



## LEAGUE OF CITIES OF THE PHILIPPINES

### **Discussion Paper on House Bill No. 3012: An Act Establishing Local Language as the Official Language in Local Government Towards People's Greater Participation in Governance**

The League of Cities of the Philippines (LCP) supports House Bill No. (HBN) 3012 authored by Rep. Adolph Edward G. Plaza, which seeks to institutionalize local language as the official medium of communication in Local Government Units (LGUs). LCP believes in the potential of the proposed legislation to increase people's participation in governance by enabling them to understand government processes and freely communicate with the use of their native tongue. In this regard, we would like to present some recommendations that hopefully would serve the intent and spirit of the proposed legislation.

#### **The operational definition of 'regional language' can be further clarified.**

Section 3 of HBN 3012 refers to regional language as "the language dominant and commonly-spoken in the province". The said definition runs contrary on how the adoption of regional language in government processes shall be implemented as provided by Section 4: the regional language shall be used "among and between municipal governments and provincial governments, to wit: between municipal governments, between provincial governments, and between municipal governments and provincial governments." In this discussion paper, it is assumed that regional language refers to the dominant language used within a cluster of provinces and the smaller LGUs within their jurisdiction.

#### **Implementation at the provincial level (as opposed regional) may be more feasible for the intent of the proposed legislation.**

Usage of regional language between provincial governments may be less feasible given the diverse distribution of languages across different provinces in the region. In fact, according to the 2000 figures of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), there are at least five (5) languages generally spoken for each region in the country. In such instances, the proposed legislation may need to be utterly clear on the criteria for the selection of the regional language. On the other hand, the dominant language may be easier to be determined for every province than in the region.



**LGUs within a province should be provided with the prerogative to use their local languages.**

At the same time, the bill should recognize that there may be variations in the languages used within the province. For instance, in Iloilo, *Hiligaynon* is considered the dominant language in Iloilo City while *Kinaray-a* is the language commonly used in the municipalities of Pototan, Dingle, Janiuay, Calinog, and Maasin. LGUs with a different language from the regional (or provincial as recommended) language must be allowed to use their language within their jurisdiction. With this, LGUs will be able to preserve and promote their language. LGUs shall communicate in English and/or Filipino if any of them is non-speaker of the regional language.

English and Filipino aside from the regional language can be used in communications between a non-speaker LGU and a speaker LGU inside the province. This is also supported in the exceptions to the law on non-residents, non-speakers, and aliens, as enshrined in Section 6b: Communications between the LGUs and the non-residents of the place where the LGU is located, non-speakers of the regional language, and aliens may be made in the official language of the Philippines which are Filipino and English.

**Finally, the proponent may want to consider including provisions on the means and responsible government institutions for the bill's reinforcement, funding, and monitoring should it become law.**