually conduct meetings and monitor news daily to disseminate information through social media. What's more challenging is that all of them do this while on quarantine;

WHEREAS, in the same article, it says that the alliance was formed after recognizing the lack of sign language interpreters in TV stations during the announcement of the community quarantine and that interpreters had to designate a portion of their houses as their workstation to comply with the standards of TV inset;

WHEREAS, in the advisory issued by the Commission on Human Rights [CHR (V) A2020-009] to expound on the standards for the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, taking into account the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Philippines, it states that the foremost clamor of persons with disabilities is to be adequately informed about the government response to the pandemic and the regulations, including advisories, to ensure the health and well-being of the people. In particular, it has been a challenge for the deaf community to obtain information through broadcast media when there are no insets for sign language interpretation and no sufficiently visible captions or subtitles of suitable texts;

WHEREAS, in the same CHR advisory, another instance are emergency hotlines that would require the informant to report verbally, which obviously could not be accessible for the deaf community;

WHEREAS, under the law, qualified interpreters and materials should be provided whenever necessary or requested in activities conducted by government agencies and GOCCs. Hence, this difficult situation of the deaf community may have been avoided if the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the Law were issued by the agencies involved in the effective implementation of the Act. The IRR would have provided the guidelines as well as to inform the concerned government agencies of the proper implementation of the law;

WHEREAS, R.A. No. 11106 provides that the Department of Education (DepEd), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and all other national and local government agencies involved in the education of the deaf to use FSL and coordinate with each other on the use of FSL. R.A. No. 11106 also provides that FSL shall be taught as a separate subject in the curriculum for deaf learners in schools;

WHEREAS, the FSL Law provides under section 8 thereof on Filipino Sign Language in the Health System that State hospitals and all health facilities shall take steps to ensure access of the Filipino deaf to health services, including the

¹ <https://lifestyle.mb.com.ph/2020/03/23/filipino-deaf-communitys-access-to-information-in-the-time-of-covid-19/>

free provision of FSL interpreters and accessible materials upon request of deaf patients, or individuals who have family members who are deaf. As part of their corporate social responsibility, private health facilities are encouraged to provide access to health services to all deaf patients and their family members;

WHEREAS, R.A. No. 11106 likewise provides that FSL shall be the language of broadcast media interpreting to guarantee access to information and freedom of expression of the Filipino deaf and that all videos published online, including those on social media, shall also conform to Philippine web accessibility standards;

WHEREAS, all briefings of the DOH as well as official advisory of the government on rules and guidelines during Covid-19 crisis should be made accessible for all citizens including our persons with disabilities;

WHEREAS, Section 13 of the law provides that the KWF (Komisyon ng Wikang Filipino), in coordination with the Secretary of Education, the Chairperson of the CHED, the Director General of the TESDA, the Chairperson of the PRC, and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the Secretary of Justice, and the heads of other relevant agencies, and in consultation with the representatives of the deaf community, teachers with knowledge and experience with the use of FSL in deaf education, the academe, interpreters, and other persons concerned, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act within one hundred eighty (180) days after its effective date;

WHEREAS, there is a need to find out the reason behind the delay or inaction of the different government agencies involved in crafting the Implementing Rules and Regulation of R.A. No. 11106 in order to diminish the severe risk to the health and well-being of individuals with disabilities especially the deaf and hard of hearing by timely and accurate health information surrounding the outbreak;


WHEREAS, Section 14 of R.A. No. 11106 provides that the monitoring and implementation of the law shall be strictly upheld and for this purpose, an Inter-Agency Council is created which shall consist of one (1) representative each from the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), the Council for Welfare of Children (CWC), the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), the Kimsyon ng Wikang Filipino (KWF) and the Filipino Sign Language (FSL) organizations or institutions;

WHEREAS, Under the law, the Inter-Agency Council shall make an annual report on the monitoring and implementation of R.A. No. 11106 and the copy of which shall be submitted to both Houses of Congress and published in accessible formats in their respective websites and through other means necessary to serve the purpose of effective dissemination;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, as it is hereby resolved by the House of Representatives to direct the Inter-Agency Council created under Republic Act No. 11106 or the Filipino Sign Language Act, to submit to the House of Representatives a comprehensive on the monitoring and implementation

of this Act and for the House Special Committee on Persons with Disabilities to investigate, inquire, and look into, the delay in the issuance of its Implementing Rules and Regulations with the end in view of ensuring the rights of the Deaf Community in the country such as but not limited to access to information, education and health services under R.A. No. 11106 during Covid-19 crisis.

Adopted,


MA. LOURDES T. ARROYO