Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
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House Resolution No. 1092

Introduced by Rep. ANGELO MARCOS BARBA
2nd District, Ilocos Norte

A RESOLUTION URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF
INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (DICT),
in coordination with the Department of Education
(DEPED), Commission on Higher Education (CHED),
State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), Technical
Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA)
and other educational institutions, to accelerate
the installation, deployment and activation of free
Wi-Fi Internet Access Service, particularly in the
Education Sector

WHEREAS, the State recognizes the vital role of information and
communication in nation-building and adopts a policy that would promote an
environment for the development of structures to ensure the availability and
accessibility to reliable and secure internet access suitable to the needs and
aspirations of the nation;

WHEREAS, Philippine Digital Strategy for 2011-2016 was developed for
the purpose of having a digitally empowered, innovative, globally competitive,
and prosperous society where everyone has reliable, affordable, and secure
information access in the country;

WHEREAS, in line with the Philippine Digital Strategy for 2011-2016,
the Department of Science and Technology—Information and
Communications Technology (DOST-ICT) Office on July 24, 2015 launched
the Free Wi-Fi Internet Access in Public Places Project for the purpose of
jumpstarting economic development and improving the country’s educational
system, most especially in unserved and underserved areas;

WHEREAS, the Free Wi-Fi Internet Access in Public Places Project was
envisioned to provide enhanced internet accessibility for Filipinos to hasten
economic, social, and educational opportunities nationwide;

WHEREAS, internet connectivity services shall be made available in
public places, such as parks, plazas, schools, rural health units and
government hospitals;
WHEREAS, a budget amounting to One billion four hundred and eight thousand pesos (PhP1.408 billion) was authorized in the 2015 General Appropriations Act for the Free Wi-Fi Internet Access in Public Places Project;

WHEREAS, DOST-ICT aimed to provide internet access to 99% of the Philippine Archipelago by 2016\(^1\);

WHEREAS, the goal of providing 99% of the Philippine Archipelago internet access by 2016 did not come to fruition despite having a budget amounting to PhP1.408 billion pesos;

WHEREAS, on May 23, 2016, Republic Act No. 10844 creating the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), was signed into law;

WHEREAS, the DICT shall be the primary policy, planning, coordinating, implementing, and administrative entity of the Executive Branch of the government that will plan, develop, and promote the national ICT development agenda;

WHEREAS, pursuant to its mandate, DICT continued and carried out the Free Wi-Fi Internet Access in Public Places Project, now known as Pipol Konek, first conceived and implemented by the now defunct DOST-ICT Office;

WHEREAS, Congress enacted Republic Act No. 10929, known as the Free Internet Access in Public Places Act, signed by President Rodrigo Roa Duterte on August 2, 2017, to formally establish a national program that will provide free access to internet service in public places throughout the country, to promote knowledge-building among citizens and enable them to participate and compete in the evolving information and communication age;

WHEREAS, public places, under Republic Act No. 10929, shall include the following: (a) National and local government offices; (b) Public basic education institutions; (c) State universities and colleges, and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) technology institutions; (d) Public hospitals, health centers, and rural health units; (e) Public parks, plazas, libraries, and barangay reading centers; (f) Public airports and seaports; and (g) Public transport terminals;

WHEREAS, the DICT, as lead implementing agency, shall oversee the effective and efficient implementation of the said Act;

WHEREAS, to fast-track the implementation of the Free Internet Access in Public Places Act and aid in the capacity-building initiatives of stakeholders

involved in project management, the DICT forged a partnership with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) on September 26, 2018;

WHEREAS, the DICT and the Department of Education (DepEd) issued Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC) No. 1, Series of 2018 to harmonize the effort of both agencies in providing connectivity in public basic education institutions and alternative learning system (ALS) centers and implement the project without delay;

WHEREAS, prior to the Free Internet Access in Public Places Act and JMC No. 1, Series of 2018, the DepEd had an Internet Connectivity Project of its own—the DepEd Internet Connectivity Project (DICP)—and directed all public high schools to subscribe to internet connectivity services;

WHEREAS, despite the existence of the various Free Internet Access Projects, repeated appropriations in the General Appropriations Act from 2015 up to present, and the enactment of the Free Internet Access in Public Places Act, internet connectivity remains a problem in the country;

WHEREAS, the Covid-19 pandemic further exposed the weaknesses of the country’s digital infrastructure, particularly in the education sector where only 48% of public schools have internet connectivity and only 17 out of 112 state universities and colleges have been installed free Wi-Fi hotspots;

WHEREAS, as of June 21, 2020, DICT has listed 4,195 live sites for the Free Wi-Fi for all Hotspots across public places in the country such as municipal plazas, public schools, barangay halls, government agencies, health centers, public libraries, and district hospitals;

WHEREAS, the currently listed 4,195 listed live sites still failed to meet DICT’s targets of adding 5,308 sites for FY 2018 and 5,302 sites for FY 2019;

WHEREAS, since 2018, DICT has repeatedly failed to meet its target of establishing internet access sites and/or Wi-Fi Hotspots in the country;

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2 DICT Official Website. (2019 March 27) DICT will accelerate the free Wi-Fi rollout through UNDP project partnership 2019 March 27 Retrieved on June 24, 2020 from https://dict.gov.ph/dict-will-accelerate-the-free-wi-fi-rollout-through-undp-project-partnership/
WHEREAS, due to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, the DICT and all concerned agencies were forced to work together and accelerate the implementation of the Free Internet Access in Public Places Act;

WHEREAS, a whole-of-government approach is necessary to completely fast-track the implementation of the Free Wi-Fi Internet Access in Public Places Project and the Free Internet Access in Public Places Act nationwide;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, to urge the Department of Information and Communications Technology, in coordination with all concerned agencies, such as the Department of Education, Commission on Higher Education, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority and other educational institutions, to accelerate the installation, deployment, and activation of Free Wi-Fi Internet Access Service, particularly in the education sector, to finally ensure the availability and accessibility to reliable and secure internet access suitable to the needs of students, teachers, and the country's entire education system that would enable them to participate and compete in the evolving information and communication age.

Adopted,

ANGELO MARCOS BARBA