

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City
TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session



HOUSE BILL NO. 1281

Introduced by **REP. BERNADETTE "DETTE" G. ESCUDERO**

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

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Education is a fundamental right enshrined in the 1987 Philippine Constitution, which mandates the State to ensure access to quality education for all, particularly for underserved and marginalized sectors.

Despite this constitutional mandate, thousands of Filipino learners residing in geographically isolated, disadvantaged, and conflict-affected areas (GIDCA) continue to face systemic barriers in accessing basic education. These challenges are compounded by inadequate infrastructure, lack of essential learning facilities, absence of qualified teachers, and limited community support mechanisms.

This measure seeks to address the persistent educational inequities faced by learners in GIDCAs across the country. Through this measure, the government shall establish functional public basic education schools equipped with essential learning facilities and amenities, and by improving access through the construction of access roads and the installation of basic utilities like electricity and internet connection. Likewise, another salient intervention of this bill is to craft a five-year roadmap that outlines a comprehensive strategy for bridging the educational development gap in these underserved communities.

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


HON. BERNADETTE "DETTE" G. ESCUDERO
Representative
1st District, Sorsogon

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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 "Last Mile Schools
2 Act".
3

4 **SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy.** It is the declared policy of the State to protect
5 and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, and take
6 appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.
7

8 The State recognizes and promotes the rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities
9 within the framework of national unity and development. To this end, the State shall
10 recognize the right of indigenous families and communities to retain shared
11 responsibility for upbringing, training, education and well-being of their children,
12 consistent with the rights of the child.
13

14 The State shall improve the quality and access to basic education of children in the
15 far-flung, isolated, disadvantaged and conflict-affected areas, as well as those in Last
16 Mile Schools, by investing on school infrastructures and roads leading to the said public
17 schools.
18

19 **SEC. 3. Definition of Terms.** As used in this Act:
20

21 (a) Basic education refers to the intended basic learning needs which provide
22 the foundation on which subsequent learning can be based. It includes

1 kindergarten, elementary and secondary education as well as alternative
2 learning systems for out-of-school learners and those with special needs;
3

4 (b) Basic Education School refers to learning institutions accredited by the
5 Department of Education (DepEd) to deliver services addressing the intended
6 basic learning needs of students;
7

8 (c) Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs)/Indigenous Peoples (IPs) refer to
9 the same definition stated in Section 3h, Chapter 2 of Republic Act No. 8371,
10 or "The Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997", which describes it as "group
11 of people or homogenous societies identified by self-ascription and ascription
12 by others, who have continuously lived as organized community on communally
13 bounded and defined territory, and who have, under claims of ownership since
14 time immemorial, occupied, possessed and utilized such territories, sharing
15 common bonds of language, customs, traditions and other distinctive cultural
16 traits, or who have, through resistance to political, social and cultural inroads
17 of colonization, non- indigenous religions and cultures, became historically
18 differentiated from the majority of Filipinos. ICCs/IPs shall likewise include
19 peoples who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the
20 populations which inhabited the country, at the time of conquest or
21 colonization, or at the time of inroads of non- indigenous religions and cultures,
22 or the establishment of present state boundaries, who retain some or all of
23 their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, but who may have
24 been displaced from their traditional domains or who may have resettled
25 outside their ancestral domains"; and (d) Last Mile Schools refer to public basic
26 education schools with gaps in resources and facilities which are located in
27 geographically isolated and disadvantaged and conflict-affected areas
28 (GIDCA).
29

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

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.
37

38 **SEC. 5. Access to Education.** The DepEd shall collaborate with concerned
39 national government agencies for the delivery of the infrastructures necessary to
40 ensure access to education in the Last Mile Schools, namely:
41

42 (a) Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), for the construction of
43 access roads leading to the location of Last Mile Schools;
44

45 (b) Department of Energy (DOE) and National Electrification Administration
46 (NEA), for the installation of electricity; and
47

(c) Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), for the installation of information and communications technology.

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

(a) Having less than four (4) classrooms;

(b) With makeshift or nonstandard rooms;

(c) Absence of or irregular electricity;

(d) Have not been allocated funds for repairs or new construction projects in the last

four (4) years unless destroyed;

(e) With travel distance of more than one hour from the center of a city or municipality, or with difficulty of terrain or of such nature as to be considered having difficulty of access to existing educational institutions;

(f) Having multigrade classes or rooms;

(g) With less than five (5) teachers;

(h) Having a student population of less than one hundred (100) learners;

(i) With more than seventy-five percent (75%) IP learners; and

(j) Having such other circumstances that make it difficult for learners to access school facilities.

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

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

1 **SEC. 8. Appropriations.** The amount necessary for the implementation of
2 this Act shall be included in the budgets of the concerned Departments, agencies and
3 Government-Owned and Controlled Corporations in the annual General Appropriations
4 Act.
5

6 **SEC. 9. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** Within ninety (90) days
7 from the approval of this Act, the Secretary of Education shall, in consultation with
8 the NCIP, DPWH, DICT, DOE, NEA, DSWD, DENR, NDRRMC, and Union of Local
9 Authorities of the Philippines, formulate the rules and regulations implementing the
10 provisions of this Act.
11

12 **SEC. 10. Separability Clause.** If any provision of this Act is held invalid or
13 unconstitutional, the other provisions not so declared shall remain in force and effect.
14

15 **SEC. 11. Repealing Clause.** All laws, decrees, orders and rules and
16 regulations contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby
17 repealed or amended accordingly.
18

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

Approved,