

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 483



Introduced by Representative Roman T. Romulo

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill aims to institutionalize the Last Mile Schools Program as a strategic intervention to sustain the country's significant progress in basic education access, while addressing equity gaps in education quality, infrastructure, and resource allocation.

According to the Year Two Report of the Second Congressional Commission on Education, 1.6 million learners are enrolled in last mile schools.¹ These schools, mostly located in geographically isolated, disadvantaged, and conflict-affected areas (GIDCAs), often lack the necessary infrastructure, qualified teachers, learning materials, and basic utilities, which undermines the overall quality of education and limits learners' opportunities to thrive.

The proposed measure aims to identify and prioritize these under-resourced institutions for targeted investment and support. This will ensure that no learner is left behind due to their location or socioeconomic status.

In view of the foregoing, this representation seeks the immediate passage of this measure.

ROMAN T. ROMULO
Lone District, Pasig City

¹ Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOMII), *Fixing the Foundations: A Matter of National Survival* (EDCOMII, January 27, 2025), p. 140.)

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AN ACT
ESTABLISHING PUBLIC BASIC EDUCATION SCHOOLS IN GEOGRAPHICALLY
ISOLATED AND DISADVANTAGED AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED AREAS,
PROVIDING ACCESS ROADS LEADING TO LAST MILE SCHOOLS, AND
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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

1 **SECTION 1. Short Title.** – This Act shall be known as the “Last Mile Schools
2 Act”.

3 **SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy.** – It is the declared policy of the State to protect
4 and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, and take
5 appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.

6 The State recognizes and promotes the rights of Indigenous Cultural
7 Communities within the framework of national unity and development. To this end,
8 the State shall recognize the right of indigenous families and communities to retain
9 shared responsibility for upbringing, training, education and well-being of their
10 children, consistent with the rights of the child.

11 The State shall improve the quality and access to basic education of children in
12 the far-flung, isolated, disadvantaged and conflict-affected areas, as well as those in
13 Last Mile Schools, by investing on school infrastructures and roads leading to the
14 said public schools.

1 **SEC. 3. Definition of Terms.** – As used in this Act:

- 2 a) *Basic education* refers to the intended basic learning needs which provide
3 the foundation on which subsequent learning can be based. It includes
4 kindergarten, elementary and secondary education as well as alternative
5 learning systems for out-of-school learners and those with special needs;
6 b) *Basic Education School* refers to learning institutions accredited by the
7 Department of Education (DepEd) to deliver services addressing the
8 intended basic learning needs of students;
9 c) *Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs)/Indigenous Peoples (IPs)* refer to
10 the same definition stated in Section 3h, Chapter 2 of Republic Act No.
11 8371, or “The Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act of 1997”, which describes it
12 as “group of people or homogenous societies identified by self-ascription
13 and ascription by others, who have continuously lived as organized
14 community on communally bounded and defined territory, and who have,
15 under claims of ownership since time immemorial, occupied, possessed
16 and utilized such territories, sharing common bonds of language, customs,
17 traditions and other distinctive cultural traits, or who have, through
18 resistance to political, social and cultural inroads of colonization, non-
19 indigenous religions and cultures, became historically differentiated from
20 the majority of Filipinos. ICCs/IPs shall likewise include peoples who are
21 regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations
22 which inhabited the country, at the time of conquest or colonization, or at
23 the time of inroads of non-indigenous religions and cultures, or the
24 establishment of present state boundaries, who retain some or all of their
25 own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, but who may have
26 been displaced from their traditional domains or who may have resettled
27 outside their ancestral domains”; and
28 d) *Last Mile Schools* refer to public basic education schools with gaps in
29 resources and facilities which are located in geographically isolated and
30 disadvantaged and conflict-affected areas (GIDCA).

31 **SEC. 4. Establishment of Last Mile Schools.** – The Last Mile Schools are
32 hereby established, under the administration of the DepEd, to cater to the basic
33 education of learners throughout the country’s GIDCA.

34 The establishment of Last Mile Schools in locations situated by the ICCs shall
35 be undertaken in consideration of the rights of the IPs, in accordance with Republic
36 Act No. 8371.

1 **SEC. 5. Access to Education.** – The DepEd shall collaborate with concerned
2 national government agencies for the delivery of the infrastructures necessary to
3 ensure access to education in the Last Mile Schools, namely:

- 4 a) Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), for the construction of
5 access roads leading to the location of Last Mile Schools;
- 6 b) Department of Energy (DOE) and National Electrification Administration
7 (NEA), for the installation of electricity; and
- 8 c) Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), for the
9 installation of information and communications technology.

10 **SEC. 6. Criteria.** – The indicators used in identifying a public school to be
11 included among the Last Mile Schools are the following:

- 12 a) Having less than four (4) classrooms;
- 13 b) With makeshift or nonstandard rooms;
- 14 c) Absence of or irregular electricity;
- 15 d) Have not been allocated funds for repairs or new construction projects in
16 the last four (4) years unless destroyed;
- 17 e) With travel distance of more than one hour from the center of a city or
18 municipality, or with difficulty of terrain or of such nature as to be considered
19 having difficulty of access to existing educational institutions;
- 20 f) Having multigrade classes or rooms;
- 21 g) With less than five (5) teachers;
- 22 h) Having a student population of less than one hundred (100) learners;
- 23 i) With more than seventy-five percent (75%) IP learners; and
- 24 j) Having such other circumstances that make it difficult for learners to access
25 school facilities.

26 **SEC. 7. Implementation.** – The school building program for the Last Mile
27 Schools shall be established and completed within a period of five (5) years after the
28 effectivity of this Act.

29 To facilitate synchronicity, harmony and complementarity of plans, resources
30 and efforts of both the national government and the local government units (LGUs)
31 towards the attainment of the objectives of this Act, the DepEd shall plan and
32 implement the programs, projects, and activities that address the needs of the Last
33 Mile Schools, in coordination and collaboration with the National Commission on
34 Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), DPWH, DICT, DOE, NEA, Department of Social Welfare
35 and Development (DSWD), Department of Environment and Natural Resources
36 (DENR), National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC),
37 and concerned LGUs.

1 **SEC. 8. Appropriations.** – The amount necessary for the implementation of this
2 Act shall be included in the budgets of the concerned Departments, agencies and
3 Government-Owned and Controlled Corporations in the annual General
4 Appropriations Act.

5 **SEC. 9. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** – Within ninety (90) days from
6 the approval of this Act, the Secretary of Education shall, in consultation with the
7 NCIP, DPWH, DICT, DOE, NEA, DSWD, DENR, NDRRMC, and Union of Local
8 Authorities of the Philippines, formulate the rules and regulations implementing the
9 provisions of this Act.

10 **SEC. 10. Separability Clause.** – If any provision of this Act is held invalid or
11 unconstitutional, the other provisions not so declared shall remain in force and effect.

12 **SEC. 11. Repealing Clause.** – All laws, decrees, orders and rules and
13 regulations contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby
14 repealed or amended accordingly.

15 **SEC. 12. Effectivity.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
16 publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

17 *Approved,*