

Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City

First Regular Session
Seventeenth Congress

House Bill No. 5515

Introduced by Representative Estrellita B. Suansing



EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to institutionalize the Essential Health Care Program for public school children.

Poor hygiene and deficient access to safe water and sanitation are the major contributors to the prevalent diseases among public school children in the Philippines. The most common of these diseases are diarrhea, respiratory infections, skin diseases, worm infections and non-communicable diseases like dental caries. These diseases hinder and have a strong impact on the school children's academic learning. With poor health, children are more likely to be absent and have inferior academic performance.

As schools have been identified as places where poor and disadvantaged children may easily be reached not just for vaccinations but for some of the essential health interventions, several health programs benefitting school children were spearheaded by the Department of Education in coordination with the Department of Health and local government units. For instance, the Essential Health Care Program (EHCP) was initiated in a limited number of pilot areas in 2003. The program was formally adopted by the Department of Education in 2009, but still in a limited number of public schools. The EHCP is a health program that instills in public school children the importance of basic health and sanitation activities like the daily handwashing with soap, tooth brushing with fluoride toothpaste and bi-annual deworming. With EHCP's impressive statistical results and impact on the health status and school attendance of children, the program was recognized for "*Innovation in Global Health*" by the World Bank, the United Nations Development Program and the World Health Organization.

Notwithstanding the impressive feedback on the EHCP, the program was dragged to a halt after years of fragmented implementation due to insufficient financial resources.

Thus, to restore a successful and effective health program that will benefit school children nationwide, this bill seeks to institutionalize the EHCP and appropriate adequate funds for its full implementation.

In view of the foregoing, passage of this bill is earnestly sought.


ESTRELLITA B. SUANSING

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House Bill No. **5515**

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AN ACT
INSTITUTIONALIZING THE ESSENTIAL HEALTH CARE PROGRAM FOR PUBLIC
SCHOOL CHILDREN AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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

1 SECTION 1. **Short Title.** – This Act shall be known as the “*Essential Health*
2 *Care Program Act.*”

3 SEC. 2. **Declaration of Policy.** – It is the policy of the State to protect
4 and promote the right to health of the people and adopt an integrated and
5 comprehensive approach to health development which shall endeavor to make
6 essential goods, health and other social services available to all the people. The State
7 also recognizes the interrelationship of education and health. The health of school
8 children highly influences their academic absorption and performance. Toward this
9 end, the State shall institutionalize a health program that will improve the health of the
10 school children to enable them to develop their full potential towards becoming the
11 country’s future leaders and to address the high incidence of drop outs and poor school
12 performances due to health problems.

13 SEC. 3. **Essential Health Care Program.** – The Department of
14 Education, in coordination with the Department of Health, shall implement an Essential
15 Health Care Program (EHCP) in all public schools to improve the health of the children.
16 Under this program, soap, toothbrush, toothpaste with fluoride and deworming

1 medicines shall be provided for the conduct of daily handwashing, daily tooth brushing
2 and bi-annual deworming of school children from age six to twelve.

3 **SEC. 4. *Role of the School Division Superintendent.*** – The school
4 division superintendent who supervises a number of schools in their respective
5 jurisdiction shall:

6 a) Issue a memorandum for all school principals under the division to
7 implement the EHCP;

8 b) Oversee the overall implementation of the EHCP and ensure monitoring
9 of the program in all schools under the division at least once a year;

10 c) Ensure the distribution of soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes and
11 deworming medicines according to the distribution system of the Department of
12 Education;

13 d) Include in the performance ranking system for teachers and principals
14 the compliance with school health programs like the EHCP; and

15 e) Promote the Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA) by using
16 the EHCP as the focal point in strengthening its linkage with the local government units
17 (LGUs).

18 **SEC. 5. *Role of the School Principal.*** – The school principal of a public
19 school shall:

20 a) Call for parent-teacher assemblies for the proper information of parents
21 and teachers about the EHCP;

22 b) Ensure that handwashing and tooth brushing are included in the daily
23 activities of each class in the school;

24 c) Instruct all teachers in the school to ensure strict compliance with the
25 EHCP guidelines;

1 d) Link with LGUs and other stakeholders to create and strengthen a
2 supportive environment;

3 e) Ensure availability and proper distribution of soap, toothpaste,
4 toothbrushes and deworming medicines within the school;

5 f) Ensure monitoring and communication of the results of the EHCP
6 implementation to the teachers, parents and the community at least once a year; and

7 g) Recognize the achievements of teachers and school health personnel
8 through performance ranking.

9 SEC. 6. ***Role of the School Health Personnel.*** – To assist the teachers
10 in the implementation of the EHCP, the school health personnel shall:

11 a) Conduct a basic orientation on EHCP for teachers, school
12 administrators, parent-teacher association officials and members and barangay health
13 workers during an assembly called for the purpose;

14 b) Monitor and give feedback to parents, teachers and the principal on the
15 status of implementation of the program at least twice a year;

16 c) Provide teachers and parents with needed information to address
17 questions, concerns and misconceptions on deworming;

18 d) Provide technical support to teachers and oversee deworming activities
19 in their areas of responsibility; and

20 e) Seek the assistance of barangay health workers during the mass
21 deworming activity.

22 SEC. 7. ***Role of Teachers.*** – The teachers who are directly supervising
23 the school children shall:

24 a) Ensure the availability of water, the distribution of toothbrush,
25 toothpaste, soap and deworming tablet for the school children;

b) Supervise the school children during the daily toothbrushing and hand washing especially during critical moments, which are, after using the toilet, before eating and after eating;

c) Supervise the administration of the deworming medicine;

d) Organize the regular cleaning of handwashing facilities;

e) Document the activities in a record book and forward the detailed records to the school health personnel for reference and statistical purposes; and

f) Facilitate participatory lectures with regard to lessons and observations learned during the health interventions.

SEC. 8. *Role of Parents.* – Recognizing the natural role of parents in rearing their children, the parents shall continue the EHCP activities at home and shall:

a) Participate in the annual monitoring of the EHCP;

b) Participate in parent-teacher assemblies to convey issues or concerns to the school health personnel; and

c) Signify consent for the deworming of their children under the EHCP.

SEC. 9. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – The Department of Education shall serve as the central planning, coordinating, implementing and monitoring body of the EHCP.

The Secretary of Education shall, in coordination with the Secretary of Health, promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 10. *Appropriations.* – The initial amount of Six hundred million pesos (P600,000,000.00) necessary for the effective implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current appropriations for the Department of Education and the Department of Health. Thereafter, such amount as may be necessary for the continued

1 implementation of the EHCP shall be included in the annual General Appropriations
2 Act.

3 SEC. 11. **Effectivity.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
4 publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,