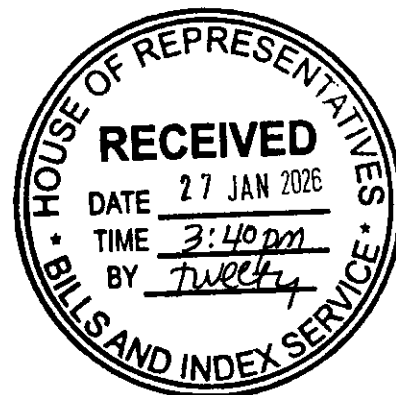




HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

House Bill No. 7426

Introduced by Hon. Antonio B. Legarda Jr.

AN ACT

MANDATING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (DepEd) AND THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND HIGHWAYS (DPWH) TO ALLOCATE FUNDS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE (WASH) AREAS IN ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS NATIONWIDE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

A safe and conducive learning environment requires more than just classrooms and teachers. It requires the presence of basic school utilities that support the daily needs of students. However, a significant number of public schools nationwide operate without adequate water supplies, functional toilets, or proper handwashing facilities.¹

The absence of adequate Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) facilities has resulted in serious public health concerns among school-aged children. Studies have shown that schools play a critical role in preventing common childhood diseases, shaping health and sustainable hygiene practices, and promoting long-term health outcomes²; however, this role is undermined when basic WASH facilities are lacking. Without a reliable way to maintain hygiene on campus, students face daily exposure to preventable risks, including infections, diarrhea, skin illnesses, among others.

This bill seeks to institutionalize the construction, upgrading, maintenance, and monitoring of WASH facilities in all public elementary and secondary schools nationwide. By establishing clear standards, defining agency responsibilities, and ensuring sustainable funding, the bill aims to promote healthy learning environments,

¹<https://www.dlsu.edu.ph/wp-content/uploads/pdf/conferences/research-congress-proceedings/2020/FNH-14.pdf>

²Dalisay, S., Lumangaya, C., De Guzman, L., et. al., A Qualitative Analysis of the Implementation of the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene in Schools Program in the Philippines using the One Health Lens (2024).

improve educational outcomes, and reduce avoidable healthcare costs for families and the government.

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


HON. ANTONIO B. LEGARDA, JR.

1 TWENTIETH CONGRESS OF THE)
2 REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
3 *First Regular Session*)
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18 DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND HIGHWAYS (DPWH) TO ALLOCATE
19 FUNDS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE
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21 PURPOSES
22

23 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in*
24 *Congress assembled:*
25

26 Section 1. ***Short Title.*** – This Act shall be known as the “WASH in Public Schools Act.”

27 Section 2. ***Declaration of Policy.*** – Consistent with the Constitutional mandate to
28 protect the right of every citizen to quality education and a healthy environment, the
29 State recognizes that access to safe water and sanitation is a prerequisite for effective
30 learning. The State acknowledges that the lack of functional hygiene facilities in
31 schools contributes significantly to the prevalence of infectious diseases and prevents
32 the academic progress of the student population.

33 The State, therefore, adopts a policy of institutionalizing standards for WASH
34 infrastructure. It shall be the duty of the State to ensure that every public school is
35 equipped with clean, accessible, and child-friendly sanitary facilities, and guarantee a
36 continuous and safe water supply for all learners and school personnel. By providing
37 these basic health and water needs, the State protects the well-being of learners,
38 promotes public health, and strengthens human capital development.

1 Section 3. **Coverage.** – This Act shall apply to all public elementary and secondary
2 schools nationwide, including those located in geographically isolated and
3 disadvantaged areas.

4 Section 4. **Construction and Improvement of WASH Facilities.** – The
5 Department of Education (DepEd), in coordination with the Department of Public
6 Works and Highways (DPWH) and the Department of Health (DOH), is mandated to
7 oversee the planning, construction, rehabilitation, upgrading, and maintenance of
8 Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) facilities in all public elementary and
9 secondary schools.

10 The DPWH shall provide technical assistance, engineering design, and construction
11 standards, while the DOH shall ensure compliance with national health, sanitation,
12 and safety guidelines.

13 All WASH facilities shall comply with national standards on health, safety, child
14 protection, and accessibility.

15 Section 5. **Minimum Standards for WASH Facilities.** – WASH facilities in public
16 schools shall include, but not limited to the following:

- 17 a. Handwashing stations with continuous access to clean and safe running water
18 and soap;
- 19 b. Adequate, clean, private, and gender-sensitive, accessible, and child-friendly
20 toilets that provide privacy and dignity for all learners, including girls;
- 21 c. Accessible sanitation facilities for students with disabilities;
- 22 d. Facilities for proper menstrual hygiene management;
- 23 e. Proper drainage systems and waste disposal mechanisms to maintain sanitary
24 conditions within school premises; and
- 25 f. Water supply systems capable of supporting the daily hygienic and sanitation
26 needs of the entire school population.

27 These provisions shall be implemented with consideration for local contexts and
28 environmental sustainability, and must adhere to child protection, safety, and
29 inclusivity standards at all times.

1 Section 6. ***Appropriations.*** – The amount necessary for the initial implementation of
2 this Act shall be charged against the current appropriations of the DepEd and DPWH.
3 Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the continued implementation of this
4 Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

5 Priority in funding shall be given to schools with no existing or substandard WASH
6 facilities, particularly those in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas.

7 Section 7. ***Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – Within sixty (60) days from
8 the effectivity of this Act, the DepEd, in coordination with DPWH and DOH, shall
9 promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of
10 this Act.

11 The DepEd shall submit an annual report to Congress on the status, functionality, and
12 adequacy of WASH facilities in public schools, including identified gaps and
13 recommended interventions, to ensure transparency and accountability.

14 Section 8. ***Separability Clause.*** – If any part or provision of this Act is held invalid
15 or unconstitutional, the other provisions not affected shall remain in full force and
16 effect.

17 Section 9. ***Repealing Clause.*** – All laws, executive orders, issuances, decrees, rules
18 and regulations or any part thereof which are inconsistent with or contrary to the
19 provisions of this Act are deemed amended, modified, or repealed accordingly.

20 Section 10. ***Effectivity.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
21 publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,