S. No. 1937
H. No. 4745

Republic of the Philippines
Congress of the Philippines
Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress

First Regular Session

Begun and held in Metro Manila, on Monday, the twenty-eighth day of July, two thousand twenty-five.

[REPUBLIC ACT NO. 12321]

AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC BASIC EDUCATION SCHOOLS IN GEOGRAPHICALLY ISOLATED AND DISADVANTAGED AREAS (GIDA) AND UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the "Last Mile and GIDA Schools Act".

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – The State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and take appropriate steps to make education accessible to all.

The State also recognizes the accessibility of school sites as an essential component of the right to basic education. Education planning, school mapping, and school infrastructure development shall be guided by the principle that learners must have reasonable geographic access to a basic education school that is compliant with national education facilities standards.

The State shall improve the quality of and access to basic education for children in far-flung, isolated, disadvantaged, and conflict-affected areas, as well as those in Last Mile and GIDA Schools, by investing in school infrastructures, access roads, and programs responsive to their unique contexts.

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

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

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

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

(c) *Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA)* refer to remote or marginalized areas or communities with limited access to essential services and infrastructure and may include areas impacted by conflict or insecurity;

(d) *Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs)/Indigenous Peoples (IPs)* refer to a group of people or homogenous societies identified by self-ascription and ascription by others,

who have continuously lived as an organized community on communally bounded and defined territory, and who have, under claims of ownership since time immemorial, occupied, possessed and utilized such territories, sharing common bonds of language, customs, traditions, and other distinctive cultural traits, or who have, through resistance to political, social, and cultural inroads of colonization, non-indigenous religions and cultures, become historically differentiated from the majority of Filipinos. ICCs/IPs shall likewise include peoples who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, at the time of conquest or colonization, or at the time of inroads of non-indigenous religions and cultures, or the establishment of present state boundaries, who retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural, and political institutions, but who may have been displaced from their traditional domains or have resettled outside their ancestral domains; and

(e) *Last Mile and GIDA Schools* refer to public schools located in remote, hard-to-reach, underserved, or economically disadvantaged communities where access to safe, adequate, and quality basic education is significantly constrained by limitations in infrastructure, resources, personnel, and prevailing social and environmental conditions.

SEC. 4. *Institutionalization of the Last Mile and GIDA Schools Program.* – The Last Mile and GIDA Schools Program is hereby institutionalized under the administration of the DepEd to address gaps in resources, facilities, and other essential education inputs in schools and communities that have not met standard allocation criteria, particularly in the GIDAs: *Provided,* That an area may be identified for the establishment of a new Last Mile and GIDA School pursuant to this Act.

The DepEd shall promulgate guidelines, based on evidence and measurable criteria, for the identification of schools and areas to be covered by the Program and aligned with the policy and objectives of this Act. Such guidelines shall be subject to periodic review and updating to ensure continued relevance and responsiveness to prevailing conditions.

For purposes of this Act, the indicators used in identifying a public school as a Last Mile and GIDA School may include the following:

(a) With more than seventy-five percent (75%) IP learners;

(b) Located in or serving communities affected by conflict, insecurity, disaster vulnerability, or other conditions that significantly impede safe access to education; and

(c) Any other indicators that the DepEd may deem necessary as criteria for the identification of Last Mile and GIDA Schools.

The establishment of Last Mile and GIDA Schools within ancestral domains shall be undertaken in accordance with Republic Act No. 8371 or "The Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997", including compliance with Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) requirements.

SEC. 5. *Access to Basic Education School Sites.* – The DepEd shall adopt and implement a national school accessibility standard to guide school siting, school mapping, and infrastructure programming for public basic education schools, including Last Mile and GIDA Schools.

The accessibility standard for these school sites must include that:

(a) Students shall have access to a basic education school within a walkable distance of three (3) kilometers from their place of residence;

(b) The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) shall ensure that access roads leading to the school sites are constructed and maintained in accordance with Batas Pambansa Blg. 344 or the "Accessibility Law", and universal design concepts to ensure their accessibility and the mobility of all learners; and

(c) Where access is not feasible due to terrain, geography, or safety considerations, the DepEd and local government units (LGUs) concerned shall provide support services to learners through the provision of alternative delivery modes and transportation, respectively.

This standard shall be periodically reviewed and integrated into school planning systems and inter-agency coordination, subject to considerations of safety and feasibility.

SEC. 6. *Development of the National Last Mile and GIDA Schools Mapping System.* – Within one (1) year from the effectivity of this Act, the DepEd shall develop and publish a National Last Mile and GIDA Schools Map which shall serve as the basis for planning, resource allocation, and program implementation under this Act. The DepEd shall review and update the Last Mile and GIDA Schools Map at least once every three (3) years to ensure responsiveness to changing conditions and educational needs.

SEC. 7. *Access to Education through Multi-Stakeholder Support.* – To ensure access to education in Last Mile and GIDA Schools, the DepEd shall collaborate with concerned national government agencies (NGAs), LGUs, civil society organizations (CSOs) and other stakeholders, including the following:

(a) LGUs and CSOs, for the construction, upgrading, and community-based support of Last Mile and GIDA Schools, including construction of local/provincial roads leading to such schools;

(b) DPWH, for the construction of access roads, particularly national highways, connecting local roads or leading to the location of Last Mile and GIDA Schools;

(c) Department of Energy (DOE) and National Electrification Administration (NEA), for the installation and provision of electricity;

(d) Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), for the installation of information and communications technology and connectivity;

(e) National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), for compliance with the process of obtaining the FPIC of concerned ICCs/IPs in cases where a Last Mile and GIDA School or access road is to be established within ancestral domains;

(f) Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), and the Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA) or relevant water

regulatory units, for the provision of adequate and safe water; and

(g) Department of Transportation (DOTr), in coordination with LGUs, for ensuring the availability of safe, reliable, and accessible public transportation services to and from Last Mile and GIDA Schools, including the planning, development, and coordination of transport routes and services aligned with access roads and local conditions.

The support for Last Mile and GIDA Schools and their access roads within ancestral domains shall be undertaken in consideration of the rights of the concerned ICCs/IPs to their ancestral domain and to FPIC, in accordance with Republic Act No. 8371.

For purposes of implementing partnerships under Section 7(a), the DepEd shall establish guidelines for the engagement of CSOs through Memoranda of Agreement and other community-based partnership modalities, adopting context-responsive and streamlined procedures to facilitate timely delivery of school infrastructure in GIDA areas. The DepEd may likewise engage the Armed Forces of the Philippines in the construction of Last Mile and GIDA School infrastructure in priority, conflict-affected, disaster-prone, or hard-to-reach areas.

SEC. 8. *Construction Standards for Last Mile and GIDA Schools.* – School buildings and related facilities under this Act shall comply with the minimum standards and specifications prescribed by the DepEd for public school infrastructure: *Provided,* That, where full compliance with these minimum standards and specifications is not feasible, the DepEd shall prescribe appropriate and context-responsive standards specifically for Last Mile and GIDA Schools. Such standards shall ensure that all school facilities remain safe, durable, accessible, climate- and disaster-resilient, and suitable to the geographic, cultural, and environmental conditions of the communities they serve.

When practicable, the DepEd shall integrate the use of bamboo, engineered bamboo, and other sustainable, locally sourced materials in the design, construction, repair, and rehabilitation of public school buildings and facilities: *Provided,* That the use of such materials shall strictly

comply with the building codes, safety metrics, structural standards and guidelines set forth by relevant regulatory bodies to ensure the structural integrity and disaster resilience of the school infrastructure.

The construction of Last Mile and GIDA Schools shall be subject to applicable environmental laws, including Republic Act No. 11038 or the "Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System Act of 2018", and Presidential Decree No. 705 or the "Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines", in coordination with the DENR.

SEC. 9. *Programs for Last Mile and GIDA Schools.* – The DepEd shall formulate and implement programs responsive to the unique context of Last Mile and GIDA Schools, teachers, and learners, including, among others, the following:

(a) Learning delivery and intervention mechanisms, including alternative learning modalities;

(b) Formula for school maintenance and other operating expenses, in consultation with the Department of Budget and Management (DBM);

(c) Learning tools and equipment;

(d) Learner support services, including psychological and socio-emotional support, feeding programs and other health and nutrition interventions, tutoring, mentoring, and other individualized interventions;

(e) Water and sanitation facilities;

(f) Access to electricity;

(g) DepEd computerization; and

(h) Prioritization in the Adopt-a-School Program under Republic Act No. 8525 or the "Adopt-a-School Act of 1998".

For Last Mile and GIDA Schools in ancestral domains, the curriculum shall integrate Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSP), indigenous languages, and community-validated cultural narratives, in coordination with the NCIP and consistent with Republic Act No. 8371.

SEC. 10. *Targeted Support for Teachers and Non-Teaching Personnel in Last Mile and GIDA Schools.* – The DepEd, in coordination with the DBM, concerned LGUs, and other relevant agencies, shall provide a comprehensive support package for teachers and non-teaching personnel assigned to Last Mile and GIDA Schools, which shall include:

(a) Additional Compensation and Allowances – Teaching and non-teaching personnel under the Program may be eligible for additional compensation and allowances, separate from existing benefits, which may include, but are not limited to, special hardship allowance and mobility assistance, including transportation support for deployment and periodic travel, as may be applicable to their respective circumstances;

(b) Housing and Accommodation Support – The DepEd, in coordination with concerned LGUs, may provide accommodation support, especially for relocated school personnel, which may include the construction of quarters where feasible, rental or housing subsidies, or partnerships with LGUs and communities for safe local housing;

(c) Professional Development and Teacher Pipeline – The DepEd shall strengthen teacher preparation and retention through relevant in-service trainings, scholarships, and bridging programs through the National Educators Academy of the Philippines, in coordination with the Teacher Education Council (TEC). In support of this, the TEC shall undertake the following:

(1) Develop contextualized pre-service teacher education and graduate program curriculum;

(2) Affirm career stages to establish progression pathways;

(3) Develop scholarships and teacher education support programs for pre-service teachers from GIDAs and ICCs/IPs, linked to return-to-service obligations in Last Mile and GIDA Schools, including the institutionalization of a Teacher Education Scholarship Program for GIDA communities; and

(4) Develop a system for adding credit points in the evaluation of teachers and school heads in Last Mile and GIDA Schools, for purposes of scholarship grants and other career advancement opportunities; and

(d) Localized Recruitment and Engagement Mechanisms – The DepEd shall promote community-based and context-responsive staffing:

(1) Hiring of qualified teachers as prescribed under Republic Act No. 8190, entitled "An Act Granting Priority to Residents of the Barangay, Municipality or City Where the School is Located, in the Appointment or Assignment of Classroom Public School Teachers";

(2) Prioritizing the hiring of essential non-teaching personnel who are residents of, willing to reside in, or culturally connected to the local community, and who demonstrate proficiency in the local language;

(3) Adopting provisional or alternative deployment pathways for qualified individuals, including deployment as Learning Support Aides, subject to appropriate safeguards, and implementing a direct hiring and placement program for qualified candidates from GIDAs; and

(4) Engaging IKSP educators, culture-bearers, tradition-keepers, and other recognized indigenous resource persons as essential partners in the delivery of contextualized education. The DepEd and NCIP shall establish mechanisms for their engagement, including recognition protocols appropriate to their cultural roles and contributions.

SEC. 11. *Role of Local School Boards.* – The Local School Boards shall:

(a) Coordinate with the DepEd in the identification of Last Mile and GIDA Schools to be established, constructed, or supported;

(b) Recommend and allocate funds, including the Special Education Fund and other local resources, for the establishment of, and support to, Last Mile and GIDA Schools;

(c) Ensure that Last Mile and GIDA School needs are included in local education and development plans; and

(d) Promote community participation, including parents, ICCs/IPs, and other stakeholders, in school planning and monitoring.

SEC. 12. *Implementation.* – The DepEd shall ensure immediate planning and implementation of programs under this Act in coordination with relevant NGAs, LGUs, and partner CSOs.

SEC. 13. *Reporting on Learner Outcomes.* – The DepEd shall assess and report on learner participation, retention, and learning outcomes for students enrolled in Last Mile and GIDA Schools, to ensure that progress and gaps are systematically monitored and addressed, through adequate funding from both NGAs and LGUs, or other necessary measures, or both.

SEC. 14. *Performance Management, Coordination, and Reporting on Program Implementation.* – Government agencies identified in Section 7 of this Act shall include in their own performance management system their respective school targets for the implementation of their respective mandates in support to the Last Mile and GIDA Schools.

For purposes of monitoring and reporting on program implementation, the DepEd shall, among others:

(a) Utilize existing inter-agency mechanisms such as social development councils, regional development councils, or local school boards;

(b) Publish annually a list of Last Mile and GIDA Schools, which shall serve as the basis for the allocation of national funds and guide the participation and support of LGUs; and

(c) Submit an annual report to Congress on the status and implementation of this Act.

The DepEd shall, after three (3) years of implementation and every three (3) years thereafter, conduct a review of the Program to assess the efficacy of its implementation and identify implementation gaps, among others.

SEC. 15. *Policy Review.* – The DepEd shall review and revise existing relevant policies, standards, and guidelines to directly address the specific conditions and contexts of Last Mile and GIDA Schools.

SEC. 16. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary for the implementation of this Act shall be included in the budgets of the concerned departments, agencies, and government-owned or -controlled corporations in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 17. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Rules and regulations necessary for the effective enforcement of the provisions of this Act shall be formulated by the DepEd, in consultation with the DPWH, DOE, NEA, DICT, NCIP, DILG, DENR, DOST, DOTr, LWUA, DBM, TEC, Department of Social Welfare and Development, National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, Civil Service Commission, and Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines and shall be implemented within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act.

SEC. 18. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, the other provisions not so declared shall remain in force and effect.

SEC. 19. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, orders, and rules and regulations contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

SEC. 20. *Effectivity.* – Notwithstanding the non-issuance of the implementing rules and regulations, this Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,

[redacted] DY III
Speaker of the House of Representatives

[redacted] C. SOTTO III
President of the Senate

This Act, which is a consolidation of Senate Bill No. 1937 and House Bill No. 4745, was passed by the Senate of the Philippines and the House of Representatives on May 5, 2026 and May 6, 2026, respectively.

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CHEL[redacted]-GARAFIL
Secretary General
House of Representatives

MAR[redacted]DOZA
Secretary of the Senate

Approved: JUL 2 2 2026

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FERDINAND ROMUALDEZ MARCOS JR.
President of the Philippines

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