Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THIRTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session



HOUSE BILL NO. 1557

Introduced by Reps. SATUR C. OCAMPO, TEODORO A. CASIÑO, JOEL G. VIRADOR, CRISPIN B. BELTRAN, RAFAEL V. MARIANO and LIZA L. MAZA

Explanatory Note

The future lies in the hands of today's children. To ready them for their role as our future leaders, they must be afforded quality nutrition to give them a good start in developing their skills and potentials during their tender years. Adequate and quality nutrition is integral to a child's total development.

However, the high child malnutrition rate in the country is taking a toll especially among the underprivileged majority. Based on available figures from the Food and Nutrition Research Institute of the Department of Science and Technology, the prevalence of underweight children ages 0 to 5 was at 30.6% in 2001. The Bicol region had the highest malnutrition rate of 37.6%.

Food is the most basic of all necessities that, unfortunately, cannot be adequately provided by all parents to their children all the time. Regular meals have become a privilege to most. Children going to school on an empty stomach is a crude testament of the grinding poverty besetting most Filipinos.

This bill legislates a Nationwide Child Nutrition Program in all public elementary schools and barangay day care centers throughout the country. This Nutrition Program which makes feeding for schoolchildren mandatory is in keeping with the State's declared policy of promoting and protecting the rights and welfare of children.

Immediate approval of this bill is earnestly sought.

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AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR A MANDATORY NATIONWIDE CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM IN ALL PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS AND BARANGAY DAY CARE CENTERS

SECTION 1. Title. This Act shall be known as the "Child Nutrition Law of 2004."

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. It is the declared policy of the State to promote the rights of children to survival, development and special protection with full recognition of the nature of childhood and its special needs, and to support the nutritional needs of children to enhance their learning capacities in compulsory basic education. To this end, the State shall institutionalize a mandatory child nutrition program in all and public elementary schools and barangay day care centers that is comprehensive, integrative and sustainable on a national basis.

SECTION 3. Objectives. The objectives of the mandatory child nutrition program are:

1. To achieve improved child attendance and survival rates in day care centers and schools by ensuring that adequate health and nutrition programs are accessible to young children throughout the early childhood years;

2. To enhance the physical, social, emotional, cognitive, psychological, spiritual and language development of young children;

3. To enhance the role of public elementary schools and barangay day care centers as surrogate caregivers of children;

4. To facilitate the learning process through healthy body and physical environment;

5. To ensure that young children are adequately prepared for the formal learning system and that both public elementary schools and barangay day care centers are responsive to the developmental needs of these children; and

6. To establish an efficient system for early identification, prevention, referral and intervention for developmental disorders and disabilities in early childhood.

SECTION 4. Program Framework. The mandatory child nutrition program shall be provided for children enrolled or studying in public elementary schools and barangay day care centers regardless of age with the consent of parents. The program shall include:

1. Complementary feeding to ensure access to food supplements which will improve nutritional status. This activity may also be used as a venue for other nutrition-related activities such as micronutrient supplementation, weighing and growth monitoring, deworming of children, and emergency feeding during and after disasters. Health and nutrition counseling and education

may also form an integral part of this activity and health personnel may be tapped as resource persons.

2. Dietary diversification/backyard gardening to assure availability of nutritious food in the local areas. Enhancing community resources accessible to local households and managed by the community will be an effective strategy to address lack of nutritious food therein.

   The accompanying benchmarks under the mandatory child nutrition program shall be determined by the Department of Health in consultation with the Department of Education and the barangay having jurisdiction over the barangay day care center or the public elementary school.

SECTION 5. Wholistic Approach. Every agency of the national and local governments shall cooperate and extend full support and cooperation and make available such materials, data and other resources as may be necessary to ensure the successful implementation of this Act. In particular:

The Department of Health in consultation with the Department of Education and the appropriate barangay shall review the plans, programs and implementation of the school or day care supplementary feeding program, with the purpose of identifying: 1) ways and means of increasing the volume of supplementary feeding with particular attention to local food components, 2) priority areas of the country where greater attention is needed, and 3) the groups of school children most likely to benefit from supplementary feeding.

The Department Social Welfare and Development shall assist in monitoring the weight and health of children participating in the supplementary school feeding program.

The Department of Agriculture and the National Food Authority shall make available warehouse, trucking and facilities.

The Department of Interior and Local Government shall help enlist the support of local government units in the accomplishment of program objectives.

The National Economic and Development Authority shall assist in the determination of official development assistance sources to expand the inputs into the school supplementary feeding program.

The Department of Budget and Management shall help prepare work and financial plans covering the food assistance program, particularly the peso counterpart requirement involved in the freight, insurance, storage and other requirements for effective food handling and distribution.

The Department of Trade and Industry shall look for cost-effective sources for components of the mandatory child nutrition program, including but not limited to foodstuffs, vaccines and dietary supplements.

SECTION 6. Selection of Priority Areas. The Department of Health in consultation with the Department of Education and the Department of Social Welfare and Development shall select at least five (5) regions for each year based on the criteria provided herein in order to achieve a national coverage for a period of three (3) years. All barangays within the selected region shall establish their respective mandatory child nutrition program within a period of six (6) months.

The following criteria shall be considered in the selection of priority regions:

1. Low level of participation of 3-5 year old population in existing day care and pre-school services; and

2. Number of provinces and cities with high incidence of poverty, low birth weight, infant and under-five (5) mortality, malnutrition, maternal mortality, low participation rate in Grade I, and high drop-out rate among Grade I pupils.

SECTION 7. Self-Starting Barangays. A self-selection alternative is available for barangays not selected as priority site for a given year but which can afford to institutionalize a mandatory child nutrition program in its locality.

SECTION 8. Funds for the Mandatory Child Nutrition Program. The funds for the establishment, maintenance and operation of the mandatory child nutrition program shall be appropriated from the following sources:

1. Ten percent (10%) of the recorded income of the general fund accruing from interest on deposit accounts and performance bonds and any forfeited amounts therefrom. Performance bonds and deposits filed or posted by private persons or entities with agencies of the government shall be deposited with an authorized government depository bank as trust liabilities and under the name of the agency concerned.

2. Ten percent (10%) of the total amount specifically identified and authorized intelligence and confidential funds as provided for in the budgets of departments, bureaus, offices or agencies of the national government, which shall be prorated among them.

3. Fifteen percent (15%) of the total amount automatically appropriated for debt service compounding both interest payment and principal amortization thereon.

SECTION 9. Repealing Clause. All laws, decrees, rules and regulations, and executive orders contrary to or inconsistent with this Act are repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 10. Effectivity. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,