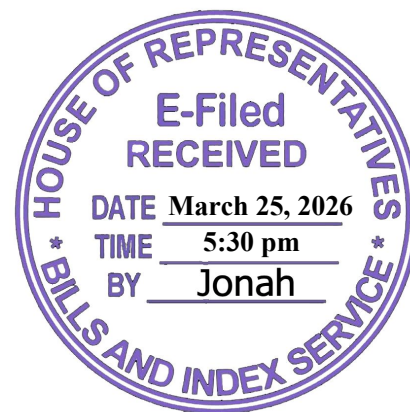


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **8783**



Introduced by **REP. NATHANIEL “Atty. Nat” M. ODUCAO**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Access to quality basic education is a fundamental right under the 1987 Philippine Constitution. Section 1, Article XIV mandates the State to “protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.” Despite this constitutional guarantee, many Filipino learners, especially those in geographically isolated, disadvantaged, and conflict-affected areas (GIDCAs), still face significant barriers to schooling.

In the Philippines, according to the Department of Education (DepEd), there are over 1,900 identified Last Mile Schools nationwide. These schools are often more than one hour away from municipal or city centers, lack electricity and adequate classrooms, have few teachers, and serve small student populations—more than 75 percent of whom are indigenous learners. Collectively, these last-mile schools number in the *thousands* and represent a significant portion of the most underserved learning communities in the country.

The inadequacy of educational access is reflected in broader learning challenges faced nationwide, including disparities in infrastructure and digital resources between urban and remote areas. Many students must traverse dangerous terrain, rivers, and impassable roads just to attend class, while others lack basic facilities such as multi-grade classrooms, potable water, and sanitation.

This bill seeks to institutionalize a strategic framework for the establishment, upgrading, and sustained support of Last Mile Schools and to ensure that no Filipino learner is denied access to basic education due to geography or conflict. The measure defines Last Mile Schools as public basic education schools located in GIDCAs with significant gaps in facilities, services, and resources. These schools are characterized by fewer than four classrooms, makeshift or substandard infrastructure, irregular or absent electricity, minimal funding for repairs and construction, challenging terrain, and low teacher-to-student ratios.

The bill also recognizes and respects the rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities and Indigenous Peoples (ICCs/IPs) under Republic Act No. 8371, the Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act of 1997. Establishment or upgrading of schools in ICC/IP communities shall uphold their rights, traditions, and participation in education consistent with national law.

To ensure that learners in GIDCAs are afforded a complete basic education, this measure mandates the Department of Education (DepEd) to coordinate with other national government agencies for the delivery of essential infrastructure and utilities. The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) shall construct and maintain access roads leading to Last Mile Schools;

the Department of Energy (DOE) and the National Electrification Administration (NEA) shall ensure electrification; and the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) shall facilitate digital connectivity where feasible. Through this inter-agency collaboration, students will no longer be forced to walk hours over rugged terrain or cross rivers just to attend school.

The measure establishes a five-year implementation period for the construction and upgrading of Last Mile Schools and ensures funding support through inclusion in the annual General Appropriations Act. By improving access, facilities, and educational quality in remote areas, this bill provides a concrete response to the structural education gaps that continue to hinder national development and the future opportunities of Filipino children.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Oducado', with a small circular stamp containing the number '8' to the right of the signature.

REP. NATHANIEL “ATTY. NAT” M. ODUCADO
1Tahanan Party List

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **8783**

Introduced by **REP. NATHANIEL “ATTY. NAT” M. ODUCAO**

**AN ACT ESTABLISHING PUBLIC BASIC EDUCATION SCHOOLS IN
GEOGRAPHICALLY ISOLATED, DISADVANTAGED AND CONFLICT-
AFFECTED AREAS, PROVIDING ACCESS ROADS LEADING TO LAST MILE
SCHOOLS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

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

1 **SECTION 1. *Short Title.*** – This Act shall be known as the “*Last Mile Schools Act.*”

2 **SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.*** – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to protect and
3 promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, and take appropriate steps to make
4 such education accessible to all.

5 The State recognizes and promotes the rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities within
6 the framework of national unity and development. To this end, the State shall recognize the right
7 of indigenous families and communities to retain shared responsibility for upbringing, training,
8 education and well-being of their children, consistent with the rights of the child.

9 The State shall improve the quality and access to basic education of children in the far-
10 flung, isolated, disadvantaged and conflict-affected areas, as well as those in Last Mile Schools, by
11 investing in school infrastructure and roads leading to said public schools.

12 **SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.*** – As used in this Act:

- 13 a) *Basic Education* - refers to the intended basic learning needs which provide the
14 foundation on which subsequent learning can be based. It includes kindergarten,
15 elementary and secondary education as well as alternative learning systems for out-
16 of-school learners and those with special needs;
- 17 b) *Basic Education School* - refers to learning institutions accredited by the
18 Department of Education (DepEd) to deliver services addressing the intended basic
19 learning needs of students;
- 20 c) *Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs)/Indigenous Peoples (IPs)* - refer to the
21 same definition stated in Section 3(h), Chapter 2 of Republic Act No. 8371, or “The
22 Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act of 1997,” which describes it as “group of people

homogenous or societies identified by self-ascription and ascription by others, who have continuously lived as organized community on communally bounded and defined territory, and who have, under claims of ownership since time immemorial, occupied, possessed and utilized such territories, sharing common bonds of language, customs, traditions and other distinctive cultural traits, or who have, through resistance to political, social and cultural inroads of colonization, non-indigenous religions and culture, became historically differentiated from the majority of Filipinos. ICCs/IPs shall likewise include peoples who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, at the time of conquest or colonization, or at the time of inroads of non-indigenous religions and cultures, or the establishment of present state boundaries, who retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, but who may have been displaced from their traditional domains or who may have resettled outside their ancestral domains”, and

- d) *Last Mile Schools* - refer to public basic education schools with gaps in resources and facilities which are located in geographically isolated and disadvantaged and conflict-affected areas (GIDCA).

SEC. 4. *Establishment of Last Mile Schools.* – The Last Mile Schools Program is hereby established, under the administration of the DepEd, to cater to the basic education of learners throughout the country’s GIDCA.

The establishment of Last Mile Schools in locations situated by the ICCs shall be undertaken in consideration of the rights of the IPs, in accordance with Republic Act No. 8371.

SEC. 5. *Access to Education.* – The DepEd shall collaborate with concerned national government agencies for the delivery of the infrastructures necessary to ensure access to education in the Last Mile Schools, namely:

- a) Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), for the construction of access roads leading to Last Mile Schools;
- b) Department of Energy (DOE) and National Electrification Administration (NEA), for the installation of electricity; and
- c) Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), for the installation of information and communications technology.

SEC. 6. *Criteria.* – The indicators used in identifying a public school to be included among the Last Mile Schools are the following:

- a) Having less than four (4) classrooms;
- b) With makeshift or nonstandard rooms;
- c) Absence of or irregular electricity;
- d) Not having been allocated funds for repairs or new construction projects in the last four (4) years unless destroyed;
- e) With travel distance of more than one hour from the center of a city or municipality, or with difficulty of terrain or of such nature as to be considered having difficulty of access to existing educational institutions;

- f) Having multigrade classes or rooms;
- g) With less than five (5) teachers;
- h) Having a student population of less than one hundred (100) learners;
- i) With more than seventy-five percent (75%) IP learners; and
- j) Having such other circumstances that make it difficult for learners to access school facilities.

SEC. 7. *Implementation.* – The school building program for the Last Mile Schools shall be established and completed within a period of five (5) years after the effectivity of this Act.

To facilitate synchronicity, harmony and complementarity of plans, resources and efforts of both the national government and local government units (LGUs) towards the attainment of the objectives of this Act, the DepEd shall plan and implement the programs, projects, and activities that address the needs of the Last Mile Schools, in coordination and collaboration with the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), DPWH, DICT, DOE, NEA, Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), and concerned LGUs.

SEC. 8. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary for the implementation of this Act shall be included in the budgets of the concerned departments, agencies, and government-owned and controlled corporations in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 9. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days from the approval of this Act, the Secretary of Education shall, in consultation with the NCIP, DPWH, DICT, DOE, NEA, DSWD, DENR, NDRRMC, and Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines, formulate the rules and regulations implementing the provisions of this Act.

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

SEC. 11. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, orders, rules and regulations contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

SEC. 12. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,