



Republic of the Philippines
QUEZON CITY COUNCIL

Quezon City
23rd City Council

PO23CC-153

42nd Regular Session

ORDINANCE NO. SP- **3513**, S-2026

AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING THE QUEZON CITY DIGITAL WELLNESS AND HEALTHY SCREEN TIME FRAMEWORK FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN SCHOOLS, HOMES, AND COMMUNITY SPACES AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Councilors ALY MEDALLA, NICOLE "Nikki" V. CRISOLOGO and MARIA ELEANOR "Doc Ellie" R. JUAN, O.D.

Co-Introduced by Councilors Tany Joe "TJ" L. Calalay, Bernard R. Herrera, Dorothy A. Delarmente, M.D., Joseph P. Juico, Charm Ferrer, CPA, MPA, JD, Mikey F. Belmonte, Candy A. Medina, Atty. Voltaire Godofredo "Bong" Liban III, Dave C. Valmocina, Ranulfo "Tatay Rannie" Z. Ludovica, Atty. Christoffer Allan "Tope" Liquigan, Albert Alvin "Chuckie" L. Antonio III, Wencerom Benedict C. Lagumbay, Don S. De Leon, Luigi D. Pumaren, Atty. Vicente Belmonte Jr., Edgar "Egay" G. Yap, Nanette Castelo Daza, Imee Rillo, Raquel S. Malañgen, Joseph Joe Visaya, Aiko Melendez, Alfred Vargas, MPA, Karl Edgar Castelo, Shaira "Shay" L. Liban, Ram V. Medalla, Emmanuel Banjo A. Pilar, Kristine Alexia Matias, RN, Victor "Vic" D. Bernardo, Vito Sotto Generoso, Erwin Rey "Cocoy" A. Medina, Jose Maria "Mari" M. Rodriguez, and Jhon Angelli "Sami" C. Neri

WHEREAS, Section 16 of Republic Act No. 7160, otherwise known as the Local Government Code of 1991, provides that every local government unit shall exercise such powers as are necessary, appropriate, or incidental to efficient governance and essential to the promotion of the general welfare of its constituency, and Section 17 thereof directs local government units to discharge functions and responsibilities for basic services including health and social welfare;

WHEREAS, Republic Act No. 7610, otherwise known as the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act, declares it a State policy to provide special protection to children from all forms of abuse, neglect, cruelty, exploitation, discrimination, and other conditions prejudicial to their development;

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WHEREAS, Republic Act No. 8980, or the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Act, as amended, recognizes early childhood as a critical stage of development and mandates the creation of developmentally appropriate environments that support children's physical, cognitive, emotional, and social growth;

WHEREAS, the World Health Organization (WHO), through its Guidelines on Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour and Sleep for Children Under Five (5) Years of Age, recommends that children under two (2) years old should have no screen exposure, except for video calls, and that children aged two (2) to five (5) years old should have no more than one (1) hour per day of sedentary screen time, with less being better;

WHEREAS, WHO's Early Childhood Development (ECD) framework emphasizes that excessive and unregulated screen exposure can interfere with brain development, sleep patterns, attention formation, language acquisition, physical activity, and socio-emotional bonding, particularly during the early years when foundational skills are formed;

WHEREAS, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), through its Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report and related policy guidance, underscores that digital technology in schools should be used only when it clearly supports learning outcomes, and that unrestricted smartphone use may distract learners, weaken attention, and undermine effective teaching and learning;

WHEREAS, UNESCO further emphasizes the importance of digital citizenship, media and information literacy, online safety, and learner well-being, and calls on education systems and local governments to ensure that digital environments protect children from harm, support healthy development, and promote responsible and balanced engagement with technology;

WHEREAS, UNESCO and UNICEF jointly advocate that public digital learning platforms and educational technologies must prioritize child well-being, safety, developmental appropriateness, and meaningful learning, recognizing that excessive or poorly regulated screen exposure can be detrimental to children's education and overall development;

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WHEREAS, a local study conducted by the Ateneo de Manila University School of Medicine and Public Health (Dy et al., 2023) found that 76.4% of Filipino children exceed WHO-recommended screen time limits, with television and smartphone use being the most common forms of exposure among preschool-aged children;

WHEREAS, the same study demonstrated that screen exposure beyond two (2) hours per day is significantly associated with lower receptive and expressive language scores, while prolonged exposure beyond four (4) to five (5) hours daily is associated with diminished social and play skills among young children;

WHEREAS, the study further found that children who use screens without adult supervision have nearly nine (9) times higher odds of excessive screen use, and that continuous background media exposure substantially increases the risk of harmful screen habits, underscoring the critical role of caregivers, schools, and community environments;

WHEREAS, evidence summarized in the Ateneo Policy Brief Presentation likewise indicates that excessive screen time contributes to shorter attention span, poor sleep quality, reduced physical activity, developmental delays, and disruptions in caregiver-child relationships, with implications for learning readiness, mental well-being, and school participation;

WHEREAS, both international guidance from WHO and UNESCO and local Philippine evidence recommend a whole-of-community and multisectoral approach involving schools, families, barangays, health systems, and youth organizations to promote healthy digital habits and prevent excessive screen exposure;

WHEREAS, the Quezon City Government recognizes its responsibility, under national law and in alignment with global public health and education standards, to protect child development, support families and educators, and ensure that technology use enhances learning, protects child well-being, and supports healthy development across settings.

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF QUEZON CITY IN REGULAR SESSION ASSEMBLED:

SECTION 1. TITLE. – This Ordinance shall be known as the “Digital Wellness and Healthy Screen Time Ordinance of Quezon City.”

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SECTION 2. DECLARATION OF POLICY. – It is the policy of the City to promote the healthy development and well-being of children and adolescents by encouraging balanced and responsible screen use, supporting families and educators in guiding digital habits, and creating learning and community environments that prioritize social interaction, physical activity, rest, play, and meaningful learning.

SECTION 3. THE DIGITAL WELLNESS FRAMEWORK. – The Quezon City Digital Wellness and Healthy Screen Time Framework shall be implemented through the following pillars:

- a. **Pillar 1 – Healthy Screen Use Guidelines by Setting.** The City shall establish age- and context-appropriate screen use standards for schools, homes, and community spaces, developed in coordination with the Department of Education-Schools Division Office of Quezon City (SDO-QC), the City Health Department (CHD), and barangays.
- b. **Pillar 2 – Protection Against Harmful Digital Design.** The City shall require that all digital platforms, tools, and applications procured, endorsed, or deployed by the City for public use avoid manipulative design features and incorporate child-friendly safeguards.
- c. **Pillar 3 – Capacity-Building and Support Programs.** The City shall provide professional development for educators, digital wellness programs for parents through Parents Teachers Associations (PTAs), and peer-led advocacy initiatives for learners, with referral pathways for screen-related mental health and vision concerns.
- d. **Pillar 4 – Community and Public Space Promotion.** The City shall promote screen-free or low-screen zones, offline activities, and digital wellness standards in City-managed libraries, youth centers, and learning hubs.

SECTION 4. COVERAGE. – This Ordinance shall apply to the following settings and programs within Quezon City:

- a. All public elementary and secondary schools, in coordination with SDO-QC;



- b. City-operated and City-accredited daycare centers and Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) facilities, in coordination with the Social Services Development Department (SSDD), for purposes of guidance on developmentally-appropriate and healthy screen use consistent with the ECCD Act and related national policies;
- c. City-managed learning spaces, including but not limited to public libraries, learning hubs, community centers, and other City-run educational facilities;
- d. City-supported youth programs, activities, and initiatives implemented by the Quezon City Government or its partner organizations; and
- e. Barangays, private basic education institutions, and homes, for purposes of guidance, education, and awareness only, without punitive regulation or enforcement.

Nothing in this Ordinance shall be construed as regulating the use of private digital devices within private homes or imposing penalties on parents, caregivers, or children for personal screen use.

SECTION 5. SCHOOLS AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS. – In coordination with SDO-QC, the City shall support the promotion of digital wellness in public schools in the City through the following measures:

- a. **Healthy Screen Use Practices** – Public and private schools in the City are encouraged to adopt the following:
 - 1) Prohibition of non-instructional screen use by students during class hours, consistent with existing DepEd policies, and subject to school-approved instructional, health, or assistive exceptions;
 - 2) Establishment of device-free periods, such as during recess, lunch breaks, and other non-instructional activities;
 - 3) Adoption and implementation of School Digital Wellness Policies aligned with this Ordinance;
 - 4) Where feasible, implementation of appropriate network-level controls within school-managed internet systems to limit access to websites and online content not aligned with instructional objectives or that may pose risks to learners; and



- 5) Integration of digital self-regulation, mindfulness, and responsible technology use into existing student development programs.
- b. **Parent Support and Engagement** – The Quezon City Government and SDO-QC shall work closely with PTAs or equivalent school-based organizations in activities such as, but not limited to:
- 1) Co-development and delivery of parenting seminars, digital literacy sessions, online safety orientations, and workshops on mental health and screen-use balance;
 - 2) Dissemination of age-appropriate guidance and informational materials through PTA meetings, school orientations, and official communication channels; and
 - 3) Promotion of consistent and aligned home-school approaches to responsible and balanced digital technology use.
- c. **Educator Capacity Building** – The City shall support professional development programs for educators on:
- 1) Classroom management strategies that do not rely excessively on screens;
 - 2) Media and Information Literacy (MIL); and
 - 3) Early identification of digital overuse and screen-related distress among learners.
- d. **Student Support and Engagement** – The City Government, in coordination with the SDO-QC, shall establish appropriate referral pathways for learners experiencing screen-related stress, problematic digital use, or related mental health concerns, including access to school-based counseling, guidance services, and appropriate support mechanisms.

The City Government shall likewise promote the active participation of learners through duly recognized student councils and student organizations, which may include:

- 1) Design and implementation of peer-led digital wellness campaigns, information drives, and advocacy activities;
- 2) Promoting healthy screen habits, device-free periods, and balanced technology use within the school community; and



- 3) *Providing youth perspectives, feedback, and recommendations to inform the development, implementation, and continuous improvement of digital wellness programs, policies, and related interventions.*

SECTION 6. BARANGAYS, PRIVATE BASIC EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS, AND HOMES. – *The City Government, through the CHD, shall issue age-appropriate guidance on healthy screen use for children and adolescents in barangays, private basic education institutions, and homes, consistent with national and international health and child development standards. Such guidance may include recommendations on:*

- 1) *Screen-free family time, including during meals and shared activities;*
- 2) *Screen-free bedtime routines to support sleep and well-being; and*
- 3) *Balanced use of digital devices alongside play, physical activity, and social interaction.*

Barangays shall serve as information and outreach channels for parent education and digital wellness materials. No Barangay or City office shall act as an enforcement body for screen use within private homes.

SECTION 7. ESTABLISHMENT AND REVITALIZATION OF COMMUNITY SPACES AND ACTIVITIES. – *The City Government, through the Quezon City Parks Development and Administration Department (QCPDAD), Quezon City Public Library (QCPL), and Barangays, shall invest in the establishment, revitalization, and accessibility of screen-free or low-screen zones and activities in community spaces. These include, but are not limited to:*

- a. *QCPL and City-managed libraries – City-managed libraries shall serve as training and resource hubs for parents, teachers, youth, and the public on digital wellness. The QCPL shall develop localized learning modules, seminars, and toolkits on digital wellness that are accessible to parents, educators, students, and the general public. It shall promote responsible, balanced, and purposeful use of digital technologies through age-appropriate education, programming, and the provision of screen-free and low-screen spaces, while upholding the principles of intellectual freedom, equitable access, and lifelong learning. The QCPL shall adopt internal Digital Wellness Guidelines applicable to all QCPL branches.*



City-managed libraries shall further support education, research, information access, digital inclusion, homework assistance, and access to electronic government services.

QCPL shall equip librarians and its personnel in guiding children and adolescents toward responsible digital behavior through supervision, mentoring, and educational support, without acting as enforcement or disciplinary authorities. These include the provision of capacity building on digital wellness, MIL, and children and youth development, among others.

- b. Community hubs – The QCPDAD and barangays shall establish and maintain accessible community hubs such as childcare facilities, play areas, parks, and cultural centers. These City-managed facilities shall adopt digital wellness standards that encourage balanced use of technology while preserving spaces for quiet reading, interaction, and offline learning.

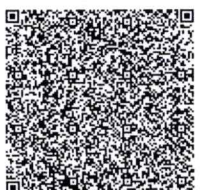
The City Government shall encourage collaboration among the SDO-QC, Social Services Development Department (SSDD), QCPL, CHD, PTAs, barangays, schools, and other relevant agencies and stakeholders in promoting digital wellness, community activities, and ensuring consistent messaging on healthy screen habits. In partnership with community organizations and educational institutions, it shall organize activities in these spaces, including, but not limited to:

- a. digital wellness workshops;
- b. community dialogues on online safety and misinformation;
- c. reading programs;
- d. arts, sports, and cultural activities; and
- e. mindfulness and mental wellness sessions.

SECTION 8. PROTECTION AGAINST HARMFUL AND ADDICTIVE DIGITAL DESIGN. – The City recognizes the risks posed by certain digital design features, including infinite scroll, autoplay, algorithmic amplification, and other mechanisms that may contribute to excessive or compulsive use, particularly among children and adolescents.

Accordingly, all digital platforms, applications, systems, or tools that are procured, funded, developed, officially-endorsed, or deployed by the City Government for use in public schools, City-managed learning spaces, youth programs, or other City-supported initiatives shall, where applicable:

- a. Utilize child-friendly default settings;



- b. Avoid manipulative or deceptive design practices; and
- c. Provide clear time-use reminders and age-appropriate safeguards and features that support healthy and balanced digital engagement.

These requirements shall be implemented through appropriate procurement policies, memoranda of agreement, accreditation standards, partnership guidelines, or program implementation protocols of the City Government.

The City Government shall proactively engage with digital and technological companies and service providers to advocate for child-friendly design and safeguards that prevent excessive digital use.

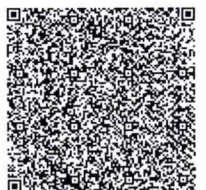
Nothing in this Section shall be construed as regulating, restricting, or monitoring the private use of digital platforms, applications, or online services by individuals, nor as regulating private social media companies or digital service providers beyond the authority of the City under national law.

SECTION 9. MONITORING AND EVALUATION. – The CHD, in coordination with SDO and Education Affairs Unit, shall monitor and evaluate the implementation of this Ordinance.

SECTION 10. APPROPRIATION. – The appropriations for the implementation of this Ordinance shall be incorporated in the annual budget of the relevant offices and agencies in accordance with proper accounting and auditing procedures, other existing laws, rules and regulations.

SECTION 11. REPEALING CLAUSE. – All ordinances, resolutions, local executive orders, rules and regulations or any part thereof inconsistent herewith are deemed repealed, modified, or amended accordingly.

SECTION 12. SEPARABILITY CLAUSE. – In case any provision of this Ordinance is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions hereof which are not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

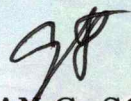


SECTION 13. EFFECTIVITY CLAUSE. – This Ordinance shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

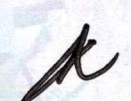
ENACTED: April 20, 2026.

CERTIFICATION

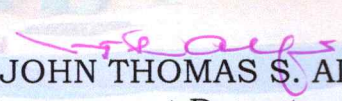
This is to certify that this Ordinance was ENACTED by the City Council on Second Reading on April 20, 2026 and was PASSED on Third/Final Reading on April 27, 2026.


GIAN G. SOTTO
City Vice Mayor
Presiding Officer

APPROVED: JUL 20 2026


MA. JOSEFINA G. BELMONTE
City Mayor

ATTESTED:


ATTY. JOHN THOMAS S. ALFEROS, III
City Government Department Head III
(Secretary to the Sanggunian)

