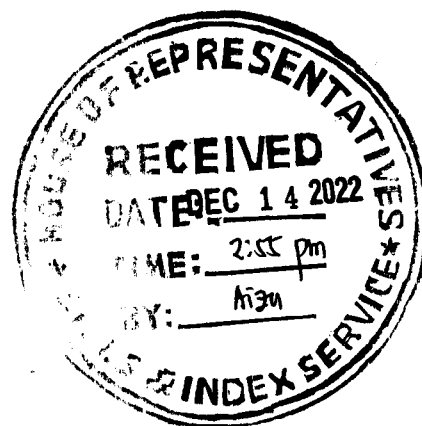


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
1st Regular Session

House Bill No. **6686**



**Introduced by Representatives EDVIC G. YAP,
JOCELYN P. TULFO, JEFFREY SORIANO and RALPH WENDEL P. TULFO**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability caused by differences in the brain. People with ASD often have problems with social communication and interaction, and restricted or repetitive behaviors or interests. People with ASD may also have different ways of learning, moving, or paying attention.¹

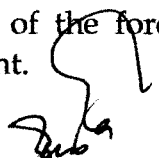
While Republic Act No. 7277 or the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons has paved the way for the recognition and protection of rights of persons with disabilities, including persons with ASD, there is still insufficiency of programs and initiatives to address the needs specific to Filipinos diagnosed with autism. Bullying, discrimination, lack of affordable and accessible health and educational facilities specializing in ASD nationwide, are only a few of the perennial problems faced by our countrymen diagnosed with ASD.

It is the State's duty to provide protection and care to Filipinos with ASD, especially with their profound and peculiar needs due to the breadth of the spectrum. This bill aims to increase awareness and proper understanding of ASD, provide access to affordable therapies and education, employment, services and support to people with ASD to live independently within the community, minimize or completely eradicate discrimination and promote inclusivity within the community.

It is imperative to equip teachers, medical professionals, volunteers, and the Filipino community as a whole, with sufficient training and knowledge to address the needs of persons with autism and ultimately develop responsiveness and compassion towards them.

¹[https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/signs.html#:~:text=Autism%20spectrum%20disorder%20\(ASD\)%20is,%2C%20moving%2C%20or%20paying%20attention.](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/signs.html#:~:text=Autism%20spectrum%20disorder%20(ASD)%20is,%2C%20moving%2C%20or%20paying%20attention.)

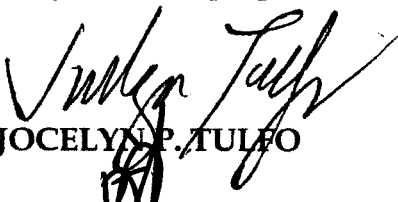
In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this proposed bill is earnestly sought.



EDVIC YAP



JEFFREY SORIANO



JOCELYN P. TULFO



RALPH WENDEL P. TULFO

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House Bill No. **6686**

Introduced by Representatives EDVIC G. YAP,
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AN ACT
INSTITUTING A COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL CARE PLAN TO
ENCOURAGE COOPERATION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND RESEARCH FOR
THE EDUCATION AND SUPPORT OF PERSONS WITH AUTISM
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

1
2 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress*
3 *assembled:*

4
5 **Section 1. Short Title.** - This Act shall be known as the "*Autism Cooperation,*
6 *Accountability, Research, Education and Support (CARES) Act of 2022*".
7

8 **Sec. 2. Declaration of Policy.** — The State hereby affirms its role in protecting
9 and upholding the rights of all disabled persons, by giving full support to the
10 improvement of their well-being and their integration into mainstream society. To
11 this end, the State recognizes the need to legislate for the distinctive needs of persons
12 with autism (PWAs) and commits itself to institutionalize adequate policies and
13 programs that shall increase awareness and proper understanding of autism, to
14 develop a clear and consistent pathway to early detection and diagnosis, provide
15 access to quality education and employment opportunities such that PWAs may live
16 independently within the community, to minimize or completely eradicate
17 discrimination and to enable the private sector to extend relevant services that will
18 complement the government's programs.
19

20 **Sec. 3. Definition of Terms.** - As used in this Act, the following terms shall mean:
21

- 22 a) "**Autism**" or Autism Spectrum Disorder refers to a neurological condition
23 characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, and
24 communication, as well as by unique strengths, as defined in the latest version of
25 the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

- 26 b) "**Diagnosis**" refers to necessary assessments, including but not limited to neuro-
27 psychological evaluations, genetic testing MRIs, hearing tests, psychometric tests
28 to diagnose or discount autism and/or developmental disabilities individuals.
29 c) "**Intervention**" refers to interceding action undertaken to help improve the autism
30 prognosis. Intervention in autism may take the form of medical, pharmacologic,
31 therapeutic, educational, and non-traditional habilitative care.
32 d) "**Epidemiology**" refers to the study and analysis of the distribution and
33 determinants of health conditions, like autism in define populations.
34

35 **Sec. 4. Treatment as Persons with Disability** – In accordance with Republic
36 Act No. 7277, as amended, all PWAs shall be treated as Persons with Disability. They
37 shall likewise be entitled to all the rights, privileges, and benefits provided for
38 persons with disabilities under Republic Act No. 10754 and other related laws.
39

40 **Sec. 5. Inter-Agency Cooperation, Accountability and Research** – The
41 Department of Health (DOH), in coordination with the Department of Social Welfare
42 and Development (DSWD), Department of Education (DepEd), the Philippine
43 Council for Mental Health (PCMH), other academic institutions and non-
44 governmental organizations, is hereby mandated to establish and evaluate activities
45 to:
46

- 47 1. Inform and educate on such disabilities to increase awareness relating to causes,
48 early detection, management, treatment as well as developmental milestones;
- 49 2. Promote research into the development and validation of reliable screening tools
50 for such disabilities;
- 51 3. Develop a curriculum for continuing education to assist individuals in
52 recognizing the need for and using, valid and reliable screening tools;
- 53 4. Promote early screening of children and individuals at higher risk for such
54 disabilities;
- 55 5. Promote research to determine evidence-based practices for interventions,
56 develop guidelines for those interventions and disseminate information related
57 to such research and guidelines; and
- 58 6. Encourage public participation in decisions relating to such disabilities.
59

60 **Sec 6. Continuing Education and Training on Autism for Public Service**
61 **Providers.** – All officers and staff in charge of providing services to the public,
62 including but not limited to the Department of Health (DOH), Department of Social
63 Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Education (DepEd), Department
64 of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of
65 Transportation (DOTr), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), the
66 Department of National Defense (DND), Department of Science and Technology
67 (DOST), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Technical Education and Skills
68 Development Authority (TESDA), National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA),
69 Persons with Disabilities Affairs Offices (PDAOs) at the Local Government Units
70 (LGUs), Public Safety Units (military, police, firemen and other first responders), shall
71 undergo mandatory continuing education to empower service providers to become

more responsive, sensitive, and compassionate in the delivery of services to PWAs and their families.

Sec. 7. Epidemiological Surveillance Programs. - The Department of Health, in coordination with different academic institutions and non-governmental organizations is hereby mandated to conduct an epidemiological survey to determine the prevalence of autism in the county annually to provide data to government agencies and the private sector, to make necessary services available to PWAs and their families.

Sec. 8. Evidence-based Research. - The DOH, the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development (PCHRD), and the National Institute of Health (NIH) are mandated, in coordination with local and international mental health institutions, to promote, create, develop, and adopt research and strategic plans that will continue to determine and establish evidence-based practices for interventions in the treatment, care and integration into society of PWAs.

Sec. 9. Early Detection and Intervention of Autism. - The DOH, in coordination with the DepEd is hereby mandated to establish a program for early screening and detection of autism, to provide the appropriate services to children and toddlers with developmental delays associated with autism, and to ensure tie central PWD registry are updated accordingly.

Sec. 10. Protection Against Discrimination in Schools, Colleges, Universities and Training Institutions. - The DepEd, CHED and TESDA shall formulate or update policies and protocols to ensure that all educational institutions shall be inclusive to learners with autism, in matters including, but not limited to, acceptance to academic or training programs, instructional supports, and behavior management.

Sec. 11. Provision at Equal Opportunities for Employment - The DOLE and the Civil Service Commission (CSC) shall formulate policies and programs to ensure that PWAs are provided equal opportunities for gainful employment and apprenticeship opportunities in the private and public sectors.

Sec. 12. Mandatory Insurance Coverage and Prohibition Against Discrimination thereof. - All persons with autism shall be covered by the National Health Insurance Program of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PHIC). Funds necessary to ensure the enrolment of PWAs, who are currently covered under any existing category, shall be sourced from the National Health Insurance Fund of PHIC, earmarked from the proceeds of sin tax collections, as provided for in Republic Act No. 10351. It shall likewise include the cost of early screening and detection programs, as one of the available benefits of its members. The Department of Finance (DOH) shall likewise issue guidelines to ensure that all insurance providers shall provide PWAs access to life insurance instruments and shall include allied medical procedures (like occupational and speech therapies) in health insurance benefits of policy holders.

118
119 **Sec. 13. Protection in cases of Disaster and Emergencies.** — the DILG, DSWD,
120 and the DND shall formulate the necessary policies and protocols to ensure that the
121 military, public safety professionals, local government units, and first responders
122 shall provide the necessary lifesaving support to PWAs with behavioral and
123 communication challenges, in times of disasters, calamities and other emergencies.
124

125 **Sec. 14. Access to Transportation.** - The DOTr shall formulate the necessary
126 policies and protocols to ensure PWAs with behavioral and communication
127 challenges and their families are given reasonable accommodation in accessing all
128 forms of transportation by service provides over land, sea, and air.
129

130 **Sec. 15. Reasonable Accommodation in Legal Proceedings.** - The DOJ shall
131 formulate the necessary policies and protocols to ensure criminal justice agencies and
132 professionals shall provide the necessary accommodations and protections to PWAs
133 in behavioral and communication challenges, who may be the accused of victims of
134 or witnesses to crimes.
135

136 **Sec. 16. The Autism CARES Plan** - The Philippine Council for Mental Health
137 (PCMH), a multi-sector body established by the Mental Health Act, in coordination
138 with other government agencies and stakeholders, shall develop, regularly update
139 and monitor the implementation of the Autism Cares Plan (ACP), a holistic medium-
140 term plan that shall embody the provisions of this Act, in order to respond to the
141 needs of PWAs and their families for the guidance of the stakeholders in public and
142 private sectors. The PCMH shall likewise coordinate the development and
143 implementation of necessary policies and programs to operationalize all ACPs and
144 to ensure the needs of PWAs are served.
145

146 **Sec 17. Appropriations.** - The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of
147 this Act shall be included and incorporated in the annual general appropriations of
148 the DOH.
149

150 **Sec 18. Separability Clause.** - If any provision of this Act is declared invalid or
151 unconstitutional, the provisions not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force
152 and effect.
153

154 **Sec. 19. Repealing Clause.** - All laws, executive orders, presidential decrees,
155 presidential proclamations, letter of instruction, rules and regulations or parts thereof
156 inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified
157 accordingly.
158

159 **Sec. 20. Effectivity.** - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
160 publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.
161

162 *Approved.*