



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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS  
FIRST REGULAR SESSION

House Bill No. 2021



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INTRODUCED BY **Rep. ZIAUR-RAHMAN ALONTO ADIONG**

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### EXPLANATORY NOTE

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a lifelong developmental condition that affects communication, behavior, and social interaction. The World Health Organization estimates that 1 in 100 children globally is diagnosed with autism. In the Philippines, while awareness of autism has improved, access to timely diagnosis, therapy, and support services remains heavily concentrated in urban centers, leaving thousands of individuals in the provinces without appropriate care or intervention.

This bill seeks to address the glaring disparity by mandating the establishment of a **Center for Autism in every province** of the country. These Centers will serve as local hubs for early diagnosis, therapeutic services, educational support, family counseling, vocational training, and community-based advocacy.

The proposed Centers will function not only as clinical facilities but as community resource institutions that aim to equip families, educators, health workers, and local governments with the knowledge and tools to provide care, acceptance, and opportunity to every individual on the autism spectrum.

Each provincial Center shall operate under whole be established the guidance of the Department of Health (DOH) in coordination with the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and Department of Local Government (DILG). A National Autism Board, under the Office of the President, which will ensure policy coherence, standardization of services, and overall program direction.

The establishment of these Centers will also help identify and reach indigent individuals with autism who are often neglected due to geographic and financial barriers. By ensuring the presence of at least one Center per province, we create a foundation for a more inclusive and compassionate society—one that values the potential of every Filipino, regardless of ability.

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

  
**REP. ZIAUR-RAHMAN ALONTO ADIONG**  
**1<sup>st</sup> District, Lanao Del Sur**



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**AN ACT  
ESTABLISHING A CENTER FOR AUTISM IN EVERY PROVINCE OF THE  
PHILIPPINES AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

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

**SECTION 1. Declaration of Policy.**

It is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote and protect the rights of all individuals, including those with autism and other developmental disabilities, to live a full, healthy, and dignified life. The State shall ensure access to appropriate health care, education, therapy, and support services for persons with autism and shall take proactive measures to eliminate barriers to inclusion and participation.

**SECTION 2. Definition of Terms.**

As used in this Act:

- a. **Autism** refers to a developmental disability that typically appears within the first three years of life, resulting from a neurological disorder that affects brain function.
- b. **Disability** means a physical, sensory, or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.
- c. **Disabled Gifted** are individuals who exhibit high performance in intellectual, artistic, or leadership capabilities despite having a disability.

- d. **Disabled Worker** refers to a worker whose capacity to earn is reduced due to physical, sensory, or mental impairment.
- e. **Handicap** means a disadvantage arising from an impairment or disability that limits an individual's ability to perform age-appropriate activities.
- f. **Impairment** is any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical structure or function.
- g. **Indigent Patient** refers to a person with disability whose income falls below the government-defined poverty threshold.
- h. **Rehabilitation** is an integrated approach involving medical, psychological, social, educational, and vocational measures to enable persons with disabilities to attain maximum independence.
- i. **Special Education (SPED)** is a customized form of education designed for learners with special needs who cannot benefit fully from regular education programs.

### **SECTION 3. Establishment of a Center for Autism in Every Province.**

There shall be established, under the supervision of the Department of Health (DOH), a **Center for Autism in every province** of the Philippines. Each provincial Center shall be tasked to:

- a. Formulate and implement localized autism response plans consistent with national standards;
- b. Operate diagnostic, therapeutic, and rehabilitation clinics;
- c. Provide vocational training for autistic individuals, especially adults;
- d. Offer free diagnosis, therapy, and rehabilitation services to indigent individuals with autism;
- e. Conduct regular training programs for teachers, therapists, medical professionals, and caregivers;
- f. Provide counseling, family support, orientation, and referral services; and
- g. Promote awareness and advocacy programs about autism and inclusive development.

### **SECTION 4. Governing Structure.**

Each provincial Center shall be managed by a Provincial Autism Coordinating Committee (PACC) composed of:

- a. The Provincial Health Officer as Chairperson;
- b. The Provincial Social Welfare and Development Officer as Vice Chairperson;
- c. A representative from the Provincial Schools Division Office of the Department of Education (DepEd);
- d. A representative from Department of Local Government (DILG)
- e. One (1) parent-representative of a person with autism; and
- f. One (1) representative from the provincial medical or therapeutic association.

There shall also be established a National Autism Board (NAB) which shall provide the national-level oversight and policy direction which shall be attached to the Office of the President. The National Autism Board (NAB) shall be composed of the following:

- a. One (1) representative from the Department of Health, as Chairperson;
- b. One (1) representative from the Department of Education, as Vice-Chairperson;
- c. One (1) representative from the Department of Social Welfare and Development;
- d. One (1) representative from the Department of Local Government
- e. Two (2) representatives from the National Council on Disability Affairs;
- f. Two (2) representatives from the Autism Society Philippines;
- g. Two (2) representatives from parents of children and adults with autism.

## **SECTION 5. Appropriations.**

The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriations of the concerned agencies. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the continued operation of the Centers shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

## **SECTION 6. Implementing Rules and Regulations.**

The Department of Health, in coordination with the Department of Education, Department of Social Welfare and Development, and the National Council for Disability Affairs shall issue the implementing rules and regulations of this Act within ninety (90) days from its effectivity.

## **SECTION 7. Separability Clause.**

If any part or provision of this Act is held unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

## **SECTION 8. Repealing Clause.**

All laws, executive orders, rules and regulations, or parts thereof which are inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

## **SECTION 9. Effectivity.**

This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in at least two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,