



Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Nineteenth Congress
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 8884



Introduced by Representative LORDAN G. SUAN

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The steady increase in the number of mental health cases has reached an alarming rate. This phenomenon is not exclusive to the Philippines but has been affecting all countries worldwide. Some health professionals called this the “silent pandemic” due to the steady increase in the number of people affected, the devastating effects on individual lives, and the stress it brings to public health systems. This is made worse by the fact that most mental health cases are not reported due to the stigma attached to it.

The case of the Philippines is a real concern. The National Center for Mental Health reported that in 2019, it received 712 suicide-related and 2,413 mental health-related calls. There were 2,810 suicides during that year. By the year 2020, suicide-related calls increased to 2,841 and 8,176 mental health-related calls. Actual suicide increased to 4,420 cases. In 2021, suicide-related calls almost doubled to 5,167 and mental health-related calls increased to 9,730. In 2020, the World Health Organization pegged the number of Filipinos suffering from mental, neurological and substance use disorders at 3.6M.

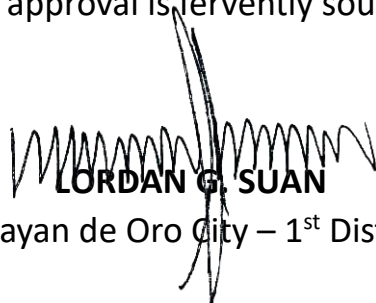
Children and young adults are not spared by this problem. The report from the Department of Education showed that 404 students died of suicide in the school year 2021-2022 and 2,417 students tried ending their life in that same period. The 2021 University of the Philippines Population Institute Survey revealed that almost one in every five Filipino youth aged 15 -24 considered committing suicide and around 1.5M attempted suicide. This is an alarming increase from the 574,000 reported attempted suicide in 2013.

The Harvard Humanitarian Initiatives surveyed local mental health and psychosocial support providers in 2020, with the assistance of the Philippine Psychiatric Association and Psychological Association of the Philippines. The survey showed that affordability, stigma, and stigma-related perceptions are the main barriers that hinder Filipinos from seeking mental health care and remedies. Of these barriers, the high cost of mental health care landed as the topmost concern among Filipinos. In short, it is expensive for Filipinos to avail mental health care.

PhilHealth's mental health benefits at the moment include hospitalization benefits for mental disorders, and assessment and rehabilitation sessions for children with developmental disabilities. It now includes outpatient benefits like consultations with psychiatrists and neurologists. However, closer inspection reveals that these benefits remain limited and inadequate. The package offered by PhilHealth fails to consider among others the cost of consultations, the longevity of treatment and the cost of medication. It also lacks a mechanism to assess, yearly, the effectiveness and adequacy of its benefits.

This bill seeks to provide a PhilHealth comprehensive mental health benefits package that is responsive to the needs of the suffering Filipinos.

In light of the preceding, this bill's approval is fervently sought.



LORDAN G. SUAN

Cagayan de Oro City – 1st District



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HOUSE BILL NO. 8884

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AN ACT
PROVIDING A COMPREHENSIVE BENEFITS PACKAGE TO MENTAL HEALTH
CLIENTS UNDER PHILHEALTH'S NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM
(NHIP) AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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 “Mental Health
2 Benefits Act of 2023.”

3 **SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy.** — It is hereby declared policies of the state:

- 4 a) To protect and promote the right to health of the people;
5 b) To adopt an integrated and comprehensive approach to health
6 development which shall endeavor to make essential goods, health,
7 and other social services available to all the people at an affordable
8 cost; and
9 c) To prioritize the needs of the underprivileged, sick, elderly, disabled,
10 women, and children, and to provide free medical care to paupers.

11 Toward achieving these ends, the state deepens the value it gives to the
12 mental well-being of the people through responsive and accessible services to

13 service users. It commits to providing adequate investments in improving and
14 treating those suffering from mental health conditions.

15 **SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.*** — This Act shall adopt the following terms and
16 definitions provided by Republic Act No. 11036 or the Mental Health Act:

- 17 a) Mental Health refers to a state of well-being in which the individual
18 realizes one's own abilities and potentials, copes adequately with the
19 normal stresses of life, displays resilience in the face of extreme life
20 events, works productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a
21 positive contribution to the community;
- 22 b) Mental Health Condition refers to a neurologic or psychiatric
23 condition characterized by the existence of a recognizable, clinically-
24 significant disturbance in an individual's cognition, emotional
25 regulation, or behavior that reflects a genetic or acquired dysfunction
26 in the neurobiological, psychosocial, or developmental processes
27 underlying mental functioning. The determination of neurologic and
28 psychiatric conditions shall be based on scientifically-accepted
29 medical nomenclature and best available scientific and medical
30 evidence;
- 31 c) Mental Health Services refer to psychosocial, psychiatric or
32 neurologic activities and programs along the whole range of the
33 mental health support services including promotion, prevention,
34 treatment, and aftercare, which are provided by mental health
35 facilities and mental health professionals; and
- 36 d) Mental Health Clients or Service User refers to a person with lived
37 experience of any mental health condition including persons who
38 require, or are undergoing psychiatric, neurologic or psychosocial
39 care;

40 **SEC. 4. *Mental Health Benefits Package.*** — A Mental Health Benefits
41 Package shall be provided under the NHIP. Within six (6) months from the
42 effectivity of this Act, the Department of Health (DOH), Philippine Health
43 Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth), and Philippine Council for Mental Health
44 (PCMH), in consultation with mental health associations and mental health
45 service providers, shall develop the Mental Health Benefits Package which shall
46 cover the following:

- 47 a.) In-patient mental health treatment;
- 48 b.) Out-patient mental health treatment;
- 49 c.) Acute in-patient and Emergency services;
- 50 d.) Psychiatric services;
- 51 e.) Diagnostic assessments;
- 52 f.) Psychotherapy sessions;
- 53 g.) Psychiatric medications;
- 54 h.) Telemedicine consultations; and
- 55 i.) Psychotropic medicines.

56 **SEC. 5. *Review.*** — The Health Technology Assessment Council (HTAC) which
57 is created under Republic Act No. 11223 shall conduct a yearly review of the
58 Mental Health Benefits Package under PhilHealth and recommend an
59 appropriate increase based on the prevailing cost of medication and services.

60 **SEC. 6. *Appropriations.*** — The amount necessary for the implementation of
61 this Act shall be taken from the revenue of PhilHealth.

62 **SEC. 7. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** — Within sixty (60) days from
63 the effectivity of this Act, the DOH, PhilHealth, and PCMH, shall, in consultation
64 with mental health associations, mental health service providers, and other
65 relevant stakeholders, formulate the necessary rules and regulations for the
66 effective implementation of this Act.

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

71 **SEC. 9. *Repealing Clause.*** — All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders,
72 memoranda, circulars, and other issuances, or parts thereof, which are
73 inconsistent with the Act, are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

74 **SEC. 10. *Effectivity Clause.*** — This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after
75 its publication in the Official Gazette or a website provided for by law.

Approved,