



Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 2521



Introduced by Representative Giselle Mary L. Maceda

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article XIV, Section 1 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution provides that “The State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.” This provision serves not only as a mandate but also as a moral obligation to ensure that no Filipino child is left behind, regardless of geography, ethnicity, or economic standing.

Despite this constitutional guarantee, the reality faced by many Filipino children – particularly those residing in Geographically Isolated, Disadvantaged, and Conflict-Affected Areas (GIDCAs) – tells a far different story. Due to the natural terrain of the Philippines, coupled with deeply rooted socio-economic divides, access to quality education remains a challenge. For many, the journey to school involves traversing dangerous mountain paths, crossing rivers, or walking hours along rough and unpaved roads. These risks, endured daily by our young learners, underscore a glaring inequality in our education system that must be urgently addressed.

This bill seeks to institutionalize the establishment of basic education schools in GIDCAs ensuring that children in remote communities can access safe, inclusive, and quality learning environments. By bringing schools closer to these learners and equipping them adequately, we reinforce our commitment to equity and inclusive development.

This measure is not just about building schools – it is about building hope, opportunity, and a future for every Filipino child. Never again should a child have

to risk their life by crossing dangerous rivers or hiking long treacherous paths just to reach a classroom.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Maceda', is positioned above the printed name.

REP. GISELLE MARY L. MACEDA
4th District, Manila City



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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**.

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

Towards this end, the State shall improve the quality and access to basic education of children in 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.

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

SECTION 4. *Establishment of Last Mile Schools.* – The Last Mile Schools are hereby established, under the administration of the DepEd, to cater to the basic education of learners throughout the country’s GDCA.

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

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

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

SECTION 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 classrooms;
- c. Absence of or irregularity of 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.

SECTION 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.

SECTION 8. *Establishment of Community-Based Learning Hubs.* – To complement the establishment of Last Mile Schools and ensure continuous access to basic education in areas where formal school infrastructure is not yet feasible, the Department of Education (DepEd), in coordination with local government units (LGUs), and Indigenous Peoples’ communities, and other stakeholders, shall establish community-based learning hubs in identified Geographically Isolated, Disadvantaged, and Conflict-Affected Areas (GIDCA).

These learning hubs shall serve as temporary or supplementary education centers providing access to basic literacy, numeracy, and life skills, specially during periods of school construction, emergencies, displacement, or resource constraints.

SECTION 9. *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.

SECTION 10. *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, NDRRMS, and Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines, formulate the rules and regulations implementing the provisions of this Act.

SECTION 11. *Separability Clause.* – If any portion or provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the remainder of this Act or any provision not affected thereby shall remain in force and effect.

SECTION 12. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations and other issuances, or any part thereof, inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed, modified, or amended accordingly.

SECTION 13. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,