

Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
Batasan Hills, Quezon City

**NINETEENTH CONGRESS**  
First Regular Session



**HOUSE RESOLUTION 859**

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Introduced by  
**ACT Teachers Party-List Rep. FRANCE L. CASTRO,**  
**GABRIELA Women's Party Rep. ARLENE D. BROSAS,**  
and **KABATAAN Party-List Rep. RAOUL DANNIEL A. MANUEL**

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**RESOLUTION**  
**URGING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO RETURN TO FULL**  
**FACE-TO-FACE PLENARY SESSIONS IN LIGHT OF THE RIGHT OF THE**  
**PEOPLE TO INFORMATION ON MATTERS OF PUBLIC CONCERN, AS**  
**WELL AS THE CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLES OF TRANSPARENCY OF**  
**ALL ACTS OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND PROCEEDINGS OF**  
**GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE PEOPLE OF**  
**THE HOUSE AND ALL MEMBERS THEREOF**

**WHEREAS**, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 necessitated restrictions in activities including proceedings and transactions in government offices. To prevent the infection and spread of the virus, prohibitions and limitations in physical interactions and in-person reporting for work were implemented, such as the general lockdowns and work-from-home arrangements in both public and private sectors;

**WHEREAS**, beginning June 2022, the Department of Education has implemented the long-awaited return to full face-to-face classes. The Commission on Higher Education likewise issued its counterpart guidelines in August 2022 covering the resumption of physical classes in all higher education institutions. All these are significant yet long-overdue steps taken by the government, given that the two-year school closure has led to a deepening learning crisis and that the Philippines is the last country to reopen its schools. At present, it is estimated that majority, if not all, classes in public and private schools nationwide—from the Kindergarten level up to colleges and universities—have now resumed in-person learning;

**WHEREAS**, as early as February 2022, the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) ordered the “100% on-site workforce” in all government offices, and allowed all private offices and workplaces to operate at 100% capacity. The Civil Service Commission (CSC) followed this up their own issuances for the physical reporting of those working in government agencies and instrumentalities and private businesses and establishments, respectively, which they updated as the numbers of those affected with COVID went down. At present, while there is still a leeway for off-site reporting, “flexible work” schemes, and other alternative work agreements, this is only by way of exception. There is also no doubt that all government offices and private establishments have now reopened and returned to giving in-person services and transactions to the public;

**WHEREAS**, for the part of the House of Representatives, it followed the IATF and CSC orders and mandated the return of full on-site reporting of its workers and employees early last year;

**WHEREAS**, as of March 12, 2023, there are 144 new COVID-19 cases, with 9,117 active cases. This was the fifth straight day that the country has tallied more than 100 new infections and the third straight day that it has fewer than 10 deaths. Although a single person getting COVID is still a case too high, these numbers are far cry from those in the past two years, when the country was posting more than 10,000 new cases per day;

**WHEREAS**, it is unfortunate and ironic that while the country has mandated all school-age children from the youngest Kindergarten pupil to the oldest college student and all workers and employees in public and private offices and workplaces to return to pre-pandemic face-to-face reporting, this is not so with the Members of the House of Representatives. To date, the House is still implementing Rule XII entitled “Conduct of Plenary Sessions through Electronic Platforms,” which it began to implement during the 18<sup>th</sup> Congress when the number of COVID cases are still high and many areas are in Alert Levels 3 to 5 (high to alarming case counts);

**WHEREAS**, as shown by the experience of the House in the 18<sup>th</sup> Congress and the current one with “hybrid sessions,” such a system that allows the “attendance” of Members via virtual a platform skirts, if not defeats several requirements imposed by the Constitution as well as rights of the people that our fundamental law guarantees;

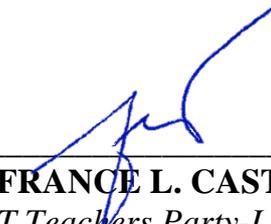
**WHEREAS**, with a “hybrid session,” the attendance of the Member is not assured at the onset of the plenary session, much less all throughout the proceedings, given that the Member “present” virtually cannot be seen and heard by the Members—and most especially, by the public—unlike the case when she or he is actually present on the floor. Voting is also done loosely, as votes on measures and matters raised can just be registered “through virtual conference,” and even just “through their respective mobile

phone numbers or other electronic accounts.” Such laxity allows Members to vote even when she or he is no longer on Zoom;

**WHEREAS**, under these rules, practices, and situations, the quorum—the precondition required by the Constitution for all businesses to be validly conducted by the House—is hardly established to the satisfaction of the public. The possibility of insufficiency of the representation of the interests of the people is also rife. Furthermore, as the public is not afforded access into the Zoom room or even allowed to “peek” into it via the livestreams, the people are blinded as to whether their elected representative is indeed working, and whether that person is indeed working for her or his—the constituent’s—interest.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the House of Representatives be urged to return to full face-to-face plenary sessions in light of the right of the people to information on matters of public concern, as well as the constitutional principles of transparency of all acts of public officials and proceedings of government agencies and accountability to the people of the House and all Members thereof.

*Adopted,*



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**Rep. FRANCE L. CASTRO**  
*ACT Teachers Party-List*



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**Rep. ARLENE D. BROSAS**  
*GABRIELA Women’s Party*



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**Rep. RAOUL DANNIEL A. MANUEL**  
*KABATAAN Party-List*