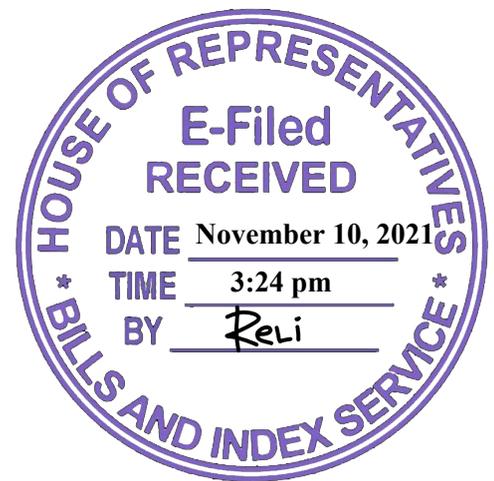


REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Third Regular Session

House Resolution No. 2343



Introduced by **KABATAAN PARTY-LIST Representative Sarah Jane I. Elago**

RESOLUTION
URGING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FLEXIBLE MODE OF LEARNING BY THE COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE INCREASING NUMBER OF ACADEMIC-RELATED ACCIDENTS AND SUICIDES OF STUDENTS AMID THE PANDEMIC

WHEREAS, the right of the youth to education is essential for the development of individuals to become productive members of society. Article 13 of the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which were adopted as international standards, state that everyone is entitled to the right to education, and that all levels of education shall be made available and accessible to all. This universally recognized right is also enshrined in the Philippine Constitution. Article XIV Section 1 mandates the State to “[...] protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all”;

WHEREAS, it has proven now more than ever that the face-to-face classes relatively grant more accessibility and effectiveness when it comes to teaching and learning, however, almost two years since the COVID-19 pandemic, educational institutions in the country have been forced to shift to a remote mode of learning which is mostly online; students and teachers are still struggling to cope with the new setup;

WHEREAS, students suddenly experienced fewer, if not lacking, interactions and social isolation which greatly impact their mental health. The lack of social interaction in online learning leads to feelings of loneliness, lack of motivation, and isolation;

WHEREAS, in the traditional classroom setup, students follow a routine schedule during school days such as times to wake up, to go to school, for class, to do homework, lunchtime to interact with friends, and attend extra-curricular activities. It has and it will never be the same with distance learning. Staying focused on online classes is a challenge. One can have a hard time separating home life and class time, following no routine schedule, avoiding distractions at home; it makes it difficult for students to concentrate well with their classes which gives them the tendency to procrastinate and set things aside, then deadlines are missed. This causes pressure, stress, and anxiety to both students and their parents;

WHEREAS, learners claim as well that overwhelming academic workload diminishes their mental health and quality of education and defeats the purpose of learning. Cases of student suicides amidst distance learning have been reported since its first year of implementation;

WHEREAS, according to this Representation's research and tally, there are at least twenty (20) reported student suicide cases at the basic and higher education level as of October 2020, and a 25.7% increase in suicide rate in the Philippines for the whole of 2020¹;

WHEREAS, one verified case and several more unverified cases of suicide amongst Saint Louis University (SLU) students have caused an uproar in social media, which spilled over to the streets calling for justice and better policy by 500-strong gathering of students in a candle-lighting protest led by the Walang Iwanan Louisian Network last November 1;

WHEREAS, apparent difficulty in dealing with online classes drove a 22-year-old man² to commit suicide in Mandurriao, Iloilo City last January 25, 2021 and a 21-year-old female student³ last September 2020 in Iriga City, Bicol;

WHEREAS, just last month, October 2021, there was also a 19-year-old student who died after he was electrocuted while searching for a mobile phone signal for online learning in their village in Calbayog City, Samar;⁴

WHEREAS, there are students who kill themselves upon dealing with their learning modules. A Grade 12 student⁵ committed suicide allegedly due to learning modules last November 2020 and on October 9, 2020 in Koronadal City, education officials expressed shock and grief over the death of a Grade 11 student⁶ in Tupi town, South Cotabato, who committed the same after days of wrestling with his learning modules which he had difficulty answering. Meanwhile, within this year, a 17-YEAR-OLD male student⁷, Grade 10, hanged himself using a blanket outside their house after suffering depression over his "school modules" in Tacloban City last April 27, 2021;

WHEREAS, one death is one too many and a constant rise of suicide rates is something that the government needs to pay attention to, especially that there are also online-classes-related accidents since the pandemic;

WHEREAS, a 20-year old student and resident of the province of Capiz, died on her way home via motorcycle after searching for internet signal so she can submit a school requirement online⁸, among others;

WHEREAS, though no one willed these suicides and accidents to happen, these unfortunate happenings underscore the need for an educational system that is compassionate and sensitive to the plight of students and families amid the COVID-19 pandemic;

WHEREAS, students are exposed to unnecessary risks whenever we go out of our houses to access the internet and comply with school requirements during these difficult times. While the whole country is yet to effectively deal with the COVID-19 crisis, an

¹ <https://www.rappler.com/nation/suicide-rises-philippines-pandemic-drags-on-2021>

² <https://dailyguardian.com.ph/college-student-commits-suicide-over-arduous-online-classes/>

³ <https://thepost.net.ph/news/campus/online-class-woes-trigger-21-year-old-coed-to-end-her-life-a-third-suicide-in-bicol-related-to-distance-learning/>

⁴ <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1501974/student-dies-of-electrocution-after-trying-to-find-phone-signal-in-calbayog>

⁵ <https://radyonatin.com/story.php?storyid=41740>

⁶ <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1345809/school-officials-grapple-with-shock-grief-over-death-of-boy-linked-to-learning-module-difficulties>

⁷ <https://www.sunstar.com.ph/article/1893000/Tacloban/Local-News/Tacloban-student-kills-self-over-module>

⁸ News source: The Eamigas, the official student publication of Aklan State University – Banga Campus

educational system that insists to meet rigid and pre-determined academic standards will surely compromise the safety and welfare of students;

WHEREAS, may this serve as a wake-up call to the Department of Education (DepEd), Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and to the Duterte administration: advisories and memoranda related to education amid this pandemic are nothing but empty rhetoric as long as public officials remain criminally negligent to pandemic response and insensitive to longstanding demands for pro-student guidelines and directives;

WHEREAS, schools remain to be the safest place for learning despite the pandemic, but the criminal negligence of the Duterte regime has kept them closed at large for more than a year;

WHEREAS, there has been a growing clamor among students, student councils, student publications, and youth organizations from different schools, colleges, and universities for adequate academic breaks to alleviate stress and give breathing time for students amidst a heavy semester;

WHEREAS, the failed and anti-poor flexible learning scam has only worsened the existing colonial, commercialized, and anti-democratic education system, boiling into an unprecedented education and mental health crisis as schools remain closed;

WHEREAS, this necessitates a need to assess the implementation of the flexible mode of learning vis-à-vis the heavy requirements it imposes on students and the effects of these requirements on students' mental health, and to demand the national government to address the pandemic scientifically and proactively in order to help resolve students and their families' other domestic problems such as loss of earning capacity, joblessness, death due to COVID, etc.;

WHEREAS, the House of Representatives should fully support the prospect of the safe reopening of campuses to be used for learning activities, as it is the aptest venue for learning and will give students a much-needed reprieve from the problems that they are encountering/ going through, and enact legislation to ensure such safe return;

NOW, BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED THAT the House of Representatives conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the implementation of the flexible mode of learning by CHED and DepEd and the increasing number of academic-related accidents and suicides of students amid the pandemic;

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED THAT the House of Representatives fast-track the reopening of campuses for the purpose of learning activities in order to give students a less stressful environment to continue their studies in. One way is by Congress immediately taking up the Safe Schools Reopening bill and President Duterte certifying it as urgent.

Adopted,

Rep. SARAH JANE I. ELAGO
Kabataan Party-list

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Elago', is written over a light gray rectangular background.