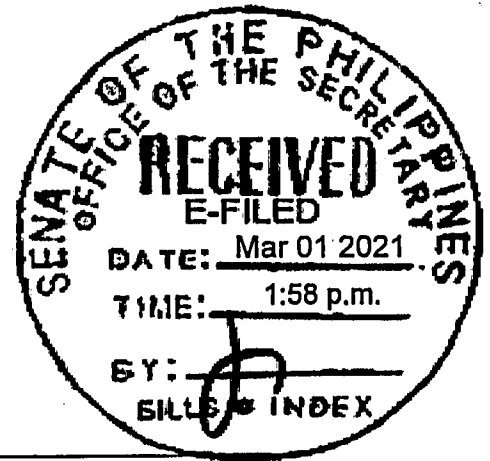


EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE ]  
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES ]  
Second Regular Session ]

SENATE

P.S. Res. No. 668



Introduced by SENATORS WIN GATCHALIAN, MARIA LOURDES NANCY S. BINAY, FRANCIS "KIKO" PANGILINAN, GRACE POE, PIA CAYETANO, JOEL VILLANUEVA and SONNY ANGARA

**RESOLUTION**  
**EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE**  
**TO RECOMMEND THE IMMEDIATE LAUNCH OF THE PILOT TESTING OF LOCALIZED LIMITED FACE-TO-FACE CLASSES IN THE 1,065 PUBLIC SCHOOLS AS IDENTIFIED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION UNDER RISK-BASED ASSESSMENT, FOLLOWING STRINGENT MITIGATION MEASURES AND STRICT HEALTH PROTOCOLS, TO ENABLE THE DEPARTMENT TO GATHER EVIDENCE ON THE GROUND AND DESIGN ITS FRAMEWORK FOR THE SAFE REOPENING OF SCHOOLS**

1           **WHEREAS**, on March 11, 2020, World Health Organization (WHO) Director  
2 General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus declared the coronavirus disease  
3 (COVID-19) outbreak as a pandemic;<sup>1</sup>  
4

5           **WHEREAS**, due to the rising number of confirmed local COVID-19 cases,  
6 President Rodrigo Duterte on March 16, 2020 also declared a State of Calamity  
7 throughout the country for a period of six (6) months, imposed an Enhanced  
8 Community Quarantine (ECQ) in Luzon effective midnight of April 12, 2020, and  
9 ordered the suspension of classes at all levels, both public and private, in the  
10 National Capital Region from March 10, 2020 to March 14, 2020<sup>2</sup>;  
11

12           **WHEREAS**, the persistent rise in the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases  
13 and resulting deaths further led to the extension of the suspension of classes at  
14 all levels<sup>3</sup>;  
15

16           **WHEREAS**, the unexpected and unprecedented pandemic school closures  
17 affected a total of 28,451,212 learners from the pre-primary to the tertiary level  
18 in the country<sup>4</sup> – 24,861,728 of whom are in basic education<sup>5</sup> – based on the  
19 March 31, 2020 data of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural  
20 Organization (UNESCO) in its global monitoring of school closures caused by  
21 COVID-19;

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.who.int/westernpacific/emergencies/covid-19>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.rappler.com/nation/253912-walang-pasok-duterte-declares-class-suspensions-metro-manila-coronavirus-threat-march-10-14-2020>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.rappler.com/nation/254278-duterte-suspends-classes-government-offices-metro-manila-until-april-12-2020-coronavirus-threat>

<sup>4</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>, as of March 31, 2020

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

1           **WHEREAS**, eleven months later, the data from UNESCO as of February  
2 28, 2021 yield exactly the same number<sup>6</sup> of affected learners in the Philippines  
3 considering that, globally, the number of affected learners has drastically  
4 decreased from around 1.47 billion to 208 million within the said eleven-month  
5 period;

6  
7           **WHEREAS**, the prolonged pandemic school closures have adversely  
8 affected the learners' education, but impacting more severely the most vulnerable  
9 and marginalized learners and their families<sup>7</sup> and aggravating the already  
10 existing disparities within the education system such as gaps in nutrition and  
11 childcare;

12  
13           **WHEREAS**, while the Department of Education (DepEd) has been  
14 implementing its Basic Education-Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) to arrest  
15 the adverse effects of the prolonged school closures through alternative learning  
16 modalities, the DepEd must be forthright in recognizing the controversial quality  
17 of blended learning that was adopted, the limited preparations of educators,  
18 parents, and learners alike to engage in alternative delivery modes, and the  
19 unreliable and expensive information and communications technology (ICT)  
20 services in the country;

21  
22           **WHEREAS**, the DepEd had previously mapped out the conduct of the pilot  
23 testing of localized limited face-to-face classes for January 2021 in 1,904 public  
24 schools nationwide within areas categorized as low-risk, or at least under  
25 Modified General Community Quarantine (MGCQ),<sup>8</sup> which was approved during  
26 the Cabinet Meeting held on December 14, 2020, subject to the following  
27 conditions: (1) that such pilot implementation be a shared responsibility of  
28 DepEd, local government units (LGUs), and parents of the school children; (2)  
29 that only schools with overall readiness shall be allowed to participate therein;  
30 and (3) the health and safety protocols shall be strictly observed at school, at  
31 home, and during transport in the schools/areas covered<sup>9</sup>;

32  
33           **WHEREAS**, the pilot implementation of localized limited face-to-face  
34 classes nationwide was recently postponed by President Duterte, who is given the  
35 power under existing laws to make final decisions on education policies<sup>10</sup>, in view  
36 of his concern over the new COVID-19 variant and subject to the availability and  
37 roll out of vaccines in the country, making it the 3<sup>rd</sup> approval, and recall, of the  
38 conduct of the pilot testing of localized limited face-to-face classes<sup>11</sup>;

39  
40           **WHEREAS**, the pilot implementation was suspended by the Secretary of  
41 Education with an instruction to all central and field units to further strengthen  
42 and improve distance learning delivery, and the conduct of survey on first quarter  
43 challenges,<sup>12</sup> and with a statement issued on February 24, 2021 that the DepEd

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<sup>6</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>, as of February 28, 2021

<sup>7</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/consequences>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.deped.gov.ph/2021/02/24/on-the-pilot-implementation-of-limited-face-to-face-classes/>

<sup>9</sup> Updates on the BE-LCP, by Atty. Nepomuceno A. Malaluan, Undersecretary, Department of Education, 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Philippine Forum for Inclusive Quality Basic Education (Educ Forum), January 29, 2021, 9:30 am

<sup>10</sup> *Supra* Note 8

<sup>11</sup> *Supra* Note 9

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

1 “shall continue preparing action plans for this activity should the President give  
2 his approval in the coming months”;<sup>13</sup>

3  
4 **WHEREAS**, the Senate Committee on Basic Education, Arts and Culture,  
5 in the exercise of its oversight function, has persistently discussed in four public  
6 hearings Proposed Senate Resolution No. 391<sup>14</sup> to determine the impact of the  
7 COVID-19 pandemic to the country’s basic education sector for the purpose of  
8 crafting legislation that would ensure an immediate, effective and efficient  
9 government response;

10  
11 **WHEREAS**, in the committee’s most recent public hearing<sup>15</sup>, it was  
12 reported by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) that the Philippines is  
13 the only country in the East Asia and Pacific region where schools have remained  
14 closed since March 2020, and that globally, there are only 13 other countries that  
15 have not opened schools since their respective lockdowns last year;

16  
17 **WHEREAS**, it was likewise reported during the said hearing that as of  
18 February 9, 2021, there are 433 municipalities and 3 cities in the country with  
19 zero active cases of COVID-19<sup>16</sup>, and that the identified 1,065 schools that are  
20 projected to participate in the pilot study for localized limited face-to-face classes  
21 represent only around 2.2% of all the public schools nationwide;<sup>17</sup>

22  
23 **WHEREAS**, the Senate plenary discussions on February 24, 2021 and the  
24 interpellations on the privilege speech on the “The Perennial Crisis of the  
25 Education System”<sup>18</sup> raised issues on the decline in the quality of education in  
26 the country, observed by the Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM)  
27 thirty years ago and continues on to this day, and how the protracted school  
28 closures have further resulted in significant learning loss and reduction in  
29 foundational skills, considering that prior to the pandemic our learner outcomes  
30 under recent standardized tests like the NAT, PISA, TIMMS, and SEA-PLM were  
31 already consistently poor, if not the poorest among the testing population;

32  
33 **WHEREAS**, to avert a prolonged learning loss and minimize other  
34 potentially profound adverse social, developmental, and health costs that  
35 learners will suffer<sup>19</sup>, the DepEd needs to immediately launch its pilot testing of  
36 localized limited face-to-face classes in the identified 1,065 schools in low-risk  
37 areas;

38  
39 **WHEREAS**, according to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention  
40 (CDC), it is possible for learners to return to schools for in-person instruction as

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<sup>13</sup> *Supra* Note 8

<sup>14</sup> <http://legacy.senate.gov.ph/lisdata/32647295161.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> February 24, 2021 Public Hearing, Senate Committee on Basic Education, Arts and Culture

<sup>16</sup> Transcript, Senate Committee on Basic Education, Arts and Culture Public Hearing on PSRN 391, February 24, 2021, p. 39

<sup>17</sup> *Id.* at 22-30

<sup>18</sup> Delivered by Sen. Win Gatchalian, accessible at [http://legacy.senate.gov.ph/press\\_release/2021/0224\\_gatchalian2.asp](http://legacy.senate.gov.ph/press_release/2021/0224_gatchalian2.asp)

<sup>19</sup> Benjamin Lee, William V. Raszka. COVID-19 Transmission and Children: The Child Is Not to Blame. *Pediatrics* Aug 2020, 146 (2) e2020004879; DOI: 10.1542/peds.2020-004879

1 long as mitigation measures<sup>20</sup> are observed, as there has been little evidence that  
2 schools have contributed meaningfully to increased community transmission;<sup>21</sup>  
3

4 **WHEREAS**, the pilot testing will enable the DepEd to gather evidence on  
5 the ground to guide its framework for the safe reopening of schools using a risk-  
6 based assessment to identify, analyze and reduce the risks affecting each school;  
7

8 **WHEREAS**, the pilot testing will also guide the DepEd to set specific  
9 standards and health protocols to reopen schools safely, including the provision  
10 of safe learning facilities and public health supplies such as adequate supply of  
11 safe water, sanitation areas, hand washing stations, soap, alcohol, and other  
12 cleaning materials;  
13

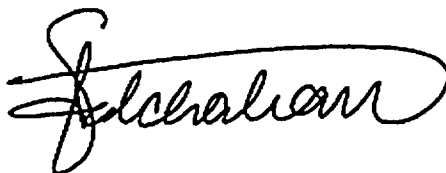
14 **WHEREAS**, the pilot testing will also lead to the resumption of the feeding  
15 program where the delivery of food packs to the beneficiaries will help mitigate  
16 the toll of the pandemic to their families and on their well-being;  
17

18 **WHEREAS**, to sustain the pilot testing of localized limited classes and the  
19 preparations for the eventual reopening of safe schools, it is important to  
20 prioritize the vaccination of teachers to mitigate the risk of adult to adult  
21 transmission in schools;  
22

23 **WHEREAS**, the pilot testing program must be a shared responsibility of  
24 the DepEd, the LGUs, the parents or guardians, and the community as a whole,  
25 to ensure that our investments in education will not be put to waste, and put the  
26 education system back on its tracks in due time, and leaving no one behind;  
27

28 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE**  
29 **PHILIPPINES**, to express, as it hereby expresses, the sense of the Senate to  
30 recommend the immediate launch of the pilot testing of localized limited face-to-  
31 face classes in the 1,065 public schools as identified by the Department of  
32 Education under risk-based assessment, following stringent mitigation measures  
33 and strict health protocols, to enable the department to gather evidence on the  
34 ground and design its framework for the safe reopening of schools.

Adopted,



**WIN GATCHALIAN**

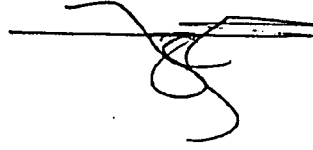
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<sup>20</sup> Mitigation measures in schools must continue, such as requiring universal face mask use, increasing physical distance and reducing density in classrooms and common areas, using hybrid attendance models when needed to limit the total number of contacts and prevent crowding, increasing room air ventilation, and expanding screening testing to rapidly identify and isolate asymptomatic infected individuals.

<sup>21</sup> Honein MA, Barrios LC, Brooks JT. Data and Policy to Guide Opening Schools Safely to Limit the Spread of SARS-CoV-2 Infection. *JAMA*. Published online January 26, 2021. doi:10.1001/jama.2021.0374, citing European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. COVID-19 in children and the role of school settings in transmission—first update. December 23, 2020. Accessed January 20, 2021. <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/children-and-school-settings-covid-19-transmission>



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**GRACE L. POE**



**PIA S. CAYETANO**



**JOEL VILLANUEVA**



In favor of targeted pilot face-to-face classes only  
in low risk areas where health system can bear the  
risks of possible outbreak

**SONNY ANGARA**