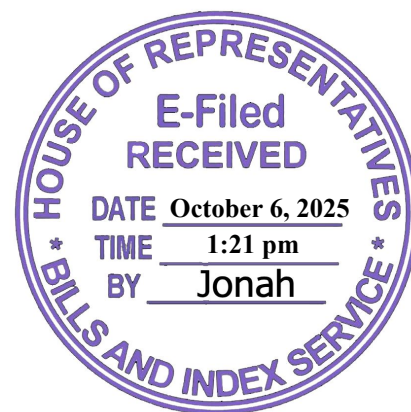




Republic of the Philippines  
**House of Representatives**  
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress  
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 5163



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**Introduced by Representative Yedda Marie K. Romualdez**

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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**

**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

The State has the responsibility to “protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at every level and must take appropriate measures to ensure that education is accessible to everyone.” This duty also involves concrete actions to achieve zero illiteracy by addressing students’ needs, including providing adequate facilities, educational supplies and materials, accessible roads to schools, and sufficient teaching personnel.

Currently, geographical access to education in the Philippines is challenged by the nation's archipelagic geography, leading to uneven school distribution, with rural and remote areas facing shortages of facilities and resources. Factors like long travel distances, natural disasters, conflict, poverty, and the digital divide further restrict access, particularly for vulnerable groups and Indigenous Peoples.

The Department of Education’s (DepEd) Last Mile Schools (LMS) Program marks a significant move toward inclusive education in the Philippines. LMS are schools characterized by having fewer than four classrooms, less than

five teachers, multi-grade classes, and fewer than 100 students, with most serving indigenous peoples (IPs) communities. These schools often operate in makeshift or non-standard classrooms without electricity and are situated in geographically isolated, disadvantaged, and conflict-affected areas (GIDCAs), where difficult terrain or long travel times—usually more than an hour from the town center—pose significant challenges.

The LMS Program’s goal is to close the educational divide between remote and urban areas, ensuring that every Filipino child in GIDCAs receives quality education. In 2019, DepEd identified over 9,000 LMS across various regions nationwide.

To guarantee fair access to education—particularly for those in GIDCAs—this bill proposes a five-year educational roadmap aimed at bridging the gap and fostering the development of families and communities through education. It also seeks to enhance multi-sector collaboration, particularly between the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and DepEd, to improve access to and delivery of quality, equitable, culture-based, and comprehensive education.

In the Nineteenth Congress, this bill was filed by Representatives Roman T. Romulo, Joey Sarte Salceda, and others where it was approved on Third Reading.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yedda', with a stylized flourish extending downwards.

**YEDDA MARIE K. ROMUALDEZ**



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**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 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 or 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 (GIDCA).

**SEC. 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 GIDCA.

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.

**SEC. 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.

**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.

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

**SEC. 11. *Repealing Clause.*** – All laws, decrees, orders and rules and regulations

contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

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

Approved,