Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language

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Chapter I — General Provisions

Article 1 — This Law is enacted for the purposes of promoting the normalization and standardization of the standard spoken and written Chinese language and its sound development, enabling the language to better play its role in social life, and promoting economic and cultural exchanges among all regions and all ethnic groups.

Article 2 — The standard spoken and written Chinese language referred to in this Law means Putonghua (common speech based on Beijing pronunciation) and the standardized Chinese characters.

Article 3 — The State shall promote Putonghua and implement the standardized Chinese characters.

Article 4 — All citizens shall have the right to learn and use the standard spoken and written Chinese language. The State shall provide conditions for citizens to learn and use the standard spoken and written Chinese language. Local people’s governments at various levels and the relevant departments shall take measures to promote Putonghua and the standardized Chinese characters.

Article 5 — The use of the standard spoken and written Chinese language shall be conducive to safeguarding state sovereignty and national dignity, to unifying the country and strengthening the solidarity of all ethnic groups, and to promoting the construction of socialist material and spiritual civilization.

Article 6 — The State shall promulgate the norms and standards for the standard spoken and written Chinese language, administer its use in society, support the teaching of and scientific research in the standard spoken and written Chinese language, and promote its normalization, enrichment and development.

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Article 7 — The State shall reward organizations and individuals that have made outstanding contributions to the standard spoken and written Chinese language.

Article 8 — All ethnic groups shall have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages. The use of the spoken and written languages of ethnic minorities shall be governed by the relevant provisions of the Constitution, the Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy, and other laws.

Chapter II — Use of the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language

Article 9 — State organs shall use Putonghua and the standardized Chinese characters as the official language for official purposes. Where the law provides otherwise, such provisions shall apply.

Article 10 — Schools and other educational institutions shall use Putonghua and the standardized Chinese characters as the basic language for education and teaching. Putonghua and the standardized Chinese characters used in teaching materials shall comply with State norms.

Article 11 — Publications in Chinese shall comply with the norms and standards of the standard spoken and written Chinese language. Where foreign languages or the spoken and written languages of ethnic minorities need to be used in Chinese publications, the relevant provisions of the State shall apply.

Article 12 — Broadcasting and television stations shall use Putonghua as the basic broadcasting language. Where foreign languages, dialects, or the spoken and written languages of ethnic minorities need to be used, the approval of the relevant broadcasting and television administrative department shall be obtained.

Article 13 — Service trades shall use the standardized Chinese characters as the basic language for public service signs, advertisements, signboards, and instruction manuals. Where foreign languages need to be used simultaneously, the standardized Chinese characters shall be used as the primary language.

Article 14 — The standard spoken and written Chinese language shall be used as the basic language in the following circumstances, unless otherwise provided by law: (1) official language of broadcasting, films and television programs; (2) written language for public facilities; (3) written language for signboards and advertisements; (4) names of enterprises and institutions; (5) packaging and instructions of commodities sold within the territory of China; (6) other circumstances provided by law.

Article 15 — Where Putonghua and the standardized Chinese characters are used in information processing and information technology products, they shall comply with State norms and standards.

Article 16 — Local dialects may be used in the following circumstances: (1) when necessary for the performance of duties by State organ personnel; (2) in traditional opera, film and other art forms; (3) in publishing, teaching and research that require the use of dialects.

Article 17 — Original complex or variant Chinese characters may be retained or used in the following circumstances: (1) cultural relics and historic sites; (2) variant characters in surnames; (3) calligraphy, seal cutting and other artistic works; (4) handwritten characters for inscriptions and signboards; (5) in publishing, teaching and research that require the use of original complex or variant characters; (6) other special circumstances approved by the relevant department of the State Council.

Article 18 — The Chinese Phonetic Alphabet (Hanyu Pinyin) shall be used as a tool for spelling and phonetic notation of the standard spoken and written Chinese language. The Chinese Phonetic Alphabet is the standardized Roman alphabet spelling system for Chinese personal names, place names and Chinese-language documents, and is used in areas where Chinese characters are inconvenient or unusable.

Article 19 — Personnel whose work requires the use of Putonghua as the working language shall have Putonghua proficiency at the corresponding level. The standard for Putonghua proficiency shall be formulated by the administrative department of education under the State Council.

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Article 20 — Schools and other educational institutions shall offer Putonghua and the standardized Chinese characters courses. The Putonghua and characters used in the teaching materials for basic education stages shall comply with State norms.

Chapter III — Administration and Supervision

Article 21 — The administrative department of education under the State Council shall be the competent department in charge of the standard spoken and written Chinese language nationwide. The relevant departments of local people's governments at or above the county level shall administer and supervise the use of the standard spoken and written Chinese language within their respective administrative regions.

Article 22 — Local people's governments at various levels and the relevant departments shall take measures to promote Putonghua and the standardized Chinese characters.

Article 23 — People's governments at or above the county level shall strengthen leadership over the work related to the standard spoken and written Chinese language and provide necessary conditions.

Article 24 — The relevant departments of the State Council may, when necessary, conduct inspections on the use of the standard spoken and written Chinese language.

Article 25 — Where the use of the standard spoken and written Chinese language is in violation of this Law, citizens may make criticisms and suggestions. The relevant departments shall handle such criticisms and suggestions in a timely manner.

Article 26 — Where the standard spoken and written Chinese language is used in violation of the relevant provisions of Chapter II of this Law, the relevant department shall order correction within a specified time limit. Where correction is refused, the relevant department shall handle the matter in accordance with law.

Article 27 — Anyone who violates this Law and interferes with others' learning and use of the standard spoken and written Chinese language shall be ordered by the relevant department to correct the situation within a specified time limit and given a warning.

Chapter IV — Supplementary Provisions

Article 28 — This Law shall come into force as of January 1, 2001.

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