

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

H. B. No. **5813**



Introduced by HONORABLE SCOTT DAVIES S. LANETE, M.D.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Autism is a developmental disorder (ASD) with a range of difficulties in social, emotional and communication skills, which occurs in all racial, ethnic and socio-economic groups.¹

In 2014, a news article² reported that the number of people with ASD in the Philippines and other countries worldwide has almost doubled in the past six years and the number is still rising. Further, Erlinda Borromeo, Autism Speaks Foundation President, said that one in sixty-eight (68) children worldwide have autism.

In the Philippines, estimated cases of autism rose from five hundred thousand (500,000) in 2008 to one million (1,000,000) people at present and the number could be much higher since there are still a lot of areas in the country that were not surveyed. Health experts have attributed this increase to poor detection methods, genetics and environmental factors.

Much has been discovered about the causes, diagnosis and management of ASD. Despite the discoveries, there still exist the common societal problem further causing suffering to people with autism such as lack of social support, meaningful relationships, future employment opportunities or self-determination.

Despite the rise of parent organizations, national and non-profit organizations dedicated to the well-being of persons with ASD and the destigmatization of ASD, persons with ASD, their family and friends continue to feel social stigma in situations where their

¹ Myers SM, Johnson CP (2007). "Management of children with autism spectrum disorders". *Pediatrics* **120** (5): 1162-82.

² Mayen Jaymalin, Number of people with autism rising, The Philippine Star, 10 April 2014.

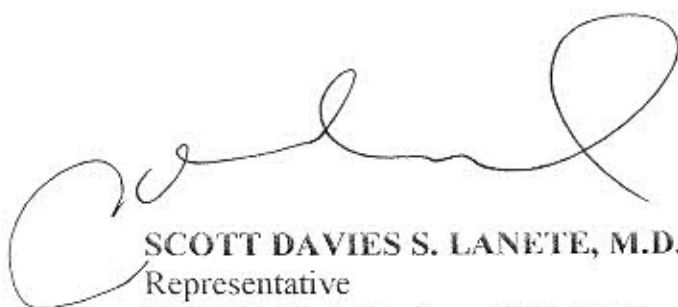
loved one's autistic behavior is perceived negatively by others. These social stigmas seem to suggest that people with ASD no longer have a bright and fruitful future ahead of them. It is high time that these social stigmas be discarded.

Numerous medical and psychological studies found that with intensive and sustained special education programs and behavior therapy early in life, people with ASD can acquire self-care, social, and job skills, improved functioning and decreased symptoms of severity and maladaptive behaviors.

Sustainable development of people with ASD can only be attained if their needs are met. Although private groups and some sector of the government have already made significant actions in adhering to stipulations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Magna Carta of Persons with Disability (RA 9442), there still lacks specialized and specified strides towards addressing the needs of the specialized group of people with ASD. It is important to develop a personal, specialized and specified support network for people with ASD and their families.

Based on the foregoing, a Philippine Center for Autism must be created to address the four (4) major areas of concern, namely: research policy, planning and program development; medical management including allied professionals; diagnostics; and family and community support. By creating a Philippine Autism Center, the needs of people with ASD will be addressed and their development will be supported so that the social stigma against them is debunked, thereby transforming them as productive members of the community resulting in a bright and fruitful future ahead for them.

In consideration of all the foregoing, the immediate passage of this Bill is earnestly sought.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott Davies S. Lanete', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

SCOTT DAVIES S. LANETE, M.D.

Representative

Third District, Province of Masbate

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**AN ACT CREATING THE PHILIPPINE CENTER FOR AUTISM
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* This Act shall be known as "Philippine Center for Autism Act of 2015"

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* It is the policy of the State to secure the well-being of the people by providing them with specialized health service. Also, it is the policy of the state to advance and protect the citizens' right to health. This includes the rights of persons with autism to full, healthy and holistic development. Therefore, the State shall promote an environment conducive to the development of autistic persons to become, to the best of their potentials, independent, self-reliant and productive members of society.

SEC. 3 *Definition of Terms.*

- a. For purposes of this Act, except as otherwise expressly indicated herein, the term autism shall be understood to mean a state of mental health that severely hinders the way information is gathered and processed by the brain thereby causing problems in communication, learning, and social behavior.
- b. Indigent shall refer to a person with ASD whose level of income falls below the poverty threshold.
- c. Rehabilitation - an integrated approach to physical, psychological, cultural, spiritual, educational, or vocational, measures that create conditions for individual to attain the highest possible level of functional ability.

SEC. 4 *Creation of the Philippine Center for Autism.*

There is hereby created a trust, for the benefit primarily of the Filipino people, under the name and style of Philippine Center for Autism.

The Philippine Center for Autism shall be administered by a Board of Trustees, composed of

seven (7) members, to be appointed by the President of the Philippines. Specifically, the Board shall be composed of the following:

- a. One (1) representative from the Department of Health, who shall sit as Chairperson;
- b. One (1) representative from the Department of Education who shall sit as the Vice-Chairperson;
- c. One (1) representative from the Department of Social Welfare and Development as Member;
- d. Two (2) representatives from the National Council for the Welfare of Disabled Persons as Members;
- e. Two (2) representatives from the Autism Society of the Philippines as Members;
- f. Two (2) representatives from the Parents of Children and Adults with Autism as Members.

The six appointive members of the Board of Trustees shall serve without compensation for a period of four (4) years and until their successors shall have been appointed and qualified.

Any vacancy in the Board shall be filled by appointment by the President of the Philippines, and the appointee shall serve for the unexpired term.

Four (4) members of the Board of Trustees shall constitute a quorum transact business and any decision of such four members on any matter duly presented to the Board of Trustees shall constitute a valid and binding act of the Philippine Center for Autism.

SEC. 5. Objectives of the Philippine Center for Autism. The Philippine Center for Autism shall endeavor to fulfill the following objectives:

- a. to promote public awareness, education, and information on issues concerning autism;
- b. to establish sustainable networks of support groups for families of autistic children and adults;
- c. to provide referral services to patients with autism and identify the appropriate educational and medical expertise and facilities suited to the needs of the autistic person;
- d. to combat the spectrum of disorders related to autism through screening, education, early intervention, prompt referrals for treatment and services;
- e. to undertake research and/or collaborate with other entities on research activities regarding autism in the Philippines;
- f. to coordinate with schools in formulating individualized programs for autistic school children and young students;
- g. to receive donations and grants from international donor institutions, foundations, and multilateral and bilateral foreign donor agencies involved in the prevention, cure and rehabilitation of persons with autism;
- h. to promote the advocacy against bias and stereo-typing against autistics thereby eliminating discrimination and/or misconceptions of the notion of being autistic with the end in view of opening the doors of productive economic opportunities to autistic persons;
- i. to provide the avenue for exchange of information, exchange programs and sharing of best practices on issues relating to the early detection, prevention, cure, treatment, and rehabilitation of persons diagnosed with autism;

- j. to network with other organizations, institutions and professionals working for the promotion of legislation and public programs for the persons diagnosed with autism; and
- k. to assist in the creation of appropriate programs for individuals diagnosed with autism.

SEC. 6. *Functions of the Philippine Center for Autism.* The Philippine Center for Autism shall have the following functions:

- a. Formulate and implement an integrated and comprehensive master plan;
- b. Create a diagnostic, therapeutic and rehabilitation clinic;
- c. Provide vocational training programs for autistic adults;
- d. Provide free diagnosis and rehabilitation services to indigent autistic;
- e. Provide continuing training programs for teachers, therapists, medical;
- f. Provide other services such as counseling, orientation and referral;
- g. Increase public awareness and concern on autism by spearheading advocacy programs.

SEC. 7. *Creation of Departments in the Philippine Center for Autism.* For the orderly and efficient execution of plans and programs, the Philippine Center for Autism shall establish the following departments:

- a. Department for research policy, planning and program development.
- b. Department for medical management.
- c. Department for diagnostics.
- d. Department for family and community support.

SEC. 8. *Appropriations.* The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act shall be included and incorporated in the annual general appropriations of the Department of Health (DOH), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), National Institute of Health (NIH), and the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC).

SEC. 9. *Auditing.* The Philippine Center for Autism shall be under the audit jurisdiction of the Commission on Audit.

SEC. 10. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* Within six (6) months from the date of effectivity of this Act, the DOH, in coordination with the DWSD, NIH, and PIA, shall promulgate necessary implementing rules and regulations to implement the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 11. *Repealing Clause.* All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations, or parts thereof not consistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 12. *Separability Clause.* - If any provision or part of this Act, or the application thereof to any person or circumstance, is held unconstitutional or invalid, other provisions of this Act which are not affected hereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

Approved,