

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. **5681**



INTRODUCED BY REP. PATRICK MICHAEL "PM" D. VARGAS

AN ACT
STRENGTHENING THE NATIONAL NUTRITION PROGRAM, AMENDING FOR
THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11037, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE
"MASUSTANSYANG PAGKAIN PARA SA BATANG PILIPINO ACT",
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Despite numerous interventions, malnutrition among Filipino children remains a persistent national concern that continues to affect both health and education outcomes. Data from the 2021 study by the Department of Science and Technology Food and Nutrition Research Institute (DOST-FNRI) reveal that close to 30% of Filipino children under five are stunted, indicating chronic undernutrition, while 5.7% are wasted, reflecting acute malnutrition. Among school-aged children (5-10 years old), 1 in 5 remain stunted, or roughly 2.7 million children nationwide.

The effects of malnutrition go beyond physical health. Studies have consistently shown its direct link to poor learning performance and lower educational attainment. The 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) showed that 12% of Filipino learners aged 15 reported going to school hungry every day or every other day due to a lack of food at home. The same report found that hunger was strongly correlated with lower mathematics scores. This learning gap demonstrates how undernutrition undermines students' cognitive development, concentration, and classroom performance.

Conversely, education also influences nutritional outcomes. Evidence from the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) and regional studies shows that children of mothers with low educational attainment are nearly three times to be underweight compared to those whose mothers completed higher education. Education empowers families with better nutrition knowledge and access to health services, while literacy perpetuates poor feeding practices and food insecurity.

The long-term economic implications are likewise staggering. According to estimates cited in the Philippine Plan for Action Nutrition (PPAN), the country loses around Php 328 billion annually, or 2.84 % of the GDP, due to productivity losses from childhood stunting, grade repetition, and premature mortality related to malnutrition.

These figures underscore the urgent need for the government's nutrition programs, particularly those targeting early childhood and school-age learners. By improving and expanding the National Nutrition Program under Republic Act No. 11037, or the *Masustansyang Pagkain para sa Batang Pilipino*, this measure aims to ensure that no Filipino child attends school hungry and that every learner has access to nutritious, fortified meals that support both physical and mental development.

Investing in nutrition is an investment in education and the nation's future. Healthier children learn better, stay in school longer, and become more productive citizens. Strengthening the country's nutrition programs, therefore, is not only a welfare intervention—it is a strategic measure for national development.

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


REP. PATRICK MICHAEL "PM" D. VARGAS
Fifth District, Quezon City

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

SECTION 1. Section 3 of Republic Act No. 11037 is hereby amended to read as follows:

"Sec. 3. Definition of Terms. - As used in this Act, the following terms shall be understood to mean as follows, to wit:

- (A) Adolescent refers to young people from the age of ten (10) to nineteen (19) years, who are in transition from childhood to adulthood.
- (B) Cycle menu refers to standardized menus prepared by the national government agencies (NGAs), in coordination with the National Nutrition Council (NNC), Food and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI), and local government units (LGUs) for day care centers, which shall be contextualized and drawn up, among others, according to age range, location and/or type of school, and local cultural and/or religions eating preferences: provided, that such menus shall have as many varieties and selections as may necessary taking into account its

availability in the place or locality where the day care center or school is located;

(C) Early childhood refers to the period from birth to the age of eight (8), representing a connected and progressive sequence of development;

(D) Fortified meal refers to a hot meal with deliberately increased content of essential micronutrients so as to improve the nutritional quality of the food and provide the level of calories and protein as prescribed by the NNC which shall consist of at least one-third (1/3) of the daily requirement based on the Philippine Dietary Reference Intake (PDRI) or nutritious food products (NFP) developed by FNRI;

(E) X X x;

(F) Milk-based substitute refers to a product that has undergone processing to extend shelf life, while retaining the essential nutritional properties of milk. These include, among others, sterilized milk and powdered milk.

(G) X X x;

(H) Undernourished child refers to a child who has been supplied with less than the minimum amount of food essential for sound health and growth. For purposes of this act, it shall include children who are suffering from chronic hunger and malnutrition as well as those who are considered as wasted, severely wasted, or stunted under the World Health Organization child growth.

SECTION 2. Section 4 of Republic Act No. 11037 is hereby amended to read as follows:

"Sec. 4. National Nutrition Program. - The National Nutrition Program, hereinafter referred to as the Program, is hereby established to address undernutrition among Filipino children.

The program shall have the following components and coverage:

(a) Supplemental Feeding Program for Early Childhood Care. - The DSWD, in coordination with the LGUs concerned, shall implement a

supplemental feeding program for undernourished children with ages two (2) to five (5) years. The Program shall be administered in day care centers or in any other facility which can be used for such purpose: Provided, That the Program shall include the provision of at least one (1) fortified hot meal for a period of one hundred sixty (160) days in a year: Provided, further, That in the preparation of fortified hot meals, the DSWD shall work in collaboration with recognized parents' organization.

The DSWD, in collaboration with the National Nutrition Council (NNC) and the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Council, shall strengthen the child development and the health and nutrition components of the Parent Effectiveness Service Program, especially for the families of the target beneficiaries.

The DSWD shall collaborate closely with the Department of Health (DOH) and the LGUs in providing health and nutrition services to undernourished children below two (2) years of age. The ECCD Council shall provide technical assistance in ensuring developmentally appropriate interventions are integrated with nutrition services."

(b) School-Based Feeding Program. - The DepEd shall implement a School-Based Feeding Program which shall cover: (1) universal feeding for all learners from kindergarten to grade 3, regardless of nutritional status; and (2) targeted feeding for all undernourished learners from grades 4 to 6: Provided, That the Program shall include the provision of at least one (1) fortified hot meal to the covered public elementary school children for a period of not less than one hundred sixty (160) days in a year: Provided, further, That subject to availability of funds, secondary beneficiaries which include currently enrolled nutritionally-at-risk adolescent pregnant mothers in public high schools, children with disabilities, other marginalized or vulnerable groups including indigenous learners as defined under Republic Act No. 11510, learners participating in remedial, intervention and supplementary learning programs, and undernourished students in secondary education enrolled in public schools, among others, may be covered under the School-Based Feeding Program.

(c) Supplementary Milk Program. - The Department of Agriculture (DA), the National Dairy Authority, the Philippine Carabao Center and the

Cooperative Development Authority, in coordination with the DepEd and DSWD, shall implement a supplementary milk program which will incorporate fresh milk, fresh milk-based food products, or milk-based substitutes in the cycle menu in accordance with Republic Act No. 8172, otherwise known as the "Philippine Food Fortification Act of 2000," in order to ensure the effective implementation of the Supplementary Milk Program, the DA shall be responsible for the procurement, payment, and delivery of the milk supply.

(d) Micronutrient Supplementation Program. - In coordination with the DSWD and DepEd, the DOH shall provide age-appropriate and needs-based micronutrient supplements to the Program beneficiaries, and implement the use of iodized salt in accordance with Republic Act No. 8172, otherwise known as the "Salt Iodization or ASIN" law: Provided, that subject to availability of funds, the DepEd shall administer weekly iron and folic acid supplementation to female adolescents, including eligible female learners in the Alternative Learning System, prioritizing areas with high prevalence of anemia among infants and young children: Provided, further, that the NNC and DOST-FNRI shall coordinate closely with the DepEd in identifying areas with high prevalence of anemia for effective program implementation.

(e) xxx;

(f) xxx;

(g) xxx;

(h) xxx; and

(i) Central Kitchen in Every School Division Office. - There is hereby established a central kitchen in every Schools Division Office, which shall be operated, maintained, and supervised by the DepEd, which shall prepare and facilitate the distribution of fortified meals to beneficiaries within their respective divisions.

SECTION 3. A new Section 5 is hereby inserted, and subsequent Sections shall be renumbered accordingly. The new Section 5 shall read as follows:

"Sec. 5. Direct Purchase from Farmers and Fisherfolk. - In the implementation of the National Nutrition Program as defined under Section 4 of this Act, DepEd,

DSWD and DA, as the case may be, may directly procure or purchase locally-produced dairy, agricultural and fishery products directly from accredited farmers, fisherfolk, and their cooperatives or associations, as defined under Republic Act No. 11321, or the "Sagip Saka Act", subject to guidelines issued by relevant national government agencies."

SECTION 4. Section 8 of Republic Act No. 11037 is hereby amended to read as follows:

"Sec. 8. Private Sector Participation. - The NGAs shall encourage the participation of the private sector in the Program which shall include, among others, PTAs, private corporations, peoples and nongovernment organizations and such other groups or organizations, both foreign and local, that may want to be partner in whole or in part with the implementation of the Program: Provided, that all partnerships shall adhere to existing government guidelines on public-private partnerships, and other applicable rules and regulations."

SECTION 5. Implementing Rules and Regulations. - Within one hundred eighty (180) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DSWD, DepEd and DA shall promulgate the implementing rules and regulations necessary to ensure the efficient and effective implementation of this Act: Provided, that the failure of the relevant agencies to promulgate the said IRR shall not prevent or delay the effectivity and implementation of this Act.

SECTION 6. Transitory Provision. - Within six (6) months from the effectivity of this Act the DSWD, DepEd, and the DA shall each update their respective and existing policies, rules, and regulations in light of and relevant to this Act.

SECTION 7. Separability Clause. - If any provision or part hereof is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

SECTION 8. Repealing Clause. - All laws, decrees, orders, rules and regulations or other issuances or parts inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 9. Effectivity. - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,