

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

House Bill No. 7670



Introduced by **MAGDALO Party-List Representative**
HON. GARY C. ALEJANO

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Occurring in countries within all socio-economic classes, autism is the fastest growing developmental disability. According to Autism Speaks Foundation, one in 68 children worldwide has autism. This figure is way above the 0.5 cases in every 1,000 children in the 1980s and one in 110 in 2008. In the Philippines, autism incidence rose from 500,000 in 2008 to one million in 2014.

Given the growing number of Autism Spectrum Disorder cases in the country, individuals affected by the said disorder still remain in the marginalized sector of the country because of lack of government support. This has prevented their total rehabilitation, self-development, and self-reliance.

This bill, thus, seeks to create the Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) to advise and make recommendations to the president, legislature, and government agencies on matters relating to autism spectrum disorder. Here, the Commission is mandated to develop a comprehensive nationwide plan for an integrated system of training, treatment, and services for individuals of all ages with ASD.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate approval of this bill is earnestly requested.


GARY C. ALEJANO
Representative

Magdalo Para sa Pilipino Party-List

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AN ACT
CREATING THE PHILIPPINE COMMISSION ON AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS
AND THE OFFICE OF AUTISM SERVICES

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

1 **SECTION 1. *Short Title.*** - This Act shall be known as the "*Philippine Commission on*
2 *Autism Spectrum Disorders Act*".

3
4 **SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.*** - It is hereby declared policy of the State to protect and
5 promote the right to health, physical, moral, and social well-being of the people. Towards this
6 end, the State shall exert efforts to develop a comprehensive nationwide plan for an integrated
7 system of training, treatment, and services for individuals of all ages with Autism Spectrum
8 Disorder (ASD).

9
10 **SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.*** - As used in this Act, the following terms shall mean:

11
12 1. *Autism Spectrum Disorder* - Defined as the standard diagnostic criteria for pervasive
13 developmental disorder, to include autistic disorder; Asperger's syndrome; pervasive
14 developmental disorder, not otherwise specified; childhood disintegrative disorder and
15 Rett's syndrome.

16
17 2. *Department of Health* – Herein, referred to as the Department.

18
19 **SEC. 4. *Philippine Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorders.*** - There is hereby
20 created a "Philippine Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorders" under the Department of
21 Health. It shall advise and make recommendations to the president, legislature, and relevant
22 government agencies regarding matters concerning all levels of Autism Spectrum Disorder
23 services including health care, education, and other adult and adolescent services.

1 The Commission shall meet on at least four (4) occasions annually, including at least two
2 (2) occasions before the end of December on the first year the Commission is fully established. It
3 may hold meetings by telephone or video conference.
4

5 The Department shall provide technical and administrative support as required by the
6 Commission.
7

8 **SEC. 5. *Composition of Members.*** - The Commission shall be composed of nineteen
9 (19) members, consisting of the following:
10

11 (1) Four (4) members of the legislature, with two (2) members from the Senate and two (2)
12 members from the House of Representatives. The Senate President shall appoint one (1)
13 member from the majority and one (1) member from the minority. Also, the Speaker of
14 the House shall appoint one (1) member from the majority and one (1) member from the
15 minority;
16

17 (2) The Director of the National Center for Mental Health, or his or her designee;
18

19 (3) The Secretary of Health, or his or her designee;
20

21 (4) The Secretary of Education, or his or her designee;
22

23 (5) The Secretary of Social Welfare and Development, or his or her designee;
24

25 (6) The Commissioner of Higher Education, or his or her designee;
26

27 (7) An individual employed as a director/principal of special education at a school district
28 located in the country;
29

30 (8) A speech and language pathologist;
31

32 (9) A diagnostician;
33

34 (10) A mental health provider;
35

36 (11) A primary care physician;
37

1 (12) Two (2) parents of individuals with autism spectrum disorder, including one (1) parent
2 of an individual under the age of eighteen and one (1) parent of an individual over the age
3 of eighteen;

4
5 (13) Two (2) individuals with autism spectrum disorder; and
6

7 (14) A representative from an independent private provider or non-profit provider or
8 organization.
9

10 The members of the Commission, other than the members from the legislature and ex-officio
11 members, shall be appointed by the president with the advice and consent of the Senate. The
12 Chair of the Commission shall be selected by the members of the commission. Of the members
13 first appointed to the Commission by the president, half shall serve a term of four years and half
14 shall serve a term of two years, and thereafter, members shall serve a term of four years.
15 Members shall continue to serve until their successor is duly appointed and qualified. Any
16 vacancy on the Commission shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.
17 Members shall serve the commission without compensation but may be reimbursed for their
18 actual and necessary expenses from money appropriated to the Department of Health.
19

20 The members of the commission shall consist of a broad representation of Filipino citizens,
21 both urban and rural, who are concerned with the health and quality of life for individuals with
22 Autism Spectrum Disorder.
23

24 **SEC. 6. Duties and Responsibilities.** - The Commission shall make recommendations for
25 developing a comprehensive nationwide plan for an integrated system of training, treatment, and
26 services for individuals of all ages with Autism Spectrum Disorder. A year after the approval of
27 this Act, the commission shall issue preliminary findings and recommendations to the legislature.
28

29 In preparing the national plan, the commission shall specifically perform the following
30 responsibilities and report on them accordingly:
31

32 (1) Study and report on the means for developing a comprehensive, coordinated system of
33 care delivery across the country to address the increased and increasing presence of
34 Autism Spectrum Disorder and ensure that resources are created, well-utilized, and
35 appropriately spread across the country:
36

- (a) Determine the need for the creation of centers for diagnostic excellence in designated sectors of the country, which could provide clinical services including assessment, diagnoses, and treatment of patients;
 - (b) Plan for effectively evaluating regional service areas throughout the country and their capacity including outlining personnel and skills that exist within the service area, other capabilities that exist, and resource needs that may be unmet;
 - (c) Assess the need for additional behavioral intervention capabilities and as necessary, the means for expanding those capabilities in a regional service area; and
 - (d) Develop recommendations for expanding these services in conjunction with hospitals after considering the resources that exist in terms of specialty clinics and hospitals, and hospital inpatient care capabilities;
- (2) Conduct an assessment of the need for coordinated, enhanced and targeted special education capabilities within each region of the country;
- (3) Develop a recommendation for enlisting appropriate universities and colleges to ensure support and collaboration in developing certification or degree programs for students specializing in Autism Spectrum Disorder intervention. This may include degree programs in education, special education, social work, and psychology; and
- (4) Other responsibilities may include but not be limited to:
 - (a) Provide recommendations regarding training programs and the content of training programs being developed;
 - (b) Recommend individuals to participate in a committee of major stakeholders charged with developing screening, diagnostic, assessment, and treatment standards;
 - (c) Participate in recommending a panel of qualified professionals and experts to review existing models of evidence-based educational practices for adaptation specific to Filipinos;

(d) Examine the barriers to accurate information of the prevalence of individuals with autism spectrum disorder across the country and recommend a process for accurate reporting of demographic data;

(e) Explore the need for the creation of interagency councils and evaluation of current councils to ensure a comprehensive, coordinated system of care for all individuals with autism spectrum disorder; and

(f) Study or explore other developmental delay disorders and genetic conditions known to be associated with autism, including fragile X syndrome, Sotos syndrome, Angelman syndrome, and tuberous sclerosis.

SEC. 7. Appropriation. - The amount necessary for the effective implementation of this Act shall be funded out of the appropriations of the Department of Health. Thereafter, such amounts as may be necessary for the continued implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 8. Separability Clause. - Any provision or provisions of this Act that may be declared unconstitutional or invalid shall not have the effect of nullifying other portions or provision hereof as long as such remaining portions can still subsist and be given effect in their entirety.

SEC. 9. Repealing Clause. - All laws, ordinances, rules and regulations, and other issuances or parts thereof which are inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 10. Effectivity Clause. - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days from the date of its publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,