

Republic of the Philippines  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
Quezon City

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

First Regular Session

House Bill No. **2627**



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Introduced by **Hon. Sol Aragon**

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**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

According to the 6<sup>th</sup> National Nutrition Survey by the Food and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI), 26.7% of children 6 to 10 years old are underweight, while 15.5% of preadolescents and adolescents 11 to 19 years old are underweight. Undernutrition or poor nutrition is the likely cause why children of this age range are underweight.

The United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) states that malnutrition among Filipino children is a very critical area of intervention. Over a half a million school-aged children in the country are severely malnourished. This malnutrition makes Filipino children the third poorest and most disadvantaged sector in the country, next only to fishermen and farmers. According to the Department of Education (DepEd), 562,262 students in kindergarten and elementary public schools are considered "severely wasted." Poverty is the main cause of this grim picture.<sup>1</sup>

Health experts all agree that there is a direct correlation between adequate nutrition among children and their behaviour and ability to learn in school. Children who come to school hungry cannot focus on their lessons. Malnourished children are more difficult to teach and have lower test scores.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/296884/news/specialreports/more-than-half-million-pinoy-kids-suffer-from-severe-malnutrition>

The role of good nutrition to keep children in school cannot be overemphasized. In a study of 50 malnourished children aged 2 to 9 in New York City, it was found that their IQ's rose by an average of 18 points after improvements were made on their nutrition level over a period of one to three years.<sup>2</sup>

The DepEd is at the forefront in the fight against malnutrition in school-age children and improve their school performance. As early as 1997, it launched a Breakfast Feeding Program (BFP) to address the "short-term-hunger syndrome" among public elementary school children. Short term hunger is a condition experienced by children who do not eat breakfast and/or walk long distances to reach school, resulting to non-attendance or non-attentiveness in class. In recent years, the DepEd has expanded the BFP to a school-based feeding program that is not limited to serving breakfasts to children. Vegetable gardens have also been established in schools as a source of healthy ingredients for the children's meals.

School-based feeding programs have been found to improve the academic performance of school children. Parents from the poorest families are also encouraged to send and keep their children in school.

However, due to lack of funding, the DepEd can only feed 42,372 school children, or 7.54% of the children suffering from severe malnutrition, in 1,010 public elementary schools in 28 provinces.

This bill seeks to make a national feeding program mandatory in all public kindergarten, elementary, and secondary schools in the country to combat malnutrition among children and adolescents, improve school attendance, and provide an environment conducive to learning for public school students.

  
**HON. SOL ARAGONES**  
**Representative, 3<sup>rd</sup> District of Laguna**

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<sup>2</sup> "The National School Lunch Program," Gordon W. Gunderson.  
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Lunch/AboutLunch/NSLP-Program%20History.pdf>

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1 **AN ACT**  
2 **PROVIDING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT, MAINTENANCE, AND OPERATION**  
3 **OF A NATIONAL FEEDING PROGRAM FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN IN PUBLIC**  
4 **KINDERGARTEN, ELEMENTARY, AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS**  
5 **THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY**

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:*

6 SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “National School Nutrition  
7 Act.”

8 SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.* –The State recognizes the vital role of the youth  
9 in nation-building and shall promote and protect their physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual,  
10 and social well-being.

11 It is a policy of the State to give priority to education to foster patriotism and  
12 nationalism, accelerate social progress, and promote total human liberation and development.  
13 Accordingly, the State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education  
14 at all levels, and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.

15 In recognition of the demonstrated relationship between food and good nutrition and  
16 the capacity of children to develop and learn, the Government shall address the problem of  
17 malnutrition and undernutrition among children and enhance the learning process by  
18  
19

1 establishing a national feeding program for school children in public kindergarten,  
2 elementary, and secondary schools throughout the country.

3       SECTION 3. *National Feeding Program.* – A national feeding program shall be  
4 mandatory in all public kindergarten, elementary, and secondary schools. This national  
5 feeding program shall be administered by the Secretary of Education.

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7       The national feeding program shall be comprised of school breakfasts made available  
8 free of charge to school children. Within three (3) years from the effectivity of this Act,  
9 school lunches made available free of charge to school children who attend more than five (5)  
10 hours of classes daily shall be made part of the national feeding program.

11  
12       The school breakfasts and lunches must meet the applicable guidelines of the Food  
13 and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI) for the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for  
14 protein, calcium, iron, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, and calories for school children. Decisions  
15 about what specific food to serve and how they are prepared shall be made by the school  
16 authorities, based on rules and regulations to be issued by the Secretary of Education.

      SECTION 4. *Technical Training and Assistance on Food Preparation, Safety, and Sanitation.* – The Secretary of Education, in consultation with the Secretary of Health, the FNRI, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and other appropriate government agencies, shall develop a program to provide the food service personnel of public kindergarten, elementary, and secondary schools with technical training and assistance in the preparation of healthy and nutritious meals, food safety, and sanitation.

17       SECTION 5. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* -Within sixty (60) days from the  
18 effectivity of this Act, the Secretary of Education, in consultation with appropriate  
19 government agencies, shall promulgate the rules and regulations to implement the provisions  
20 of this Act. Such rules and regulations shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication  
21 in a newspaper of general circulation.

22       SECTION 6. *Appropriations.* — To carry out the provisions of this Act, such amounts  
23 necessary is hereby authorized to be appropriated from the National Treasury. Thereafter,

1 such amounts necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act shall be included in the annual  
2 appropriation of the Department of Education.

3 SECTION 7. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part hereof is held invalid or  
4 unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall remain  
5 valid and subsisting.

6 SECTION 8. *Repealing Clause.* – Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive  
7 order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary to or inconsistent  
8 with, the provisions of this Act is hereby repealed, modified, or amended accordingly.

9 SECTION 9. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its  
10 publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,