

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 1558

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Introduced by HONORABLE LUIS RAYMUND "LRAY" F. VILLAFUERTE, JR.
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EXPLANATORY NOTE

A study conducted by the Food and Nutrition Research Institute shows malnutrition is prevalent in Filipino children¹. Results showed that 15.9% or two out of ten children from 0 to 47 months old were born with low birth weight or were less than 5.5 lbs.²

The results also showed that 20.2% of children in this category were underweight, while 33.6% were stunted or had lower heights for their age. 7.3% of the children suffered from acute malnutrition.³

In the five to ten years old category, results were much higher. 32% of children in this category were underweight while 33.6% had low heights for their age. The percentage of children suffering acute malnutrition was 8.5%.⁴

Without a doubt, proper nutrition is necessary to have a fulfilling and healthy life. High malnutrition levels lead to development issues and an increase in poverty in regions like the Philippines.⁵

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, due to the lack of nourishing food sources and nutrition education, hunger and malnutrition are still dominant in the Philippines. In fact, these problems have been linked with high rates of poverty and an ever growing population.

¹ <http://fnri.dost.gov.ph/index.php/nutrition-statistic>

² Ibid

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ <https://www.wfp.org/countries/philippines>

Though the national government has exerted effort to reduce hunger and malnutrition, still four in ten households in the Philippines are unable to provide their children nutritionally adequate meals according to the FNRI.⁶

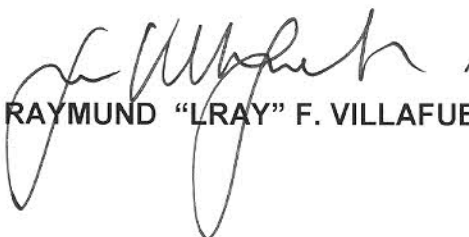
Fighting malnutrition in the Philippines is a difficult task, but it should not be considered unimportant. The betterment of the Philippines' future relies on its children; children who need proper nutrition to grow into healthy adults. Government funding and continued education are key to fighting malnutrition in the Philippines.

This bill seeks to halt the vicious cycle of hunger and poverty in the Philippines.

The bill has the following salient points:

1. It institutionalizes the "Libreng Pananghalian sa Pampublikong Paaralan" Program and for its feasible implementation. Initially, school children in the elementary levels including kindergarten in public schools shall be given free nutritious meals. Following the K-12 Policy, it shall cover pupils in the Kindergarten and Grades I-VI. On its third year of implementation, the Program shall cover all levels of public elementary schools including kindergarten and Junior High School Level of the K-12 Policy. On its fifth year of implementation, the Program shall cover both elementary and high school levels in the K -12 public education sector.
2. As the legislation recognizes administrative and resources limitations, public schools in areas where severe malnutrition are reported, armed conflict and highly congested shall be prioritized.
3. Private sector support is encouraged in this Act. It can be through their respective Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities or through simple donations to public schools.
4. A unified body composed of relevant government agencies is created. The reason is to have an integrated approach to oversee the meaningful implementation of the Program.

Pursuant to the Philippine Agenda 21, the only rational way of planning the country's national progress is through sustainable development: meeting the needs of citizens of today without limiting the options of future generations to fulfill their needs. Hence, the immediate approval of this bill is earnestly sought.


LUIS RAYMUND "LRAY" F. VILLAFUERTE, JR.

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HOUSE BILL NO. 1558

Introduced by HONORABLE LUIS RAYMUND “LRAY” F. VILLAFUERTE, JR.

AN ACT INSTITUTING A FREE NUTRI-MEALS PROGRAM TO CHILDREN ENROLLED IN ALL ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS INCLUDING KINDERGARTEN AND HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE K-12 PUBLIC EDUCATION SECTOR, PROVIDING FRAMEWORK FOR ITS MEANINGFUL IMPLEMENTATION, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

Section 1. *Title* - This Act shall be known as the “*Libreng Pananghalian sa Pampublikong Paaralan Act of 2016*.”

Section 2. Declaration of Policy. It is a declared policy of the State that it shall promote a just and dynamic social order that will ensure an improved quality of life for all. Towards this end, it is the objective of this Act to provide a government-united and practical feasible approach to address the issue of malnutrition and hunger among school children in public elementary schools including kindergarten and high schools through the institutionalization of the *Libreng Pananghalian sa Pampublikong Paaralan* Program (the “Program” for brevity).

Section 3. *Libreng Pananghalian sa Pampublikong Paaralan* - To improve nutrition, health, class attendance, attentiveness and academic performance in school, as well as to increase the sociability of children in public elementary and high schools, *Libreng Pananghalian sa Pampublikong Paaralan* Program is hereby institutionalized.

The Program is a nutrition-driven initiative and is a free nutri-meals program for school children enrolled in public schools. The food shall be served at the start of the class for five (5) days a week and to complete the duration of one hundred and twenty (120) feeding days. The duration of the feeding program may be extended depending on the assessment and evaluation of its beneficiaries.

The Program shall follow a 5-year full implementation phase. The Program shall be initially implemented in all public elementary schools including kindergarten centers (Kindergarten to Grade VI, following the K-12 Policy).

On the third year after the enactment of this Act, the Program shall be implemented in all public elementary schools including kindergarten and in the Junior High School levels following the K-12 Policy.

On the fifth year of its implementation, its implementation shall be simultaneous in all levels in the elementary and kindergarten and secondary education, covering both Junior and Senior High School Levels.

Provided, That prioritization in the implementation of this Act shall be accorded to: (a) schools located in areas where there is severe malnutrition; (b) schools where there are numerous "severely wasted" pupils reported; (c) schools located in areas of armed conflict; and (d) schools located in highly congested areas.

Section 4. Child Nutrition Network. - There is hereby created a body called the Child Nutrition Network (CNN) to implement the Program. It shall be composed of the Department of Education (DepEd), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Department of Agriculture (DA), the National Nutrition Council (NNC), the Food and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI), the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and the Department of Health (DOH). The Secretary of DepEd and the Secretary of DSWD shall be Co-Chairpersons of the CNN.

The CNN shall then establish a Nutrition Framework for its implementation. The Nutrition Framework, among others, will serve as blueprint containing the following:

- (a) integrated package of nutrition services;
- (b) institutionalization of a system of qualification, accreditation and the corresponding incentives for private corporations;
- (c) development of a database of information, knowledge and best practices for nutrition programs;
- (d) food and health aspects of school-based implementation to ensure the proper nutritional and caloric contents of meals to be given, among others;
- (e) Standard weighing protocols and instruments to be utilized in schools;
- (f) Program cost per student per meal and administration costs and the continuing re-examination and re-evaluation of said costs;
- (g) monitoring progress report on children;

- (h) participation of communities and civil society and private-public sector partnership; and
- (i) other details necessary for the efficient and proper implementation of the program.

Section 5. *Integrated Nutrition Education and Social Preparation.* - The Program shall be complemented by public health and nutrition education campaign programs, which will aim to promote a holistic and integrated approach to health and nutrition education of school pupils. For this purpose, relevant and user-friendly nutrition information and education materials shall be developed and distributed in the public school. Orientation-training shall be held among DepEd health and nutrition unit personnel at the regional and division levels, concerned local government representatives, and the parent-teacher associations (PTAs), in order to orient them on the Program's objectives and mechanics and generate support for the Program.

Section 6. *Periodic Health Examination.* A simultaneous health examination including relevant vaccination and de-worming of all school pupils shall be undertaken before the start of the Program, and shall be conducted by either the respective local Health Officer or Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNS). Children found with ailments shall be given proper treatment and referred to hospitals. Class Advisers shall note the progress of each pupil for the entire duration of the implementation of this program. The respective Principals shall submit a quarterly progress report to the Division Superintendent. The Division Superintendent shall submit the consolidated reports to the Child Nutrition Network.

Section 7. *Role of the Department of Education (DepEd).* - The Department of Education shall be responsible for institutionalizing the Program in the public education system, which will:

- (a) Provide free lunch meals to all public elementary and high school children;
- (b) Ensure that the standard lunch meals meet the required nutritional level for school pupils, in coordination with the NNC; and
- (c) Put in place a system of effective sourcing, procurement and delivery of the required raw materials and other necessary inputs.

Section 8. *Role of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).* The DSWD shall identify the priority areas, in the provinces, cities and municipalities where malnutrition rates are most severe, as may be determined by the NNC. As such, the DSWD shall closely coordinate with the local government units concerned regarding the identification of priority areas, implementation and periodic monitoring of this program.

For the first two (2) years of the Program, the DSWD shall facilitate the piloting of the Program using the National Household Targeting System For Poverty Reduction.

Section 9. Role of the Department of Agriculture (DA). - The Department of Agriculture (DA) and its attached agencies shall identify and accredit farmers, farmers' organizations or farmer's cooperatives, who can supply good quality fresh fruits, vegetables, milk, nutritious drinks and other healthy food and drinks.

The DA, as far as practicable, shall identify the farmers and farmers' organizations from the locality where the feeding program is to be administered. The farmers shall be chosen pursuant to a transparent and fair selection system, which the Department of Agriculture shall design, promulgate, and implement. The DA shall likewise provide technical assistance for a cost-effective vegetable and rice farming within the school premises, whenever applicable. The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) shall provide technical assistance in the development of cost-effective ways of raising fish resources that are available in the locality.

Section 10. Role of the Department of Health (DOH). - The DOH shall identify the fruits, vegetables, and other healthy food which are appropriate for the feeding programs in the specified locality and shall recommend these to the DA for purchasing. The DOH shall also enlist personnel or volunteers from the locality, preferably from the Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs).

With the assistance of the TESDA, the DOH shall provide technical assistance in the training on the proper and healthy preparation, cooking, and, other healthy practices in relation to the Programs.

Section 11. Role of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG). - The DILG shall implement an effective monitoring system that will be implemented through the Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNS), and shall institutionalize a fair and progressive system of compensation and incentives for the BNS, which shall likewise be sourced from the funding of the national feeding program in the public education system. The DILG shall issue memorandum circulars which will institutionalize a subsidized funding scheme for the 5th and 6th class municipalities and a national-local counter parting scheme for 3rd and 4th class municipalities.

Section 12. Role of the Local Government Units (LGUs). - The full implementation of the objectives of this Act shall be with the partnership and cooperation of the concerned LGU, which may also release counterpart funding or provide other services should it deem necessary or available. This role is pursuant to the enshrined principle in the Local Government Code that capabilities of local government units shall be enhanced by providing them with opportunities to participate actively in the implementation of national programs and projects.

Section 13. Private Sector Participation. - Private sector partnership is encouraged in this Act. The private entity can in the form of their Corporate Social Responsibility donate or adopt a school as a beneficiary of the Program in cooperation with the concerned agencies identified in this Act or directly organized and coordinated with the DepEd.

For purposes of this provision, the DepEd in coordination with the Department of Finance and other relevant government agencies may provide in a guideline a system of incentives including but not limited to creditable expenses in income tax, or discount in business permits registration or other assistance.

Section 14. *Appropriation.* - The amount of Ten Billion pesos (Php10,000,000,000.00) is hereby appropriated for the implementation of this Program and shall be sourced from the proceeds of Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) and Philippine Gaming and Amusements Corporation (PAGCOR). Initially, a substantial portion shall be sourced from the Social Fund of the Office or the President.

The funds shall be administered by the CNN.

Thereafter, such sum necessary for its continuous implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

All expenditure, disbursement of funds, and other activities made under the Program shall be subject to existing government auditing and accounting rules and regulations.

Section. 15. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* - The CNN shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations implementing the provisions of this Act, within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act. Each of the member national government agencies and instrumentalities shall likewise promulgate the necessary internal memoranda, circulars and other order to institutionalize the program within their respective offices, not later than the date to be determined by the CNN. .

Section. 16. *Repealing Clause.* - All laws, decreed and orders or parts thereof which are contrary to or inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly. Nothing in this Act shall affect the existing food programs being implemented by other government agencies.

Section. 17. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its complete publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation, whichever comes earlier.

Approved.