

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Batasan Hills, Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session



HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION No. 4

Introduced by
ACT Teachers Party-List Rep. FRANCE L. CASTRO,
GABRIELA Women's Party Rep. ARLENE D. BROSAS,
and **KABATAAN Party-List Rep. RAOUL DANNIEL A. MANUEL**

JOINT RESOLUTION
PROVIDING FOR A SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET OF THIRTY TWO
BILLION PESOS (₱32,000,000,000) TO BE RELEASED TO THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY, AND SELECTED STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES
AND DIRECTING THEM TO EXCLUSIVELY USE THE AMOUNT AS THE
MAINTENANCE AND OTHER OPERATING EXPENSES OF THE PUBLIC
SCHOOLS UNDER THEIR JURISDICTION TO ENABLE THEM TO
SUFFICIENTLY PREPARE FOR THE RESUMPTION OF FULL FACE-TO-
FACE CLASSES

WHEREAS, even as the Philippines has the unfortunate distinction of being the last country in the world to reopen the schools, we are yet to fully implement a complete return to face-to-face learning and instruction as late as today, nearly two and a half years after the COVID-19 pandemic hit;

WHEREAS, this prolonged closure of schools resulted in a learning crisis that is deepening with every day that the schools remain shuttered. This is on top of the dire straits that the state of Philippine education is already in before the pandemic, as found by the latest studies and reports on student achievement like those conducted by the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Program for International Student Assessment (PISA);

WHEREAS, several surveys have also demonstrated just how deep the learning crisis have gone. Pulse Asia, for instance, found in April 2021 that parents do not believe

that their children are not learning enough under the distance learning system as implemented by the Department of Education (DepEd). The survey, conducted from February 22 to March 3 or after a year of the “blended learning system,” found that 55% of parents or guardians either “cannot say if [their children] are learning or not learning” (30%) or “not learning” (25%). Only 46% said their children are learning, with a minimal 7% who said that their children are “really learning”;

WHEREAS, the survey also echoed the woes reported from the ground by parents, teachers, and students as to the problems they encountered with the blended learning program: parents have less or no time to guide or help their child (32% and 43%, in Classes D and E, respectively), lack of gadgets (37% and 37%), intermittent internet connection (44% and 32%) and expensive internet (33% and 18%), and too-difficult modules (52% and 71%), among others;

WHEREAS, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and Social Weather Stations (SWS) found in May 2021 that most parents (84%) observed that, despite spending more time guiding their children, the latter were learning less in distance learning than in the traditional in-person learning. Citing past documented studies, UNICEF urged the Philippine government to address all issues preventing the safe return of children to schools, saying, “Without urgent action, the learning crisis could turn into a learning catastrophe”;

WHEREAS, much of the problems noted come from the insufficient funds given to the DepEd under the General Appropriations Acts for the past two years for the conduct of blended learning, and later, the reopening of schools. The 2021 and 2022 national budgets, for example, were drafted and enacted without considering the possibility of the reopening of schools—then-President Duterte having rejected the idea thrice in December 2020 and February and June 2021—yet the DepEd started on September 20, 2021 a pilot run of limited in-person classes in 97 public schools in low risk areas;

WHEREAS, the combined effects of the continued underfunding of basic education and delayed releases of funds to school divisions and schools pushed teachers and school officials to scramble—within such a limited span of time—for the funds and facilities for the safe reopening of schools. Aside from pushing towards teachers and school officials the undue burden of ensuring that the schools pass the “verification process” of the DepEd, this paved the way for a school reopening absent the key health and safety measures to ensure the protection of education stakeholders, especially teachers, non-teaching personnel, and learners;

WHEREAS, in the schools having face-to-face classes now, many teachers, parents, and students have expressed their worries about the lack of water; insufficient sanitation and handwashing facilities; classrooms with insufficient ventilation and air filtration; lack of support for the PPE of teachers, school staff, and students; lack of

weekly testing as well as guaranteed benefits of complete medication and treatment; and many others. No school has a complete and operational clinic with adequate supplies and equipment, and only a few have a nurse or ready access to a doctor. Some parents, considering these and the additional exposure of their children during travel to and from schools, have aired the possibility of pulling their children off face-to-face classes for fear that they and their families might acquire COVID-19;

WHEREAS, this prompted 59% to 83% of teacher-respondents to cry out, in a survey conducted by the Movement for Safe, Equitable, Quality, and Relevant (SEQuRe) Education, that government “has a long way to go if they are to open all the schools for 100% face-to-face learning,” and they were made to shell out of their own pockets to prepare schools and classrooms for safe reopening, while many of the important safety measures were left not provided for;

WHEREAS, several pronouncements from top officials were recently made for the 100% resumption of face-to-face classes. President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr., for one, said that he plans to start phased in-person classes by September and a “100-percent attendance” by November;

WHEREAS, beyond implementing a “100-percent attendance,” government must urgently and completely address the requirements for the safe reopening of all schools, thereby ensuring that all teachers, school personnel, students, and anyone in contact with them are protected from contracting COVID-19 and that the spread of the virus will be prevented;

WHEREAS, under the General Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2022 (Republic Act 11369), a total of ₱30,061,113,000 was appropriated under the DepEd for the Operation of Schools, in particular, the miscellaneous and other operating expenses (MOOE), for Elementary (₱15,497,928,000), Junior High School (₱10,605,086,000), Senior High School (₱3,924,958,000), and the Philippine High School for the Arts (PHSA, ₱33,141,000). An amount of ₱835,610,000 was also appropriated under the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) for the MOOE of the Philippine Science High School;

WHEREAS, it is estimated that these amounts, plus around a billion pesos more, are needed so that all public basic education schools under the operation of the DepEd, its attached agency the PHSA, the DOST, and the state universities and colleges (SUCs) will be provided with the appropriate physical requirements including classrooms with adequate ventilation and air filtration, basic utilities like water, and facilities for handwashing and sanitation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Senate and House of Representatives assembled, that a supplemental budget of Thirty Two Billion Pesos (₱32,000,000,000) to be released to the Department of Education, Department of

Science and Technology, and selected state universities and colleges and directing them to exclusively use the amount for the maintenance and other operating expenses of the public schools under their jurisdiction to enable said schools to sufficiently prepare for the resumption of full face-to-face classes.

Adopted,



Rep. FRANCE L. CASTRO
ACT Teachers Party-List



Rep. ARLENE D. BROSAS
GABRIELA Women's Party



Rep. RAOUL DANNIEL A. MANUEL
KABATAAN Party-List