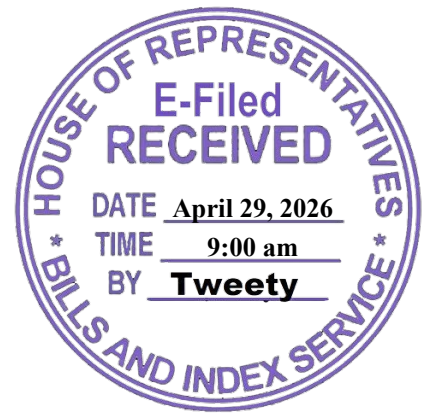




Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session



House Bill No. 8989

Introduced by CIBAC Party-List Representative
EDUARDO “BRO. EDDIE” C. VILLANUEVA

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The “Last Mile Schools Act” seeks to address the systemic educational gaps in the country’s most vulnerable and underserved areas by reinforcing the State policy to protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education. It specifically targets geographically isolated, disadvantaged, and conflict-affected areas (GIDCA) where access to basic education remains severely limited.

To ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of education interventions, the bill provides for inter-agency collaboration to deliver complementary basic services, including: a) access roads through the Department of Public Works and Highways, to enable safe and efficient travel to and from schools; b) electrification through the Department of Energy and the National Electrification Administration, to power modern learning facilities; and c) ICT infrastructure through the Department of Information and Communications Technology, to bridge the digital divide.

The bill explicitly protects the rights of indigenous cultural communities and ensures that the establishment and operations of Last Mile Schools respect their cultural traditions and comply with the Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act of 1997 (Republic Act No. 8371). For this purpose, one of the criteria for the identification of Last Mile Schools is that at least seventy-five percent (75%) of the student population that is 75 shall be composed of indigenous peoples.

The bill further mandates that Department of Education to design and implement context-specific programs for Last Mile Schools, including specialized training for teachers and school heads, appropriate staffing standards, and a distinct formula for maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE) that reflects the higher cost of delivering education in remote and hard-to-reach areas. DepEd is also mandated to ensure that the learning outcomes are not obscured by national averages and that specific gaps are systematically identified and addressed.

Recognizing the urgency of providing adequate, accessible, and culturally responsive education to learners in these areas, the bill provides for a time-bound five

(5)-year implementation period within which to construct, upgrade, and equip the necessary school facilities and support systems.

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


EDUARDO "BRO. EDDIE" C. VILLANUEVA



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HOUSE BILL NO. 8989

Introduced by CIBAC Party-List Representative
EDUARDO “BRO. EDDIE” C. VILLANUEVA

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING PUBLIC BASIC EDUCATION SCHOOLS IN GEOGRAPHICALLY ISOLATED AND 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*
2 *Act."*

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

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

13
14 The State shall improve the quality and access to basic education for children in
15 far-flung, isolated, disadvantaged, and conflict-affected areas, as well as those in Last
16 Mile Schools, by investing in school infrastructure, access roads, and programs
17 responsible for their unique contexts.

18
19 **SEC. 3. Definition of Terms.** – As used in this Act:

- 20
21 (a) **Basic Education** refers to the intended basic learning needs that provide
22 the foundation on which subsequent learning can be based. It includes
23 kindergarten, elementary and secondary education as well as alternative
24 learning systems for out-of-school learners and those with special needs;

- 1 (b) **Basic Education School** refers to learning institutions accredited by the
2 Department of Education (DepEd) to deliver services addressing the
3 intended basic learning needs of students;
- 4 (c) **Geographic Isolated and Disadvantaged and Conflict-Affected Areas**
5 **(GIDCA)** refer to schools or communities situated in remote or marginalized
6 locations, with limited access to essential services and infrastructure, or
7 impacted by conflict or insecurity;
- 8 (d) **Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs)/Indigenous Peoples (IPs)**
9 refer to the same definition stated in Section 3h, Chapter 2 of Republic Act
10 No. 8371, or The Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997, which describes
11 it as "a group of people or homogenous societies identified by self-
12 ascription and ascription by others, who have continuously lived as
13 organized community on communally bounded and defined territory, and
14 who have, under claims of ownership since time immemorial, occupied,
15 possessed and utilized such territories, sharing common bonds of language,
16 customs, traditions and other distinctive cultural traits, or who have, through
17 resistance to political, social and cultural inroads of colonization, non-
18 indigenous religions and cultures, became historically differentiated from
19 the majority of Filipinos. ICCs/IPs shall likewise include peoples who are
20 regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations
21 which inhabited the country, at the time of conquest or colonization, or at
22 the time of inroads of non-indigenous religions and cultures, or the
23 establishment of present state boundaries, who retain some or all of their
24 own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, but who may have
25 been displaced from their traditional domains or who may have resettled
26 outside their ancestral domains;" and
- 27 (e) **Last Mile Schools** refer to public basic education schools with gaps in
28 resources and facilities, which are located in GIDCA.

29
30 **SEC. 4. Establishment of Last Mile Schools.** – The Last Mile Schools are
31 hereby established, under the administration of the DepEd, to cater to the basic
32 education of learners throughout the country's GIDCA.

33
34 The establishment of Last Mile Schools in locations situated by the ICCs shall be
35 undertaken in consideration of the rights of the IPs, in accordance with Republic Act
36 No. 8371.

37
38 **SEC. 5. Access to Education.** – The DepEd shall collaborate with concerned
39 national government agencies for the delivery of the infrastructures necessary to
40 ensure access to education in the Last Mile Schools, namely:

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

47
48 **SEC. 6. Criteria.** – The indicators used in identifying a public school to be
49 considered a Last Mile School may include any of the following:
50

- (a) Having fewer than four (4) classrooms;
- (b) With makeshift or nonstandard rooms;
- (c) Absence of or irregular electricity;
- (d) Have not 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. Tailored Programs for Last Mile Schools. – The DepEd shall formulate and implement programs responsive to the unique context of Last Mile Schools, teachers, and learners, including but not limited to:

- (a) Learning delivery and intervention mechanisms;
- (b) School staffing standards, given the unique needs of learners in Last Mile Schools;
- (c) Formula for school maintenance and other operating expenses, in consultation with the Department of Budget and Management (DBM);
- (d) Learning tools and equipment;
- (e) Learner support services;
- (f) Relevant pre-service teacher education curriculum and assessment with the Teacher Education Council (TEC), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and the Professional Regulation Commission;
- (g) Relevant in-service training, through the National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP); and
- (h) Teacher, school head, and school evaluations, in coordination with the Civil Service Commission.

SEC 8. Implementation. – The school building program for 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 the 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), DBM, CSC, TEC, and concerned LGUs.

1 **SEC. 9. Reporting on Learner Outcomes.** – The DepEd shall assess and
2 report on learner outcomes separately for students enrolled in Last Mile Schools, to
3 ensure that progress and gaps are systematically monitored and addressed.
4

5 **SEC. 10. Policy Review.** – The DepEd shall review and revise existing relevant
6 policies, standards, and guidelines to directly address the specific conditions and
7 contexts of Last Mile Schools.
8

9 **SEC. 11. Appropriations.** – The amount necessary for the implementation of
10 this Act shall be included in the budgets of the concerned departments, agencies and
11 Government-Owned and Controlled Corporations in the annual General
12 Appropriations Act.
13

14 **SEC. 12. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** – Within ninety (90) days from
15 the approval of this Act, the Secretary of Education shall, in consultation with the NCIP,
16 DPWH, DICT, DOE, NEA, DSWD, DENR, NDRRMC, DBM, CSC, TEC, CHED, and
17 Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines, formulate the rules and regulations
18 implementing the provisions of this Act.
19

20 **SEC. 13. Separability Clause.** – If any portion or provision of this Act is declared
21 unconstitutional, the remainder hereof or any provisions not affected thereby shall
22 remain in force and effect.
23

24 **SEC. 14. Repealing Clause.** – Any law, presidential decree or issuance,
25 executive order, letter of instruction, rule, or regulation inconsistent with the provisions
26 of this Act is hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

27 **SEC. 15. Effectivity.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
28 complete publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.
29

30 *Approved,*