AN ACT MANDATING THE LANGUAGE ACCESSIBILITY OF DISASTER-RELATED INFORMATION

The world is experiencing unprecedented environmental transformations. Disaster preparedness especially with a vulnerable country like ours is an important part of any nation’s plan in the long term.

It is obvious to anyone that a well-informed public is a well-prepared public. However, information goes beyond dissemination. It should be accessible and easy to understand. In a linguistically diverse nation as ours, English and Tagalog may not be sufficient to effectively communicate the risks posed by natural disasters. Those who do not fully understand are particularly vulnerable to natural disasters and emergency due to unfamiliarity and lack of literacy and fluency in the dominant language.

This bill proposes to require all government agencies and local government units to convert in an easily understandable form and translate to Filipino and any other appropriate regional language or dialect all their announcements, advisories, press releases, issuances and any other information relevant to a local or national disaster or emergency.

The translation of the information shall be to (1) Filipino and (2) other regional language/s or dialect/s, as deemed necessary by the government agency and local government unit concerned considering the geographical location. This information shall be disseminated as widely as possible through all available means.

In view of the foregoing, the approval of this bill is most earnestly sought.

LUIS RAYMUND "LRAY" F. VILLAFUERTE, JR.
Republic of the Philippines  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
Quezon City  

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS  
Second Regular Session  

HOUSE BILL NO. 7519  

Introduced by HON. LUIS RAYMUND "LRAY" F. VILLAFUERTE, JR.  

AN ACT MANDATING THE LANGUAGE ACCESSIBILITY OF DISASTER-RELATED INFORMATION  

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

SECTION 1. Short Title. — This Act shall be known as "Language Accessibility of Public Information on Disasters Act."  

Section 2. Declaration of Policy. — The right of the people to information on matters of public concern is recognized in our Constitution. Indeed, communication and information occupies a vital role in nation-building. In times of disaster and other emergencies, and to render meaningful and effective the right of the people to information, it shall be ensured that announcements, advisories and similar public communications are accessible in terms of the language or dialect used.  

Section 3. Definition of Terms. — For purposes of this Act, these terms are defined as follows:  

a. "Disaster"—a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and impacts, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources.
Disasters are often described as a result of the combination of: the exposure to a hazard; the conditions of vulnerability that are present; and insufficient capacity or measures to reduce or cope with the potential negative consequences. Disaster impacts may include loss of life, injury, disease and other negative effects on human, physical, mental and social well-being, together with damage to property, destruction of assets, loss of services, Social and economic disruption and environmental degradation;

b. "Emergency"- unforeseen or sudden occurrence, especially danger, demanding immediate action;

c. "State of Calamity"- a condition involving mass casualty and/or major damages to property, disruption of means of livelihoods, roads and normal way of life of people in the affected areas as a result of the occurrence of natural or human induced hazard;

Section 4. Scope of Application. — This Act shall cover disasters and other kinds of emergencies which are (1) national in scope, as declared through a State of Calamity or State of National Emergency by the President of the Philippines, and (2) provincial, city or municipal in scope, as declared through a State of Calamity or Emergency by the appropriate local government unit.

Section 5. Language Accessibility of Disaster-Related Information. - In relation to disasters and other emergencies covered by Section 4 of this Act, it shall be mandatory for all government agencies and local government units to convert in an easily understandable form and translate to Filipino and any other appropriate regional language/s or dialect/s all their announcements, advisories, press releases, issuances and any other information relevant to such disaster or emergency, including but not limited to:

a) Typhoon warnings, signals and other advisories by the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAG-ASA);

b) Volcano, earthquake, tsunami and landslide advisories and bulletins by the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS);

c) Announcements, bulletins and other advisories of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) and the Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Councils (LDRRMCs);

d) Information on epidemics, outbreaks and public health emergencies of the Department of Health (DOH); and

e) Information on the Social Amelioration Program, emergency assistance and other social protection measures of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

Section 6. Translation to Filipino and Other Regional Language or Dialect. — The translation of the information covered by this Act shall be to Filipino and other regional language/s or dialect/s, as deemed necessary by the government agency and local
government unit concerned considering the geographical location of the affected communities and the intended recipients of the information. The translated information shall be disseminated as widely as possible through all available media and communication channels.

Section 7. Role of the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino. - The Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino (KWF) shall render the necessary technical assistance and expertise to the government agencies and local government units and monitor their compliance to the duties mandated by this Act.

Section 8. Implementing Rules and Regulations. — Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino (KWF) in consultation with other relevant government agencies and stakeholders, shall issue the necessary rules and regulations to implement the provisions of this Act.

Section 9. Repealing Clause. — All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, proclamations, rules and regulations, or any part thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Section 10. Separability Clause. - If any provision or part of this Act, or the application thereof to any person or circumstance, is held unconstitutional or invalid, the remainder of this Act shall not be affected thereby.

Section 11. Effectivity Clause. — This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days from its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,