- Food service (mass feeding)

P17-billion earmarked to fight child hunger

The House of Representatives has allocated up to P17 billion this year to fund vital school- and community-based feeding programs aimed at combating child hunger and boosting school attendance.

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Quezon City Rep. Marvin Rillo, a member of the House committee on appropriations, announced yesterday that of the total funding, P11.8 billion is earmarked for the SchoolBased Feeding Program (SBFP) under the Department of Education (DepEd), while P5.2 billion will support the Supplementary Feeding Program (SFP) of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

"These feeding programs are a lifeline for children who go to bed hungry. Access to nutritious meals can mean the difference between staying in school or dropping out for many of these children," Rillo said.

The announcement comes amid troubling findings from a Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey conducted from March 15 to 20, which showed that 27.2 percent of Filipino families—equivalent to roughly 7.5 million households—experienced involuntary hunger, or having nothing to eat at least once in the past three months.

"We are counting on the feeding programs not only to ease child hunger and malnutrition but also to keep vulnerable learners in school," Rillo added.

He emphasized that these are critical investments in the health, development, and education of the nation's children.

"They not only nourish young minds and bodies but also help lift families out of the cycle of poverty," he said.

The SBFP targets incoming kindergarten to Grade 6 pupils who are classified as wasted, severely wasted, stunted, or severely stunted. The program provides them with nutritious food products through daily rationing during the school year.

Meanwhile, the SFP supports undernourished children aged three to five enrolled in child development centers run by local governments, as well as those aged two to four in supervised neighborhood playgroups. The program offers fortified meals—including milk, vitamin-enriched bread such as nutribun, and ready-to-eat food—five days a week for 120 days.
National Nutrition Council-7 (NNC-7) Regional Nutrition Program Coordinator Letlet Mission also welcomed the development.
"I commend the government's decisive action in allocating P17 billion to strengthen school- and community-based feeding initiatives, a crucial response to the alarming rates of child hunger recently highlighted by national surveys," Mission said.
She noted that the substantial investment aligns with the Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition (PPAN) strategic framework, which emphasizes ensuring universal access to affordable, safe, and nutritious food, particularly for vulnerable groups.
"By enhancing feeding programs and promoting the availability of healthy food options in school canteens and communities, we are not only addressing immediate nutritional needs but also supporting longterm educational attainment and child development," Mission said.
She also expressed hope that additional budget allocations would be made for pregnant women and young children, particularly during the first 1,000 days of life—from conception to a child's second birthday—a critical period for physical, cognitive, and emotional development.
"Adequate nutrition, healthcare, and nurturing care during this time lay the foundation for a child's lifelong health and well-being," Mission added.
She further emphasized that the NNC remains committed to working collaboratively with partners to ensure the efficient implementation of these initiatives, recognizing that well-nourished children are the foundation of a healthier, more prosperous nation. –