

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Batasan Hills, Quezon City



TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 6982

Introduced by Abang Lingkod Party-list Representative
Manuel "Manman" O. Ko

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Education remains one of the strongest instruments for social mobility and national development. The 1987 Constitution, under Article XIV, mandates the State to "protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and to take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all."

While the government has expanded programs such as free tuition, learning materials, feeding programs, and transportation assistance, a significant ancillary expense remains unaddressed: the cost of mandatory school uniforms. For many low-income Filipino families particularly those belonging to daily-wage earners, subsistence farmers, fisherfolk, and informal workers, the purchase of school uniforms continues to serve as a financial burden that often leads to delayed enrollment, absenteeism, or the reuse of worn clothing that exposes students to social stigma and undermines self-confidence.

Field reports from public schools consistently show that students often attend class without proper uniforms or must delay enrollment while families scrape together resources to purchase required attire. This situation directly undermines equal access to education and disproportionately affects learners from marginalized communities.

This proposed measure seeks to institutionalize the annual provision of free school uniforms to all public school learners nationwide, thereby removing a persistent financial barrier to education. The bill mandates the Department of Education (DepEd) to distribute a minimum number of uniform sets per student every academic year and establishes quality standards to ensure durability and suitability to local conditions.

To promote inclusive economic development, the procurement process, consistent with the Government Procurement Reform Act (Republic Act No. 9184), prioritizes participation by community-based enterprises, cooperatives, and micro, small, and

medium enterprises (MSMEs), thereby creating livelihood opportunities at the local level while ensuring transparency, competitiveness, and accountability.

The measure further affirms existing policies that no student shall be denied entry or participation in school activities for failure to wear a prescribed uniform, reinforcing a child-centered approach that protects the learner's right to education.

By relieving households of uniform expenses, promoting dignity and equality among students, supporting local enterprises, and strengthening school attendance nationwide, this bill aims to advance both educational access and community economic empowerment.

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



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AN ACT MANDATING THE PROVISION OF FREE SCHOOL UNIFORMS TO ALL STUDENTS ENROLLED IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS NATIONWIDE, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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 “Free Public School Uniform Act”

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to uphold the constitutional right of all citizens to quality, accessible, and inclusive education. In furtherance thereof, the State shall adopt measures to ease the financial burden borne by students and their families, particularly those belonging to marginalized and low-income sectors, by removing ancillary expenses that hinder access to schooling. This Act seeks to promote equity, eliminate stigma associated with economic disadvantage, foster an environment conducive to learning, and support regular school attendance through the universal provision of free school uniforms.

SECTION 3. Coverage and Scope. – This Act shall cover all learners officially enrolled in public kindergarten, elementary, and secondary schools (Grades K to 12) under the supervision and jurisdiction of the Department of Education (DepEd) nationwide.

SECTION 4. Provision of Free School Uniforms. – The Department of Education is hereby directed to provide, free of charge, to every covered learner a complete set of prescribed school uniforms at the beginning of each academic year.

(a) Each learner shall be entitled to a minimum of two (2) complete sets of standard school uniforms, in accordance with the uniform design prescribed or approved by the DepEd.

(b) In cases where a school adopts a T-shirt, polo shirt, or similar attire as the official school uniform or daily wear, the Department shall provide a minimum of three (3) such garments per learner per academic year, in lieu of the standard uniform sets prescribed in the preceding subsection.

(c) The distribution of uniforms under this Act shall be conducted through schools or other delivery mechanisms authorized by the DepEd to ensure efficient and equitable distribution directly to enrolled learners.

SECTION 5. *Quality Standards and Procurement.* –

(a) The DepEd shall establish uniform standards of quality, including specifications for fabric durability, comfort, appropriateness to climate, safety, and workmanship, to ensure that the uniforms are practical for daily use and suitable for students of all grade levels.

(b) Procurement of uniforms shall be conducted strictly in accordance with Republic Act No. 9184 (Government Procurement Reform Act) and its implementing rules and regulations, with priority given, where practicable and legally permissible, to:

1. *Community-based enterprises;*
2. *Cooperatives; and*
3. *Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs)—particularly local manufacturers and suppliers to promote local industry participation and generate community employment, subject to quality, transparency, and competitiveness requirements.*

(c) To ensure maximum participation of local garment manufacturers and efficient delivery, the DepEd is directed to structure procurement into lots that are manageable for MSMEs, Cooperatives, and Community-Based Enterprises, particularly through decentralized or cluster-based bidding at the Schools Division Office (SDO) or Regional Office (RO) level.

(d) The DepEd, in coordination with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA), shall provide capacity building and technical assistance to local suppliers to ensure compliance with the quality standards and procurement requirements set by the Department.

SECTION 6. *Non-Compulsory Uniform Use.* –

Nothing in this Act shall be interpreted to authorize the exclusion, sanction, or discrimination of any learner who, for reasons beyond his or her control, fails or is unable to wear the prescribed uniform.

Consistent with existing DepEd policy, the wearing of uniforms shall not be a condition for admission to class participation or access to school activities.

SECTION 7. *Implementing Agency.* –

The Department of Education shall be the principal implementing agency of this Act and shall exercise overall responsibility for:

- a. Uniform design approval and standard-setting;*
- b. Procurement and quality control;*
- c. Distribution coordination;*
- d. Compliance monitoring; and*
- e. Reporting of implementation progress to Congress.*

SECTION 8. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act shall be included in the Annual General Appropriations Act (GAA) under the budget of the Department of Education starting in the fiscal year immediately following its enactment.

The DepEd may realign internally available funds during the initial year of implementation, subject to existing budgeting, auditing, and accountability rules.

SECTION 9. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Secretary of Education, in consultation with the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA), and other relevant agencies, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to carry out its provisions. The IRR shall include a clear, time-bound, and needs-based phasing strategy for the initial years of implementation, prioritizing students in Last-Mile Schools and Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA), and indigent learners, to ensure equitable and manageable program rollout.

SECTION 10. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the remaining provisions shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 11. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, and issuances inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 12. Effectivity. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in two newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,