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Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

First Regular Session
TWENTIETH CONGRESS

House Bill No. 850



Introduced by REP. JESUS MANUEL "BONG" C. SUNTAY

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The World Health Organization estimates that 1 in every 100 children has Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). In the Philippines, many children also live with other neurodevelopmental conditions like ADHD, dyslexia, and dyspraxia, which often go undiagnosed or unsupported. These conditions can severely affect social behavior, communication, learning, and overall well-being. Early identification and specialized education are proven to significantly improve outcomes for these children.

Despite this, there remains no law in the Philippines mandating comprehensive early identification, assessment, support, and education of children with ASD or other neurodivergent conditions. Many teachers lack the training, and schools the resources, to provide appropriate educational interventions. This leads to missed opportunities, school dropouts, and social isolation for thousands of Filipino children.

This bill seeks to fill that gap by:

1. Requiring early identification and assessment of children with ASD and other neurodevelopmental conditions.
2. Expanding coverage to related conditions such as ADHD, dyslexia, and dyspraxia.
3. Training teachers nationwide through grants and scholarships.
4. Providing incentives to schools and LGUs that establish inclusive education programs.
5. Mandating inclusive infrastructure standards.
6. Promoting public-private partnerships and creating a national data system to inform policy.

Through these interventions, we aim to build a more inclusive educational system where every neurodivergent child can learn, thrive, and reach their full potential. The immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.


REP. JESUS MANUEL "BONG" C. SUNTAY

1 **Republic of the Philippines**
2 **HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**
3 **Quezon City**

4
5 **First Regular Session**
6 **TWENTIETH CONGRESS**
7

8 **House Bill No. 850**
9

10 Introduced by REP. JESUS MANUEL “BONG” C. SUNTAY
11

12
13 **AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE IDENTIFICATION, ASSESSMENT,**
14 **SUPPORT, AND EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM**
15 **DISORDER AND OTHER NEURODIVERGENT CONDITIONS,**
16 **ESTABLISHING INCENTIVES FOR INCLUSIVE PROGRAMS, AND FOR**
17 **OTHER PURPOSES**
18

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

21
22 SECTION 1. Short Title.

23 This Act shall be known as the “Autism Spectrum and Neurodivergent Education Act.”
24

25 SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy.

26 It is the policy of the State to protect and promote the physical, mental, moral, spiritual,
27 intellectual, and social well-being of the youth, recognizing their vital role in nation-
28 building. The State shall ensure early identification, assessment, support, and education
29 for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and other neurodevelopmental conditions.
30 It shall promote inclusivity and non-discrimination in the education system.
31

32 SEC. 3. Definition of Terms.

33 For purposes of this Act:

- 34 a) Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) — A complex developmental disability including
35 Autism, Asperger Syndrome, Pervasive Developmental Disorder NOS, Rett Syndrome,
36 and Child Disintegrative Disorder as diagnosed by a licensed physician.
37 b) Neurodevelopmental conditions — Conditions affecting brain development and
38 function, including but not limited to ASD, ADHD, Specific Learning Disabilities such as
39 dyslexia and dyscalculia, dyspraxia, and similar conditions diagnosed by licensed
40 professionals.
41 c) Differently-abled children — Those under 18 who have not completed high school and
42 who, due to mental, physical, emotional, or learning challenges, require special
43 educational services.
44 d) Gifted children — Under 18, exhibiting advanced mental capacity as determined by
45 professional evaluation.

1 e) Special education services — Programs to meet the educational needs of differently-
2 abled children, including diagnostics, evaluation, counseling, instructional and
3 therapeutic programs, transportation, and supportive services.

4 f) Inclusive education programs — Education settings that provide accommodations,
5 modifications, and services allowing neurodivergent learners to access education
6 alongside neurotypical peers.

7 8 SEC. 4. Coverage.

9 This Act applies to children with ASD and other neurodevelopmental conditions, as
10 defined herein, from early childhood through high school.

11 12 SEC. 5. Special Needs Identification and Education Program.

13 A Special Needs Identification and Education Program shall be developed, including
14 early screening, diagnosis, and education training for selected public school teachers
15 nationwide.

16 17 SEC. 6. Autism and Neurodivergent Ombudsman.

18 The Secretary of Education shall appoint an Autism and Neurodivergent Ombudsman
19 who shall:

20 a) Develop best-practice guidelines for educational assessment and interventions for
21 neurodivergent children from three years of age;

22 b) Oversee certification of inclusive education programs;

23 c) Coordinate with DOH and DSWD to ensure comprehensive health, social, and
24 educational services;

25 d) Prepare an annual report on enrollment, retention, and outcomes for neurodivergent
26 students, submitted to Congress.

27 28 SEC. 7. Regional Support and Early Childhood Centers.

29 Regional professional development centers must have an autism/neurodivergent
30 specialist. Early childhood education centers shall be established, subject to
31 appropriations, prioritizing underserved regions with limited or nonexistent resources.

32 33 SEC. 8. Review of Special Needs Education Services.

34 The Secretary of Education shall appoint regional and city advisory committees,
35 including parents, professionals, and community representatives, to review special
36 education services and provide advice on problems related to neurodivergent education.

37 38 SEC. 9. Autism Spectrum and Neurodivergent Research and Report.

39 Within one year of effectivity, DepEd and DOH shall jointly submit to Congress a 10-
40 year strategic plan addressing ASD and other neurodevelopmental conditions,
41 including:

42 a) Determining prevalence among students;

43 b) Evaluating impacts on attendance, development, and learning outcomes;

44 c) Reviewing current national and local programs and their effectiveness.

45 46 SEC. 10. Neurodivergent Educator Development Grants.

1 DepEd shall establish scholarships and grants for teachers pursuing special or inclusive
2 education certification, covering tuition, materials, and living stipends, with priority to
3 teachers in underserved areas.
4

5 SEC. 11. Incentives for Inclusive Education Programs.

6 To encourage inclusive programs:

7 a) Private schools establishing certified inclusive programs shall receive tax deductions
8 equivalent to 200% of documented expenses for specialized classrooms, training, or
9 therapy centers;

10 b) Public schools with certified inclusive programs shall receive priority in DepEd
11 modernization grants;

12 c) LGUs achieving and maintaining certified inclusive education programs shall receive
13 performance-based cash incentives from the DepEd.
14

15 SEC. 12. Inclusive Infrastructure Standards.

16 All new or renovated public schools shall include sensory-friendly classrooms, therapy
17 spaces, accessible restrooms, and quiet areas, in compliance with standards issued by
18 DepEd, DPWH, and NCDA.
19

20 SEC. 13. Partnership with Private Sector and NGOs.

21 A National Neurodivergent Support Council shall be formed, including DepEd, NGOs,
22 parent organizations, and private stakeholders, to advise on curriculum, teacher
23 training, community programs, and outreach.
24

25 SEC. 14. Data Collection and National Registry.

26 DepEd, DOH, and PSA shall establish a confidential National Registry of
27 Neurodivergent Learners, aggregating data on prevalence, services received, and
28 educational outcomes. Data shall inform policy while upholding child privacy rights.
29 Annual summary reports shall be submitted to Congress.
30

31 SEC. 15. Funding.

32 The amount of Two Hundred Million Pesos (P200,000,000.00) is hereby appropriated
33 annually to implement this Act, indexed to inflation, to cover training, infrastructure,
34 and support services.
35

36 SEC. 16. Separability Clause.

37 If any provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining
38 provisions shall remain in full force and effect.
39

40 SEC. 17. Repealing Clause.

41 All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, issuances, letters of instruction,
42 administrative orders, rules, regulations, or local ordinances inconsistent with this Act
43 are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.
44

45 SEC. 18. Effectivity Clause.

46 This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or
47 in a newspaper of general circulation.