

NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)

23 MAR 21 P2 :38

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SENATE

S. No. 2026

INTRODUCED BY SENATOR JOSEPH VICTOR G. EJERCITO

**AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A CENTER FOR AUTISM AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a brain-based disorder that affects a child's behavior, communication skills and social skills. It includes Asperger's Syndrome, Rett Syndrome, Childhood disintegrative disorder, Kanner's syndrome and PDD-not otherwise specified (PDDNOS). Recent data from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), autism affects about one (1) out of every sixty-eight (68) persons. In the Philippines, it is said that one (1) in 100 Filipinos or 1.2 million are on the autism spectrum.¹

Thus, it is but proper to give significance and emphasis on the role of the government to take care of our children and adults who have autism and intellectual disabilities.


Accordingly, this measure seeks for the creation of a Center for Autism in the country which will help create diagnostic, therapeutic and rehabilitation clinics, provide vocational training programs for autistic adults provide free diagnosis and rehabilitation services to indigent autistic, provide

¹ <http://www.autismsocietyphilippines.org/p/autism-is-lifelong-developmental.html>

continuing training programs for teachers, therapists, and other medical professionals, provide other services such as counseling, orientation and referral, and increase public awareness and concern on autism by spearheading advocacy programs.

The Center for Autism shall be governed by the National Autism Board which shall be under the Office of the President. The Board shall be composed of the representatives from the Department of Health, Department of Education, Department of Social Welfare and Development, National Council for the Welfare of Disabled Persons, Autism society of the Philippines, and parents of children and adults with autism.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



JOSEPH VICTOR G. EJERCITO



Senate

Office of the Secretary

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

1 SECTION 1. *Declaration of Policy* - It is hereby declared the policy of the state
2 to promote and protect the right of all individuals to live a full, healthy, holistic and
3 quality life. This includes individuals who are suffering from autism or any kind of
4 developmental disability. Therefore, the state shall promote and protect the rights of
5 autistic individuals by providing them adequate support through easy access to health
6 care, educational and other services.

7 Sec. 2. *Definition of Terms* - For purposes of this Act, the terms below shall be
8 constructed to mean, except where explicitly indicated or where the text clearly
9 indicates otherwise as follows:

- 10 a. *Autism* – is a developmental disability that appears during the first three
11 years of life; the result of a neurological disorder that affects the
12 functioning of the brain;
- 13 b. *Disability* - shall mean 1) a physical or mental impairment that
14 substantially limits one or more psychological, physiological or
15 anatomical function of an individual or activities of such individual; 2) a
16 record of such an impairment; or 3) regarded as having such an
17 impairment;

- 1 c. *Disabled Gifted* - persons who demonstrate superior performance
2 capabilities in intellectual, creative, specific academic areas, leadership,
3 or in the arts in spite of physical, sensory or psychological disabilities;
- 4 d. *Disabled Worker*- means a worker whose earning capacity is impaired
5 by mental, physical, or sensory deficiency or injury;
- 6 e. *Handicap* - refers to disadvantage for given individual, resulting from
7 an impairment of disability that limits or prevents the function of
8 activity, that is considered normal given the age and sex of the
9 individual;
- 10 f. *Impairment* - is any loss, diminution or aberration of psychological,
11 physiological, or anatomical structure of function;
- 12 g. *Indigent patient*- a disabled person whose level of income falls below
13 poverty threshold;
- 14 h. *Rehabilitation* - an integrated approach to physical, psychological,
15 cultural, spiritual, educational, or vocational, measures that create
16 conditions for individual to attain the highest possible level of functional
17 ability; and,
- 18 i. *Special Education (SPED)* - type of education specifically designed for
19 learners with special needs who cannot profit maximally from regular
20 education such that they require trained personnel modifications in the
21 curricula, teaching methods, instructional materials and adaptations in
22 facilities equipment.

23 Sec. 3. *Creation of a Center for Autism* - There is hereby created a Center for
24 Autism which shall be tasked to perform the following functions:

- 25 a. Formulate and implement an integrated and comprehensive master
26 plan;
- 27 b. Create a diagnostic, therapeutic and rehabilitation clinic;
- 28 c. Provide vocational training programs for autistic adults;
- 29 d. Provide free diagnosis and rehabilitation services to indigent autistic;
- 30 e. Provide continuing training programs for teachers, therapists, and other
31 medical professionals;

- 1 f. Provide other services such as counseling, orientation and referral; and
- 2 g. Increase public awareness and concern on autism by spear heading
- 3 advocacy programs.

4 Sec. 4. *Governing Board Composition, Term, Functions* - There is hereby
5 created a National Autism Board, hereby referred to as the Board, which shall be
6 under the Office of the President. The Board shall govern the Center for Autism and
7 shall be composed of the following:

- 8 a. One (1) representative from the Department of Health, who shall sit as
- 9 Chairperson;
- 10 b. One (1) representative from the Department of Education who shall sit
- 11 as the Vice-Chairperson;
- 12 c. One (1) representative from the Department of Social Welfare and
- 13 Developmental as Member;
- 14 d. Two (2) representatives from the National Council for the Welfare of
- 15 Disabled Persons as Members;
- 16 e. Two (2) representatives from the Autism Society of the Philippines as
- 17 Members; and,
- 18 f. Two (2) representatives from the Parents of Children and Adults with
- 19 Autism as Members.

20 Sec. 5. *Secretariat* - The Board shall have a Secretariat under an Executive
21 Officer who shall be appointed by the President. The Executive Officer shall manage
22 the day-to-day operations of the Board and shall be assisted by a Deputy Executive
23 Officer who shall likewise be appointed by the President.

24 The Executive Officer shall have the following powers and functions:

- 25 a. Execute, administer and implement the policies and measures approved
- 26 by the Board;
- 27 b. Direct and supervise the affairs and operations of the Board;
- 28 c. Submit within thirty (30) days after the close of every calendar year an
- 29 annual report to the Board and such other reports it may require;

- 1 d. Submit an annual budget and such supplementary budgets as may be
- 2 necessary to the Board for its consideration and approval;
- 3 e. Represent the Board in all transactions with other offices, agencies,
- 4 instrumentalities of government and with all persons and other entities,
- 5 public or private, domestic or foreign; and,
- 6 f. Appoint, subject to confirmation of the Board, and discipline in
- 7 accordance with Civil Service laws, rules and regulations, the officers
- 8 and personnel below the level of Deputy Executive Officer.

9 The Deputy Executive Officer shall perform the following functions:

- 10 a. Assist the Executive Officer in the discharge of his powers and functions;
- 11 b. Act as the Executive Officer during the Executive Officer's absence; and,
- 12 c. Discharge such other powers and functions as may be required by the
- 13 Executive Officer and the Board.

14 *Sec. 6. Appropriations* - For the initial operating expenses of the Center, the
15 amount of Fifty Million Pesos (50,000,000.00) is hereby appropriated from the
16 available funds of the Office of the President. Thereafter, it shall submit to the
17 Department of Budget and Management, its proposed budget for inclusion in the
18 General Appropriations Act.

19 *Sec. 7. Transitory Provisions* - Within the period of one hundred and eighty
20 (180) days after the approval of this Act, the Board constituted shall start its
21 operation. All other government offices having functions similar to the Board shall
22 then cease to perform such functions. Henceforth, these functions shall be deemed
23 transferred to the board.

24 *Sec. 8. Implementing Rules and Regulations* - The Board in consultation with
25 appropriate agencies from the private and government sectors shall issue guidelines
26 and prescribe rules and regulations within one hundred (100) days after the effectivity
27 of this Act. A copy of such guidelines, rules and regulations shall be furnished to the
28 Congress of the Philippines.

1 Sec. 9. *Separability Clause* - Should any provision of this Act, be declared
2 invalid or unconstitutional, other provisions of this Act which are not affected hereby
3 shall continue to be in full force and effect.

4 Sec. 10. *Repealing Clause* - All laws, decrees, orders, rules and regulations
5 and other issuances, or parts thereof, inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, are
6 hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

7 Sec. 11. *Effectivity* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
8 publication in the Official Gazette or in newspaper of general circulation in the
9 Philippines.

Approved,