

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City



EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 6872

Introduced by Representative FLORIDA "RIDA" P. ROBES

AN ACT AMENDING SECTION 3 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7797, 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

The Coronavirus Diseases (COVID-19) pandemic has affected every person in the world, physically, emotionally and economically. In the Philippines, cases of infection have risen to almost 15,000 as of last count, killing more than 800.

Notwithstanding the impassioned and sustained efforts of countries all over the world to come up with a vaccine for the virus, experts have declared that the same is not forthcoming in a year or so.

As the country slowly eases its restrictions in fighting the disease, concerns had been raised on a possible second wave happening because without a vaccine, the virus remains a big threat to the health and well-being of everyone, especially old people with pre-existing medical conditions and young children.

On 24 April 2020, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte announced his approval of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) recommendation to move the opening of classes for school year 2020-2021 to September 2020. Said recommendation was based on the fact that children and the youth [aged zero (0) to twenty (20)] are among those more susceptible to the virus.

On 25 May 2020, President Duterte pronounced that he will not allow schools to be opened for the incoming school year in the absence of a vaccine for COVID-19. This is in view

of the possibility that the premature opening of schools, without the vaccine's availability, may dramatically spread infection among children.

Relative to the foregoing, Section 3 of Republic Act (R.A.) No. 7797 ("An Act To Lengthen the School Calendar From Two Hundred (200) Days To Not More Than Two Hundred Twenty (220) Class Days") explicitly provided that "[t]he school year shall start on the first Monday of June but not later than the last day of August." Clearly, the approved IATF-EID recommendation as well as the President's pronouncement on deferring school opening - pending the vaccine's availability - in not in accord with the above-cited provision of the law.

This bill, thus, proposes the amendment of Section 3 of R.A. No. 7797 to enable the implementation of the IATF-EID's recommendation and after due consideration of the COVID-19's long-term effects to our health and education system. In the same way, the proposed revisions are intended not only to address the current state of our education system during this trying times but also takes into consideration disruptions that may be caused by other factors such as other health, safety and security concerns.

Likewise, pending the commercial availability of a vaccine for COVID-19, the DepEd is enjoined to develop and implement alternative learning methods, such as but not limited to, online (*e-learning*) as well as offline (take home readings and activities) learning system and modules to lessen physical interaction of students among themselves and their teachers.

In view of the foregoing, the passage of this measure is earnestly urged.


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

SECTION 1. Section 3 of R.A. No. 7797 is hereby amended to read as follows:

"Sec. 3 Start of the School Year. – The school year shall start on the first Monday of June but not later than the last day of September, or in such other month, as may be determined by the President after due evaluation of existing health, safety and security concerns.

The Department of Education is likewise enjoined to develop and implement alternative modes of learning, such as but not limited to, online (e-learning) and offline learning systems.

In the implementation of this Act, the Secretary of Education shall determine the end of the regular school year, taking into consideration the Christmas and summer vacations, and the peculiar circumstance of each region.

In the exercise of this authority, the Secretary of Education may authorize the holding of Saturday classes for elementary and secondary levels for public and private schools.

SECTION 2. Appropriations. – The Secretary of Education shall immediately include in the Department's programs, the funding requirement to develop and implement alternative modes of learning, such as but not limited to, online (e-learning) and offline learning systems.

SECTION 3. Repealing Clause. — All laws, acts, presidential decrees, executive orders, presidential proclamations, issuances, rules and regulations or parts thereof which are contrary to or inconsistent with the provision of this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SECTION 4. Effectivity. — This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved.