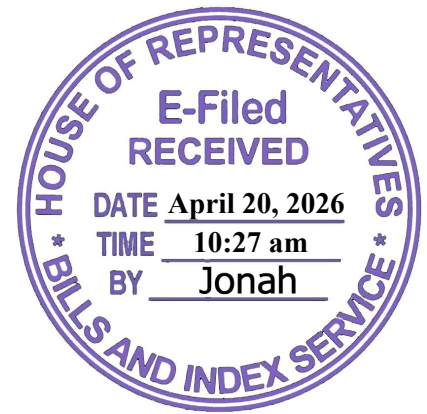


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
& Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **8881**



Introduced by Representative LEILA M. DE LIMA

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A FREE BREAKFAST PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS FROM KINDER TO GRADE 12 AND DAYCARE CENTERS, MANDATING DIRECT PROCUREMENT OF PRODUCE FROM LOCAL FARMERS AND FISHERFOLK PURSUANT TO REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11321, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "SAGIP SAKA ACT," TO ENHANCE CHILD HEALTH, NUTRITION, AND FOOD SECURITY, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article II, Section 13 of the 1987 Constitution provides that, "[t]he State recognizes the vital role of the youth in nation-building and shall promote and protect their physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual, and social well-being."

At present, the country is grappling with multiple crises that threaten the development of our youth, and by extension, that of the country's future. According to a recent study and data from the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM 2), Filipino student proficiency is in critical decline.¹ By the end of school year 2024-2025, only 30.52% of Grade 3 learners were considered proficient in key subjects, dropping to a staggering 0.40% by Grade 12, whereby mastery diminishes as students advance.² In the same year, 48.76% of learners were not reading at grade level by Grade 3, with the deficit compounding over time.³

This alarming finding is reflected even in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022 results, which showed the Philippines ranking 6th to the last in reading and mathematics and 3rd to the last in science among 81 countries.⁴ Further emphasizing the direness of the situation, in 2025, even the United Nations

¹ Lauengco, G. (11 February 2026). Crisis in education. Philippine News Agency. Retrieved from <https://www.pna.gov.ph/opinion/pieces/1153-crisis-in-education>.

² EDCOM 2 Communications. (26 January 2026). EDCOM II releases "Turning Point" report: Unveils 10-Year national roadmap to reverse education crisis. Retrieved from <https://edcom2.gov.ph/edcom-ii-releases-turning-point-report-unveils-10-year-national-roadmap-to-reverse-education-crisis/>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Lauengco, Crisis in Education.

Children's Fund (UNICEF) warned of a "real and widespread learning crisis" in the Philippines, citing data from a 2019 study that shows "90% of Filipino children in Grade 5 cannot read at their expected level, while 83% continue to struggle with basic mathematics."⁵ According to UNICEF Education Chief Akihiro Fushimi, the study's findings actually predate the COVID-19 pandemic, which has even worsened the country's education problem due to prolonged school closures and limited access to alternative learning, particularly among underprivileged and isolated communities.⁶ If left unaddressed, this education crisis may lead to the diminishing quality of a new generation of Filipino learners and workers, possibly posing problems to the country's human resource assets and economic future.

This systemic failure of the country's education sector is attributed to a wide array of factors. Among the primary factors identified, however, is stunting in the early years, which causes irreversible neurological damage even before they enter school. In 2023, 23.6% of Filipino children under five were stunted – a rate that remains higher than in many countries at a similar stage of development.⁷ According to the World Food Program (WFP), at least 1.7 million public school children in the Philippines remain malnourished, which contributes to poor academic performance nationwide.⁸ While existing school feeding programs of the government seek to address undernutrition, they still fall short in tackling broader nutrition issues like micronutrient deficiencies, with Filipino school children suffering from iron, vitamin, and zinc deficiencies that impact both the children's learning and long-term health.⁹

As such, there is a need for a more comprehensive school feeding program to sustainably address these issues affecting Filipino school children's health, nutrition, and education. This bill seeks to establish a comprehensive free breakfast program for all public school children from daycare to Grade 12. The program shall provide public school children with nutritious and fortified breakfast meals that adhere to national dietary and nutritional guidelines set by the Department of Health (DOH) and the National Nutrition Council (NNC). A nutritionist shall also be an integral part of the program, tasked with educating students, parents, and communities on healthy eating habits, proper nutrition, the benefits of fortified meals, and sustainable food consumption.

Additionally, the bill mandates direct procurement from local farmers and fisherfolk of not less than fifty percent (50%) of the produce required for the school feeding program. By doing this, the bill aims to ensure fresh, quality products for the public school children, sustainably support local economies, and implement the spirit of the Sagip Saka Act.

In the 20th Congress, a similar bill was filed by Senator Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan. This bill fully adopts Senator Kiko Pangilinan's SBN 219.

⁵ Cariaso, B. (18 June 2025). UNICEF official flags Philippines for major learning crisis. The Philippine Star. Retrieved from <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/06/18/2451334/unicef-official-flags-philippines-major-learning-crisis>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Philippine Institute for Development Studies and UNICEF. (October 2025). Raising the Bar – Understanding and Solving Chronic Malnutrition in the Philippines. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/philippines/reports/raising-bar>.

⁸ Cariaso, UNICEF official flags Philippines.

⁹ Ibid.

For the health, nutrition, and education of the Filipino youth, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



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AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A FREE BREAKFAST PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS FROM KINDER TO GRADE 12 AND DAYCARE CENTERS, MANDATING DIRECT PROCUREMENT OF PRODUCE FROM LOCAL FARMERS AND FISHERFOLK PURSUANT TO REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11321, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE “SAGIP SAKA ACT,” TO ENHANCE CHILD HEALTH, NUTRITION, AND FOOD SECURITY, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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 “*Free Breakfast*
2 *Program and Sustainable Agriculture Act.*”

3
4 SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to:

- 5 (a) Prioritize the health and nutritional well-being of all public school
6 children, recognizing that proper nutrition is crucial for their cognitive
7 development, academic performance, and overall growth;
8 (b) Address the pervasive issue of malnutrition, stunting, and learning
9 poverty among Filipino children;
10 (c) Strengthen the agricultural and fisheries sectors by providing stable and
11 direct market access for local farmers and fisherfolk, thereby boosting
12 their incomes, improving their quality of life, and contributing to national
13 food security;
14 (d) Promote a holistic and integrated approach to food systems, linking local
15 production directly to consumption within communities.

16
17 SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act:

- 18 (a) *Accredited Farmers' and Fisherfolk's Cooperatives and Associations*
19 refer to organizations of farmers and fisherfolk duly registered with the

Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) or other relevant government agencies, and recognized by the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of Education (DepEd) for the purpose of this Act;

(b) *Direct Procurement* refers to the direct purchase of agricultural and fishery products by the implementing agencies from accredited farmers' and fisherfolk's cooperatives and associations, bypassing intermediaries, consistent with the provisions and principles of Republic Act No. 11321, otherwise known as the "Sagip Saka Act;"

(c) *Fortified Meals* refer to meals that have been enhanced with essential vitamins and minerals to address micronutrient deficiencies, in accordance with national nutritional guidelines;

(d) *Local Farmers and Fisherfolk* refer to individual farmers, fisherfolk, or their duly authorized cooperatives and associations whose farms or fishing grounds are located within or in close proximity to the public schools or their respective localities;

(e) *Nutritionist* refers to a licensed nutritionist-dietitian who is qualified to provide expertise in health and nutrition education and planning;

(f) *Public School Children* refer to all enrolled students in public daycare centers, kindergarten, elementary, junior high school, and senior high school levels, including Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners within the jurisdiction of the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD);

(g) *School Feeding Program or Program* refers to the Free Breakfast Program established under this Act;

(h) *Sagip Saka Act* refers to Republic Act No. 11321, which aims to promote the welfare of farmers and fisherfolk by developing their enterprises and providing direct market access.

SEC. 4. *Establishment of the Free Breakfast Program.* – There is hereby established a Free Breakfast Program for all Public School Children from Daycare to Grade 12 in all public schools nationwide, hereinafter referred to as the School Feeding Program. The Department of Education (DepEd), in coordination with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) for daycare centers, shall be the primary implementing agency of this Program.

SEC. 5. *Program Components.* – The School Feeding Program shall include, but shall not be limited to the following components:

- 1 (a) Provision of Nutritious and Fortified Breakfasts. – Daily nutritious and
2 fortified breakfast meals shall be provided to all Public School Children,
3 adhering to national dietary and nutritional guidelines set by the
4 Department of Health (DOH) and the National Nutrition Council (NNC).
5 The meals shall be culturally appropriate and responsive to local food
6 preferences;
7
- 8 (b) Direct Procurement from Local Farmers and Fisherfolk. – To ensure
9 fresh, quality products, support local economies, and implement the
10 spirit of the Sagip Saka Act, a substantial portion, not less than fifty
11 percent (50%) of the produce required for the School Feeding Program
12 shall be directly procured from accredited Local Farmers and Fisherfolk,
13 or their cooperatives and associations. The procurement process shall
14 be streamlined, transparent, and shall prioritize their fair farmgate and
15 fisherfolk prices, consistent with the provisions and intent of Republic Act
16 No. 11321, otherwise known as the "Sagip Saka Act;"
17
- 18 (c) Integrated Nutrition Education, Behavioral Transformation, and Social
19 Mobilization. – The Program shall be complemented by a public health,
20 nutrition, and values campaign. A nutritionist shall be an integral part of
21 this complement, tasked with educating students, parents, and
22 communities on healthy eating habits, proper nutrition, the benefits of
23 fortified meals, and sustainable food consumption. Orientation-training
24 on the objectives and mechanics of the Program shall be conducted
25 among personnel of concerned National Government Agencies (NGAs)
26 and Local Government Units (LGUs), parent volunteers, and parent-
27 teacher associations (PTAs) to generate broad support. Concerned
28 NGAs shall also endeavor to mobilize community organizations to
29 continue nutrition education outside of the school;
30
- 31 (d) Monitoring and Evaluation. – A robust monitoring and evaluation system
32 shall be established to assess the Program's impact on children's
33 nutritional status, academic performance, school attendance, and the
34 economic benefits of farmers and fisherfolk; and
35
- 36 (e) Capacity Building. – Capacity building programs shall be provided to
37 accredited farmers' and fisherfolk's cooperatives and associations to
38 ensure consistent supply of quality produce, adherence to food safety
39 standards, and improved enterprise management.
40

41 SEC. 6. *Funding.* – The funds necessary for the implementation of this Act shall
42 be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA) under the respective
43 budgets of the Department of Education (DepEd), Department of Social Welfare and
44 Development (DSWD), and Department of Agriculture (DA). The implementing

1 agencies are authorized to seek and receive grants, donations, and other forms of
2 assistance from local and international sources, subject to existing government
3 accounting and auditing rules and regulations.
4

5 SEC. 7. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days from
6 the effectivity of this Act, the Department of Education (DepEd), in coordination with
7 the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of
8 Agriculture (DA), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), the
9 Department of Health (DOH), the National Nutrition Council (NNC), and other relevant
10 agencies, shall jointly promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective
11 implementation of this Act.
12

13 SEC. 8. *Separability Clause.* – If any section or provision of this Act is declared
14 invalid or unconstitutional, the sections or provisions not affected thereby shall
15 continue to be in full force and effect.
16

17 SEC. 9. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, presidential decrees, executive and
18 administrative orders, letters of instruction, rules and regulations, or parts thereof
19 inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, modified, or amended
20 accordingly.
21

22 SEC. 10. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its
23 publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation in the
24 Philippines.

Approved,