

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 6837



Introduced by
ACT Teachers Party-List Rep. FRANCE L. CASTRO,
BAYAN MUNA Party-List Rep. CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE,
Rep. FERDINAND GAITE and Rep. EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT,
GABRIELA Women's Party Rep. ARLENE D. BROSAS,
and KABATAAN Party-List Rep. SARAH JANE I. ELAGO

AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR ONE DOCTOR AND ONE NURSE
FOR EVERY PUBLIC ELEMENTARY AND HIGH SCHOOL

EXPLANATORY NOTE

More than 27 million Filipino children and youth—the latest estimated population in public elementary and high schools—spend a third of their daily lives at school. For many, especially those in far-flung areas where public hospitals and clinics are even rarer than schools, the school is the first and the most accessible point of contact with health services. Public schools, therefore, have the potential of being the place where children can be provided with preventive, curative, and supportive health interventions.

Recognizing this potential, the World Health Organization, as early as 1995 through its Global School Health Initiative, has formally urged its member states including the Philippines to make every school an “entry point for health promotion and a location for health intervention”; to develop policies, legislation, and guidelines which are supportive of school health; and to provide teachers and school staff with the necessary support to enable them to promote school health.

The provision of a licensed doctor and nurse for every public school is one way to comply with these recommendations, and will ensure appropriate, adequate, and professional medical attention for the Filipino student.

This bill also answers a constant concern of public school teachers: They are often given loads or assignments to act as “teacher-nurses” for the school and the ones usually called to respond whenever a student is injured by accident or otherwise. Aside from adding to teachers’ tasks and contributing to their overworked situation, this practice exposes teachers to


accusations of not giving the proper treatment or aggravating injuries. Worse, they are vulnerable to charges of illegal practice of medicine or nursing and at risk of losing their own license to teach. Students are also exposed in this set-up, as they do not receive the necessary and adequate medical response.

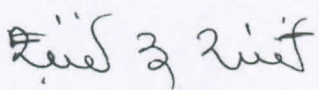
Various laws and administrative issuances of the Department of the Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education, such as the *DepEd School Health Manual*, the *DepEd Educational Facilities Manual*, the *Manual of Regulations for Private Schools*, and the *Manual of Regulations for Private Higher Education*, to name a few, require private schools in basic and tertiary education to provide health facilities and services. There should therefore be no reason for the absence of doctors and nurses in public schools in basic education.


Doctors and nurses directly attending to children where they are found—at school—is a standard contemplated by a genuine universal health care program, and a just and guaranteed investment of taxpayers' funds. Furthermore, this will go a long way towards improving both health and education, two of the most basic rights of the Filipino.

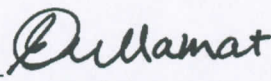
This global direction of making schools as “entry points for health promotion and a locations for health intervention” is even more urgent now that our country is in the middle of a fight against the novel coronavirus—anticipated to be a long-term one—and government is considering the reopening of schools. A return to the “new normal” should pertain to a return to what is *ideal*, especially where the best interests of children are concerned, and not simply a return to what has been, which is *far from ideal*. Approval of this bill will guarantee that medical solutions are indeed front and center in the government’s anti-COVID response.

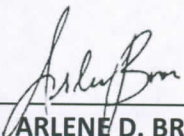
For the foregoing reasons, urgent approval of this bill is sought.



Rep. FRANCE L. CASTRO
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Section 1. *Short Title.* This Act shall be known as the *Doctors and Nurses in Schools Act of 2020*.

Section 2. *Declaration of Policy.* The State shall protect the rights and promote the welfare of the child in accordance with the 1987 Constitution and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly by ensuring that the school, one of the core institutions charged with the development of the youth, has enough personnel and facilities to fully promote the child's right to health.

Section 3. *Doctors and Nurses in Public Schools.* Upon effectivity of this Act, the Department of Education (DepEd) shall ensure that there is at least one doctor and one nurse, duly licensed by the Professional Regulation Commission, stationed in each large public elementary and high school, and one doctor and one nurse per cluster of small schools. The DepEd, in coordination with the Department of Health (DOH), shall categorize schools into large and small schools considering the most manageable doctor-student and nurse-student ratios.

After a year of implementation and in consideration of the annual increase of the student population, School Heads shall undertake periodic evaluations as to the necessity of providing for additional doctors and nurses in their respective schools and shall make the corresponding recommendations to DepEd.

For purposes of this Act, the provision of school doctors and nurses shall include the provision of the standard equipment or facilities for them to respond to emergencies and diseases common to the immediate community, such as the standard health and/or emergency kits.

Section 4. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* Within thirty (30) days after effectivity of this Act, the DepEd, in consultation with the Department of Budget and Management and the DOH, shall promulgate the rules and regulations necessary for its implementation. These shall include the categorization of schools and the doctor-student and nurse-student ratios as provided in Section 3.

Section 5. *Appropriations.* Upon effectivity of this Act, the amounts necessary for its implementation shall be charged against the savings of the DepEd. Thereafter, the funds shall be provided in the annual General Appropriations Act.

Section 6. *Separability Clause.* Should any provision of this Act be held unconstitutional, all other provisions not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

Section 7. *Repealing Clause.* All laws, decrees, rules and regulations, and other issuances inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

Section 8 *Effectivity Clause.* This Act shall take fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or one (1) newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,