



Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila
TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session
HOUSE BILL NO. **8606**

Introduced by Representative EDGAR R. ERICE

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The State's constitutional duty to prioritize education is clear. What remains unacceptable is the continued reality that millions of Filipino learners leave the early grades without the ability to read, comprehend, and compute at levels required for meaningful learning.

Evidence on the ground confirms both the urgency of the problem and the viability of solutions. Community-based interventions such as Oplan TalkRead, a free reading tutorial program for non-readers, have demonstrated that with focused instruction, consistent support, and early intervention, struggling learners can rapidly acquire foundational reading skills. However, such gains remain localized and fragmented, underscoring the need for a national, institutionalized, and scalable framework.

Foundational learning from Kindergarten to Grade 3 is the single most critical investment in the entire education system. When children fail to acquire basic literacy and numeracy at this stage, the system is forced to remediate at far greater cost. Conversely, global evidence consistently shows that the highest returns in education, and in nation-building, come from investing early, decisively, and systematically.

This measure establishes a National K to 3 Foundational Learning and Nurturing Care Program, a bold, integrated reform that moves beyond fragmented interventions and institutionalizes a unified, accountable, and adequately funded framework. It places Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy (ELLN) at the core, strengthens teacher specialization,

guarantees protected instructional time, and aligns education with health, nutrition, and responsive caregiving through a whole-of-government approach.

Critically, this bill introduces budget tagging and progressive prioritization, ensuring that K to 3 is no longer an afterthought but a front-loaded national investment. It embeds transparency through a national dashboard and mandates system-wide accountability specifically from national agencies to local governments and schools.

As emphasized by Kofi Annan, “Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family.” Without strong foundations, that promise collapses.

The country can no longer afford delayed learning, fragmented delivery, and under-prioritized early education. If we are serious about raising a generation capable of competing, innovating, and leading, then we must be equally serious about ensuring that every child can read, understand, and think by Grade 3.

The time to act is now. The cost of inaction is generational.

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



EDGAR R. ERICE
Representative
2nd District, Caloocan City



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AN ACT

STRENGTHENING K TO 3 FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING AND NURTURING CARE BY ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL K TO 3 PROGRAM WITH AN EARLY LANGUAGE, LITERACY, AND NUMERACY (ELLN) CORE, INTEGRATING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND VALUES FORMATION, ALIGNING HEALTH, NUTRITION, AND RESPONSIVE CAREGIVING SUPPORTS, PROVIDING PROTECTED INSTRUCTIONAL TIME, BUDGET TAGGING AND PROGRESSIVE PRIORITIZATION, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

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2 **SEC. 1. Short Title.** This Act shall be known as the “K to 3 Foundational Learning and
3 **Nurturing Care Act.”**

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5 **SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy.** It is the policy of the State to give priority to education and
6 promote total human development. In pursuit of this mandate, the State has to ensure that all
7 children from Kindergarten to Grade 3 develop strong foundations in early language, literacy,
8 numeracy, social and emotional learning (SEL), and values, consistent with developmental
9 science and the country’s goals for equity and lifelong learning.

1 The State recognizes that foundational learning is profoundly influenced by children’s health,
2 nutrition, attendance, responsive caregiving, safety, and wellbeing, and shall therefore promote
3 whole-child, whole-of-government, and whole-of-community approaches aligned with the
4 Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) System Act (RA 12199).

5 The State shall provide clear standards, protected instructional time, appropriate teacher
6 support, coherent program governance, transparency in resource allocation, and strong
7 collaboration among national agencies, LGUs, families, and schools..

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9 **SEC. 3. Objectives.** This Act aims to:

- 10 a. Establish a National K to 3 Foundational Learning and Nurturing Care Program
11 (“National K to 3 Program”);
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13 b. Guarantee strong instruction in early language, literacy, and numeracy (ELLN) as the
14 program core;
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16 c. Ensure the integration of SEL and values formation into curriculum, teaching practice,
17 and school climate;
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19 d. Strengthen linkages among health, nutrition, responsive caregiving, child protection,
20 and early learning;
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22 e. Support and professionalize K–3 teachers, including pathways for specialization;
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24 f. Secure protected instructional time for foundational learning;
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26 g. Establish a national K to 3 Foundational Learning and Nurturing Care Dashboard;
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28 h. Ensure budget tagging and progressive prioritization for K–3 across the education
29 system;
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31 i. Promote alignment and coherence from 0–4 (ECCD) to K–3..

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33 **SEC. 4. Definition of Terms.** For the purposes of this Act:

- 34 a. Early Intervention – timely identification and support for learners who exhibit delays
35 in foundational competencies;
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37 b. Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy (ELLN) – competencies in oral language,
38 vocabulary, decoding, fluency, comprehension, writing, and early mathematics

expected in Kindergarten to Grade 3. ELLN constitutes the core instructional component of the National K to 3 Program.;

- c. Foundational Learning – competencies in early language, literacy, numeracy, SEL, and values needed for future academic performance and holistic development;
- d. National K to 3 Program – the unified program established under this Act, formally known as the National K to 3 Foundational Learning and Nurturing Care Program, encompassing standards, instructional time, teacher development, materials, assessments, interventions, and whole-child supports for K–3;
- e. Nurturing Care – the enabling environment for child development, including health, nutrition, responsive caregiving, early learning, safety, and security, consistent with RA 12199;
- f. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) – skills in attention, emotion regulation, cooperation, empathy, perseverance, and responsible decision-making that support learning and wellbeing;
- g. Values Formation – competencies and behaviors related to respect, responsibility, cooperation, fairness, empathy, and bayanihan, embedded in daily routines and school culture;

SEC 5. Establishment of the K to 3 Program. There is hereby established a National K to 3 Foundational Learning and Nurturing Care Program, which shall:

- a. Provide a strong ELLN instructional core, including oral language, decoding, comprehension, writing, and early numeracy;
- b. Integrate SEL and values formation across curriculum, pedagogy, routines, and school climate;
- c. Ensure nurturing care linkages for health, nutrition, attendance, responsive caregiving, and child protection;
- d. Institute protected instructional time for foundational learning;
- e. Provide localized, culturally relevant, accessible (including offline) learning materials;

- f. Implement early identification and intervention;
- g. Strengthen teacher preparation, assignment, coaching, and mentoring, especially for early grades; and
- h. Promote partnerships with LGUs, parents, and communities.

SEC. 6. Standards and Curriculum Alignment. DepEd shall:

- a. Issue standards for ELLN, SEL, and values formation in K–3;
- b. Align curriculum, teaching guides, assessments, and materials with these standards;
- c. Ensure protected instructional time for foundational learning; and
- d. Align the K–3 Program with RA 12199 and the ECCD Council's 0–4 developmental framework to ensure continuity

SEC. 7. Teacher Specialization and Professional Development. DepEd, CHED, and PRC shall:

- a. Develop specialization pathways for early learning / early-grade teachers;
- b. Strengthen in-service professional development, coaching, and mentoring for current K–3 teachers;
- c. Facilitate merit-based assignment of teachers to early grades based on competencies; and
- d. Provide training in ELLN, SEL, values formation, early numeracy, and early intervention.

All current K–3 teachers shall be deemed qualified during the transition period.

SEC. 8. Integration of Nurturing Care Supports. DepEd shall coordinate with DOH, DSWD, ECCD Council, DILG, and LGUs to ensure:

- a. School-based health and nutrition services, including coordination with School-Based Feeding Program;

- b. Attendance monitoring, follow-up, and support for chronically absent learners;
- c. Parenting and responsive caregiving sessions aligned with school learning goals;
- d. Screening, referral, and early intervention for health, nutrition, disability, and developmental concerns; and
- e. SEL and values-enabling environments, including positive discipline and child protection measures.

SEC. 9. K to 3 Foundational Learning and Nurturing Care Dashboard. DepEd shall establish a national K to 3 Dashboard with indicators on:

- a. Language, literacy, and numeracy proficiency;
- b. SEL and values-related observable practices or proxies;
- c. Attendance and chronic absenteeism;
- d. Nutrition and health indicators where available;
- e. School climate and child protection indicators; and
- f. Implementation of early intervention.

The dashboard shall guide planning, budgeting, coaching, and reporting at national, regional, schools division, and school levels.

SEC. 10. Financing, Budget Tagging, and Progressive Prioritization. DepEd and DBM shall identify and tag budget lines supporting the National K to 3 Program. Within three fiscal years, tagged allocations shall be no less than ten percent (10%) of the DepEd basic education budget. DepEd shall develop a medium-term plan to progressively increase K–3 investment, consistent with enrollment share, learning needs, and evidence on returns to investment.

LGUs and Local School Boards shall allocate a meaningful share of the SEF to support K–3 literacy, numeracy, SEL, values, health, nutrition, and early intervention needs.

Nothing in this Act shall prevent higher allocations for K–3 where feasible.

SEC. 11. Implementing Rules and Regulations. DepEd, with DOH, DSWD, ECCD Council, CHED, PRC, DBM, and DILG, shall promulgate the IRR within one hundred twenty (120) days after the effectivity of this Act.

SEC. 12. Transitory Provisions. All existing programs related to early-grade learning, health, nutrition, responsive caregiving, and SEL shall be aligned with this Act through the IRR.

All current K–3 teachers remain in their posts and shall receive transition support to meet specialization standards over time.

Budget tagging, teacher pathways, and dashboard rollout shall be phased considering system readiness.

No existing services shall be disrupted during transition; improvements shall be gradual, supportive, and consultative.

SEC. 13. 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..

SEC. 14. Repealing Clause. Any law, decree, executive order or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

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

Approved,