



Republic of the Philippines

House of Representatives

Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 18



**Introduced by Representatives Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez,
Andrew Julian K. Romualdez and Jude A. Acidre**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

It is the duty of the State to “protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.” The duty of the States also includes taking concrete steps towards achieving zero literacy by ensuring that the needs of the students are addressed, taking into consideration having adequate facilities and educational supplies and materials, accessible roads to schools and availability of teaching personnel.

The Last Mile Schools (LMS) Program of the Department of Education (DepEd) represents a significant step towards inclusive education in the Philippines. Schools identified as LMS are those with less than four classrooms, less than five teachers, with multi-grade classes for a student population of less than 100 - majority of them belonging to indigenous peoples (IPs) community. In terms of facilities, LMS classrooms are makeshift or non-standard rooms with no electricity. Most of these LMS are located in geographically isolated and disadvantaged and conflict-affected areas (GIDCAs) with difficult terrain or where travel distance requires more than one hour from the town center.

The LMS Program aims to bridge the educational gap between remote and urban communities, ensuring that every Filipino child in GIDCAs has access to quality education. In 2019, more than 9,000 LMS were identified by the DepEd across different regions in the country.

To ensure equitable access to education, most especially for those in GIDCAs, this bill aims to realize a five-year roadmap of the education system that shall bridge the gap and navigate the way towards the development of families and communities through education. It shall strengthen multi-sectoral linkages through the convergence between the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and the DepEd and improve access and provision of quality, equitable, culture-based, and complete education.

We acknowledge Representatives Roman T. Romulo, Joey Sarte Salceda, Yedda Marie K. Romualdez, Jude A. Acidre, and Elizaldy S. Co, among others, for filing this bill during the Nineteenth Congress and was approved on Third Reading.

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



FERDINAND MARTIN G. ROMUALDEZ



JUDE A. ACIDRE



ANDREW JULIAN K. ROMUALDEZ



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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
2 Schools Act”.

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

7
8 The State recognizes and promotes the rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities
9 within the framework of national unity and development. To this end, the State
10 shall recognize the right of indigenous families and communities to retain shared
11 responsibility for 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 of children in

1 the far-flung, isolated, disadvantaged and conflict-affected areas, as well as those
2 in Last Mile Schools, by investing on school infrastructures and roads leading to
3 the said public schools.

4

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

6

7 (a) *Basic education* refers to the intended basic learning needs which
8 provide the foundation on which subsequent learning can be based. It
9 includes kindergarten, elementary and secondary education as well as
10 alternative learning systems for out-of-school learners and those with
11 special needs;

12

13 (b) *Basic Education School* refers to learning institutions accredited by the
14 Department of Education (DepEd) to deliver services addressing the
15 intended basic learning needs of students;

16

17 (c) *Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs)/Indigenous Peoples (IPs)*
18 refer to the same definition stated in Section 3h, Chapter 2 of
19 Republic Act No. 8371, or “The Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act of
20 1997”, which describes it as “group of people or homogenous societies
21 identified by self-ascription and ascription by others, who have
22 continuously lived as organized community on communally bounded
23 and defined territory, and who have, under claims of ownership since
24 time immemorial, occupied, possessed and utilized such territories,
25 sharing common bonds of language, customs, traditions and other
26 distinctive cultural traits, or who have, through resistance to political,
27 social and cultural inroads of colonization, non-indigenous religions
28 and cultures, became historically differentiated from the majority of
29 Filipinos. ICCs/IPs shall likewise include peoples who are regarded as
30 indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which
31 inhabited the country, at the time of conquest or colonization, or at the
32 time of inroads of non-indigenous religions and cultures, or the
33 establishment of present state boundaries, who retain some or all of
34 their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, but
35 who may have been displaced from their traditional domains or who may
36 have resettled outside their ancestral domains”; and

37

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

41

42 **SEC. 4. *Establishment of Last Mile Schools.*** – The Last Mile Schools

1 are hereby established, under the administration of the DepEd, to cater to the
2 basic education of learners throughout the country's GIDCA.

3

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

7

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

- 11
- 12 (a) Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), for the
13 construction of access roads leading to the location of Last Mile Schools;
14 (b) Department of Energy (DOE) and National Electrification
15 Administration (NEA), for the installation of electricity; and
16 (c) Department of Information and Communications Technology
17 (DICT), for the installation of information and communications
18 technology.

19

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

- 22
- 23 (a) Having less than four (4) classrooms;
24 (b) With makeshift or nonstandard rooms;
25 (c) Absence of or irregular electricity;
26 (d) Have not been allocated funds for repairs or new construction
27 projects in the last four (4) years unless destroyed;
28 (e) With travel distance of more than one hour from the center of a city or
29 municipality, or with difficulty of terrain or of such nature as to be
30 considered having difficulty of access to existing educational
31 institutions;
32 (f) Having multigrade classes or rooms;
33 (g) With less than five (5) teachers;
34 (h) Having a student population of less than one hundred (100) learners;
35 (i) With more than seventy-five percent (75%) IP learners; and
36 (j) Having such other circumstances that make it difficult for learners to
37 access school facilities.

38

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

1
2 To facilitate synchronicity, harmony and complementarity of plans,
3 resources and efforts of both the national government and the local government
4 units (LGUs) towards the attainment of the objectives of this Act, the DepEd shall
5 plan and implement the programs, projects, and activities that address the needs
6 of the Last Mile Schools, in coordination and collaboration with the National
7 Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), DPWH, DICT, DOE, NEA,
8 Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of
9 Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), National Disaster Risk
10 Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), and concerned LGUs.

11
12 **SEC. 8. Appropriations.** – The amount necessary for the implementation of
13 this Act shall be included in the budgets of the concerned Departments, agencies
14 and Government-Owned and Controlled Corporations in the annual General
15 Appropriations Act.

16
17 **SEC. 9. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** – Within ninety (90)
18 days from the approval of this Act, the Secretary of Education shall, in
19 consultation with the NCIP, DPWH, DICT, DOE, NEA, DSWD, DENR,
20 NDRRMC, and Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines, formulate the
21 rules and regulations implementing the provisions of this Act.

22
23 **SEC. 10. Separability Clause.** – If any provision of this Act is held
24 invalid or unconstitutional, the other provisions not so declared shall remain in
25 force and effect.

26
27 **SEC. 11. Repealing Clause.** – All laws, decrees, orders and rules and
28 regulations contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby
29 repealed or amended accordingly.

30
31 **SEC. 12. Effectivity.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
32 publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

33
34 Approved,