

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

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. **8470**



Introduced by Honorable Ma. Alana Samantha Taliño Santos

AN ACT EXPANDING PHILHEALTH COVERAGE TO INCLUDE BENEFIT PACKAGE TO ALL MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Every Filipino has the basic and fundamental right to mental health and to require mental health services.¹ With the passage of Republic Act No. 11036, otherwise known as the Mental Health Act, the state has taken a positive and progressive step in addressing mental health issues in the country. The law recognized the need to provide timely, affordable, high quality and culturally-appropriate mental health services to all.

In 2005, the National Statistics Office identified mental illness as the third most prevalent form of morbidity.² COVID-19 has exacerbated mental health related issues in the country. According to a Department of Health (DOH) survey, around 3.6 million Filipinos are suffering from mental disorders.³ The COVID-19 pandemic is a wake-up call for public mental health stakeholders. Due to the lack of access to social support brought about by prolonged quarantines, the need for mental health services grew.⁴

The increasing rate of mental health related issues amongst the youth is highly alarming. According to a study, among Filipino children aged 5 to 15, 10% to 15% are affected by mental health problems. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 16.8% of Filipino students aged 13 to 17 have attempted suicide at least once within a year before the 2015 Global School-based Student Health survey.⁵

¹ Sec 2, RA 11036

² Lally J, Tully J, Samaniego R. Mental health services in the Philippines. BJPsych Int. 2019 Aug;16(3):62-64. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6646843/>

³ Shiela Crisostomo, 3.6 million Pinoys suffer from mental disorders – DOH survey, Philippine Star (14 Oct 2020) <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/10/14/2049401/36-million-pinoys-suffer-mental-disorders-doh-survey>

⁴ Arevalo M, Maslog E., Flores G, Manlongat K, Eala M, Addressing the gaps in the Philippine public mental health strategy, The Lancet, [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366\(22\)00040-2/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(22)00040-2/fulltext)

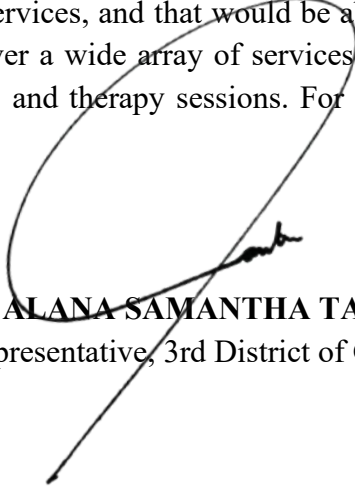
⁵ Malolos GZC, Baron MBC, Apat FAJ, Sagsagat HAA, Pasco PBM, Aportadera ETCL, Tan RJD, Gacutno-Evardone AJ, Lucero-Priso Iii DE. Mental health and well-being of children in the Philippine setting during the COVID-19 pandemic. Health Promot Perspect. 2021 Aug 18. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8501475/>

Mental health services remain to be inaccessible to the general public. In a survey, it was found that the top barrier to mental health care is the high financial costs. The other top five barriers were stigma-related such as feeling embarrassed or ashamed, concern that they might be perceived as ‘crazy’ or weak and concern about family and other people’s reactions.⁶

To strengthen mental health services, mental health services should be an integral part of the universal health coverage. In the past, only 3–5% of the total health budget is spent on mental health and there is a short supply of mental health workers, with a ratio of 2–3 per 100 000 population.⁷ There is a need to emphasize the inclusion of mental health services in the overall universal healthcare package, in order to make mental health services truly accessible to all.

At present, PhilHealth only covers in-patient mental health conditions specifically only for dementia, bipolar disorders, schizophrenia and anxiety disorders amounting to Php 7,800.⁸ This is a meager amount and fails to cover the wide array of mental health services that are necessary to respond to all mental health conditions.

The passage of this bill will lead to the creation of a Mental Health Benefit Package that would address actual current costs in mental health services, and that would be able to cover all mental health disorders. The benefit package will cover a wide array of services, including emergency services, psychiatric and neurological services and therapy sessions. For the foregoing reasons, the passage of this bill is highly urged.



HON. MA. ALANA SAMANTHA TALIÑO SANTOS
Representative, 3rd District of Cotabato

Republic of the Philippines

⁶ Vincenzo Bollettino, Cheryl Yunn Shee Foo, Hannah Stoddard, Mark Daza, Antonio C. Sison, Mendiola Teng-Calleja, Patrick Vinck, COVID-19-related mental health challenges and opportunities perceived by mental health providers in the Philippines, Asian Journal of Psychiatry, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1876201823001338>

⁷ Renzo Guinto, Julius Cesar P Alejandre, Marianne K Bongcac, Johnrev Guilaran, Sena S Salcedo, Jun Angelo Sunglao, An agenda for climate change and mental health in the Philippines, [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196\(21\)00284-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196(21)00284-9/fulltext)

⁸ PhilHealth, Technical Assistance on the Development of Comprehensive PhilHealth Benefits for Mental Health, https://www.philhealth.gov.ph/about_us/studies/abstract/10.MentalHealth.pdf

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

Section 1. **Short Title.** – This Act shall be known as the “*Comprehensive Mental Health Benefit Act*”.

Section 2. **Declaration of Policy.** – The State affirms the basic right of all Filipinos to mental health as well as the fundamental rights of people who require health services.

The State commits itself in promoting the well-being of people by ensuring that; mental health is valued, promoted and protected; mental health conditions are treated and prevented; timely, affordable, high quality, and culturally-appropriate mental health case is made available to the public; mental health service are free from coercion and accountable to the service users; and persons affected by mental health conditions are able to exercise the full range of human rights, and participate fully in society and at work free from stigmatization and discrimination.

The State shall comply strictly with its obligations under the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities, and all other relevant international and regional human rights, conventions and declarations. The applicability of Republic Act No. 7277, as amended, otherwise known as the “Magna Carta for Disabled Persons”, to person with mental health conditions, as defined herein, is expressly recognized.

Section 3. **Definition.** – As used in this Act, the following terms are defined as follows:

- (a) *Mental Health* – refers to a state of well-being in which the individual realizes one’s own abilities and potentials, scopes adequately with the normal stresses of life, displays resilience in the face of extreme life events, works productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a positive contribution to the community;
- (b) *Mental Health Condition* – refers to a neurologic or psychiatric condition characterized by the existence of a recognizable, clinically-significant disturbance in an individual’s cognition, emotional regulation, or behavioral that reflects a genetic or acquired dysfunction in the neurological, psychosocial, or developmental process

underlying mental functioning. The determination of neurologic and psychiatric conditions shall be based on scientifically-accepted medical nomenclature and best available scientific and medical evidence;

- (c) *Mental Disorders* – refer to conditions that affect a person’s thinking, feelings, mood, and behavior. These may be occasional or chronic.

Section 4. ***Mental Health Benefit Package.*** — Within one (1) year from the effectivity of this Act, PhilHealth, in consultation with the Department of Health (DOH) and the Philippine Council for Mental Health (PCMH) along with key stakeholders such as professional societies, patient organization, and health facilities, shall develop a benefit package for Filipinos with mental health illnesses. This benefit package shall cover all mental health disorders. Also, a minor suffering from mental health disorders shall likewise be benefited by this mental health benefit package. The benefit package shall cover emergency services, psychiatric and neurological services, therapy sessions and mental health gap action program (mhGAP).

Towards this end, the Health Technology Assessment Council (HTAC) created by virtue of Republic Act No. 11223 or the Universal Health Care Act, in consultation with the PCMH shall review the existing case rate packages of PhilHealth for mental and behavioral disorders and recommend an appropriate increase in benefit package taking into consideration current costs in medical services.

Section 5. ***Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** — The PhilHealth Secretary of DOH, in consultation with Health Technology Assessment Council (HTAC), the PCMH and other key stakeholders, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to implement the provisions of this Act.

Section 6. ***Appropriations.*** – The amount necessary to implement this Act shall be charged against the total revenue of PhilHealth, composed of premium contributions from direct contributors and premium subsidies of the government for the indirect contributors.

Section 7. ***Separability Clause.*** — If any provision or part of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the remaining parts or provisions not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 8. ***Repealing Clause.*** –Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order, letter of instruction, rule or regulation inconsistent or contrary to the provision of this Act is hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Section 9. ***Effectivity Clause.*** – This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following its publication in the Official Gazette or a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,