



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



TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **2281**

Introduced by **Representative MA. VICTORIA CO-PILAR**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Access to quality basic education remains one of the starkest fault lines separating urban centers from the geographically isolated, disadvantaged, and conflict-affected areas (GIDCA) of the Philippines. Children in remote mountains, island barangays, and regions scarred by insurgency or natural calamity still trek hours – often on foot or by boat – to reach the nearest school, if one exists at all. Where school buildings do stand, they are frequently makeshift structures without electricity, internet connectivity, or sufficient teachers. As a result, literacy rates, completion rates, and overall learning outcomes in these communities consistently lag behind national averages.

The 1987 Constitution mandates the State to “establish and maintain a system of free public education in the elementary and high school levels” and “take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.” Republic Act No. 9155 likewise tasks the Department of Education (DepEd) to ensure that every Filipino child has access to complete, quality basic education. Despite these mandates, government data show that more than a million school-age children in GIDCA remain out of school, while many Indigenous Peoples (IPs) still lack culturally appropriate learning facilities within their ancestral domains. Physical isolation, rugged terrain, and intermittent conflict have hindered government’s ability to build and maintain schools, deliver social services, and attract qualified teachers to these areas.

By turning the constitutional promise of universal education into concrete, measurable action, this measure lays the groundwork for inclusive growth and social justice. It affirms that distance, poverty, and conflict should never deprive a Filipino child of the fundamental right to learn, dream, and thrive.

^ In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this measure is earnestly sought.



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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 House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

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

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

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

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

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

(a) *Basic education* refers to the intended basic learning needs which provide 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 outof-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 the same
9 definition stated in Section 3h, Chapter 2 of Republic Act No. 8371, or “The
10 Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act of 1997”, which describes it as “group of people
11 or homogenous societies identified by self-ascription and ascription by others,
12 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 of
17 colonization, nonindigenous 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 nonindigenous religions and cultures,
22 or the establishment of present state boundaries, who retain some or all of their
23 own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, but who may have been
24 displaced from their traditional domains or who may have resettled outside
25 their ancestral domains”; and
26

27 (d) *Last Mile Schools* refer to public basic education schools with gaps in resources
28 and facilities which are located in geographically isolated and disadvantaged
29 and conflict-affected areas (GIDCA).
30

31 **SEC. 4.** *Establishment of Last Mile Schools.* – The Last Mile Schools are hereby
32 established, under the administration of the DepEd, to cater to the basic education of
33 learners throughout the country’s GIDCA.
34

35 The establishment of Last Mile Schools in locations situated by the ICCs shall be
36 undertaken in consideration of the rights of the IPs, in accordance with Republic Act No.
37 8371.
38

39 **SEC. 5.** *Access to Education.* – The DepEd shall collaborate with concerned national
40 government agencies for the delivery of the infrastructures necessary to ensure access to
41 education in the Last Mile Schools, namely:
42

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

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

(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.

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

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

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

3
4 **SEC. 11. *Repealing Clause.*** – All laws, decrees, orders and rules and regulations
5 contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or amended
6 accordingly.

7
8 **SEC. 12. *Effectivity.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication
9 in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

10
11 Approved,