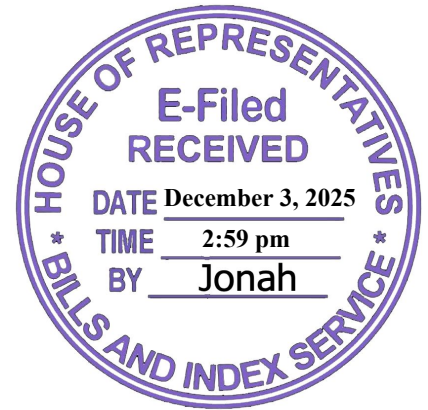




Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session



HOUSE BILL NO. 6596

**Introduced by Representatives Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez,
Yedda Marie K. Romualdez, Andrew Julian K. Romualdez and Jude A.
Acidre**

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING AN INDEPENDENT EDUCATION OMBUDSMAN TO
RECEIVE AND ADDRESS GRIEVANCES FROM STUDENTS,
PARENTS, AND TEACHERS IN ALL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE
SCHOOLS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The 1987 Philippine Constitution guarantees every Filipino the right to education. *Article XIV, Section 1* 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.” Furthermore, *Article XIV, Section 5(5)* directs the State to “assign the highest budgetary priority to education,” while *Article III, Section 1* ensures that no person shall be deprived of equal protection of the laws. These constitutional provisions highlight education as both a right and a state priority, emphasizing the duty to protect learners, teachers, and parents from practices that undermine this right.

Despite these guarantees, many stakeholders in the education sector continue to face challenges in addressing grievances such as unfair treatment, administrative inefficiencies, student rights violations, and lack of accountability in both public and private schools. Existing mechanisms are often limited, inaccessible, or slow to act, leaving students, parents, and teachers without an impartial body to turn to for redress.

This bill seeks to establish an Education Ombudsman, an independent body that will receive, investigate, and act upon grievances concerning school-related issues. By institutionalizing this office, the measure ensures that complaints are addressed promptly, fairly, and without bias, thereby strengthening transparency, accountability, and trust in the education system.

This measure is a vital step in safeguarding the constitutional rights of students and educators, promoting equal access to remedies, and ensuring that the delivery of education remains just, inclusive, and of the highest quality.

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



FERDINAND MARTIN G. ROMUALDEZ



YEDDA MARIE K. ROMUALDEZ



ANDREW JULIAN K. ROMUALDEZ



JUDE A. ACIDRE



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*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 “*Education
Ombudsman Act.*”

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to protect the rights and welfare of learners, educators, and families by ensuring accountability, transparency, and responsiveness in the delivery of education. To uphold this policy, the State shall establish an independent and impartial mechanism for receiving, investigating, and resolving grievances within the education system.

SEC. 3. *Creation of the Office of the Education Ombudsman.* – There is hereby established an Office of the Education Ombudsman as an independent and autonomous body, separate from the Department of Education (DepEd), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

SEC 4. *Mandate and Functions.* - The Education Ombudsman shall have the following powers and functions:

- (a.) Receive, investigate, and act upon complaints or grievances filed by students, parents, teachers, or education personnel involving:
 - i. Bullying, harassment, or abuse in schools
 - ii. Unjust disciplinary actions
 - iii. Misconduct or neglect by school administrators or personnel
 - iv. Violation of student or teacher rights
 - v. Misuse of school funds or resources
 - vi. Unjust grading, promotion, or evaluation practices
 - vii. Access issues in enrollment, admission, or public school services
- (b.) Recommend appropriate actions, remedies, or administrative sanctions to the proper authorities;
- (c.) Refer matters for criminal, civil, or administrative prosecution where warranted;
- (d.) Provide legal or referral assistance to aggrieved parties when necessary;
- (e.) Submit an annual report to Congress and the President on the nature, frequency, and outcomes of complaints filed; and
- (f.) Propose policy recommendations to address systemic issues in the education sector.

SEC. 5. *Organizational Structure.* - The Office shall be headed by the Education Ombudsman, appointed by the President of the Philippines from a list submitted by a Search and Selection Committee composed of representatives from:

- i. The Commission on Human Rights (CHR);
- ii. The Civil Service Commission (CSC);
- iii. The Philippine Association of State Universities and Colleges (PASUC);
- iv. A nationally recognized education reform NGO; and
- v. A representative from the parents' sector.

The Ombudsman shall serve for a non-renewable term of seven (7) years, with the rank and privileges of a Department Undersecretary.

The Office shall also include:

- i. One (1) Deputy Ombudsman each for Basic, Higher, and Technical-Vocational Education.
- ii. Regional Ombudsman Offices to ensure accessibility nationwide.
- iii. Legal, technical, and investigative staff as needed.

SEC. 6. *Independence and Powers of the Office.* – The Office of the Education Ombudsman shall operate independently of the DepEd, CHED, and TESDA. It shall not be subject to their direction, control, or supervision in the exercise of its functions.

The Office shall have the power to:

- (a.) Summon persons, issue subpoenas, and compel the production of documents necessary for investigation;
- (b.) Access school premises and conduct confidential investigations when warranted;

- (c.) Enter into cooperation agreements with government and civil society organizations; and
- (d.) Recommend preventive or remedial measures to avoid recurrence of systemic issues.

SEC. 7. *Confidentiality and Protection.* – All complaints shall be handled with strict confidentiality.

Whistleblowers, complainants, and witnesses shall be protected from retaliation under applicable laws. Any form of harassment or retaliation shall be punishable by administrative or criminal penalties.

SEC. 8. *Funding.* - The initial funding for the implementation of this Act shall be sourced from the current appropriations of the Office of the President. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for its continued operation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA).

SEC. 9. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Office of the President shall promulgate the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR), in consultation with DepEd, CHED, TESDA, and civil society stakeholders.

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

SEC. 11. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act shall be held unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not otherwise affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 12. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, executive orders or issuances or any part thereof, which are inconsistent herewith, are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

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

Approved,