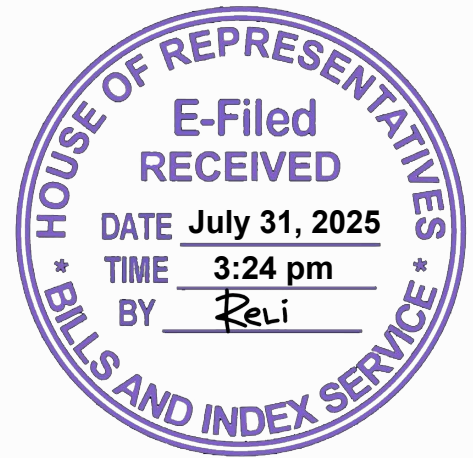




Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 2834



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

AN ACT
INSTITUTING A COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL CARE AND SUPPORT PLAN FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS, PROVIDING FOR THEIR RIGHTS AND WELFARE, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The proposed **Philippine Care and Support Plan for Children with Special Needs Act** seeks to address the systemic challenges faced by children with special needs (CWSNs) in the Philippines, including those with autism, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, and other developmental disabilities. Despite existing laws like RA 7277 (Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities) and RA 11650 (Inclusive Education Act), significant gaps remain in healthcare access, education, and social inclusion. Many CWSNs lack affordable therapies, diagnostic services, and specialized education, while stigma and discrimination persist in communities and workplaces. This bill aims to create a comprehensive national care plan to unify and strengthen support systems for CWSNs, ensuring their rights and needs are fully met.

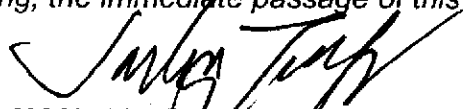
The bill's primary objectives include establishing a holistic support system that integrates early intervention, education, and healthcare services. It mandates inter-agency collaboration among the DOH, DepEd, DSWD, and LGUs to streamline efforts and eliminate fragmentation in service delivery. Additionally, it introduces measures to combat discrimination through public awareness campaigns and stricter enforcement of anti-discrimination policies. Key provisions of the bill include a centralized registry of CWSNs under the DSWD to ensure targeted aid, expanded Special Education (SPED) programs with trained teachers and adapted curricula, and PhilHealth coverage for developmental screenings, therapies, and assistive

devices. The bill also penalizes schools and workplaces that deny equal opportunities to CWSNs and requires sensitivity training for public service providers, including transport personnel and law enforcement.


The proposed legislation is grounded in both national and international frameworks, including RA 7277 (as amended by RA 10754), which guarantees the rights of persons with disabilities, and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which the Philippines ratified in 2008. By harmonizing these laws into a single, actionable plan, the bill ensures that CWSNs receive the support they need to thrive. The expected impact includes early intervention to reduce long-term costs for families and the government, greater social inclusion for CWSNs in education and employment, and economic empowerment for their families through subsidies and livelihood programs.

The urgency of this bill cannot be overstated. With 1 in 100 Filipino children diagnosed with autism (DOH, 2023) and 70% of CWSNs lacking access to essential therapies, the need for a unified, nationwide care plan is clear. This legislation represents a moral and practical imperative to uplift CWSNs and their families, ensuring they can participate fully in society. Immediate passage of this bill will pave the way for a more inclusive and equitable Philippines, where no child with special needs is left behind.


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



HON. JOCELYN P. TULFO
Representative, ACT-CIS PARTYLIST



HON. EDVIC G. YAP
Representative, ACT-CIS PARTYLIST



HON. RALPH WENDEL P. TULFO
Representative, 2ND DISTRICT OF QUEZON CITY



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

1 **Section 1. Short Title.**

2 This Act shall be known as the "*Philippine Care and Support Plan for Children*
3 *with Special Needs Act.*"

4 **Section 2. Declaration of Policy.**

5 The State affirms its paramount role in protecting and upholding the rights of all
6 children with special needs. It is committed to fostering their well-being and
7 ensuring their full integration into mainstream society. To achieve this, the State
8 recognizes the imperative to legislate for the unique needs of these children. It
9 commits to institutionalize comprehensive policies and programs that will:

- 10 • Increase public awareness and understanding of special needs.
- 11 • Develop clear and consistent pathways for early detection and diagnosis.
- 12 • Provide access to quality education and meaningful employment
13 opportunities, enabling children with special needs to live independently
14 within their communities.
- 15 • Minimize and ultimately eradicate discrimination.

- Enable the private sector to offer vital services that complement government initiatives.

Section 3. Definition of Terms.

As used in this Act, the following terms are defined:

- a. **"Children"** refers to individuals below eighteen (18) years of age, or those over eighteen (18) years of age but are incapable of taking care of themselves or protecting themselves from abuse, neglect, cruelty, exploitation, or discrimination because of a physical or mental disability or condition.
- b. **"Special Needs"** refers to a range of conditions primarily characterized by challenges in social skills, repetitive behaviors, and communication, alongside unique strengths, as defined in the latest edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.
- c. **"Diagnosis"** means the necessary assessments, including but not limited to neuro-psychological evaluations, genetic testing, MRIs, hearing tests, and psychometric tests, conducted to identify or rule out special needs and/or developmental disabilities.
- d. **"Intervention"** means any interceding action taken to improve the prognosis of special needs. This may include medical, pharmacologic, therapeutic, educational, and non-traditional habilitative care.
- e. **"Epidemiology"** refers to the scientific study and analysis of the distribution and determinants of health conditions, such as special needs, within defined populations.

Section 4. Treatment as Persons with Disability.

Consistent with Republic Act No. 7277, as amended, all children with special needs shall be recognized and treated as Persons with Disability. They shall therefore be fully entitled to all the rights, privileges, and benefits extended to persons with disabilities under Republic Act No. 10754 and other relevant laws.

Section 5. Inter-Agency Cooperation, Accountability, and Research.

The Department of Health (DOH), in close coordination with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Education (DepEd), the Philippine Council for Mental Health (PCMH), other academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations, is hereby mandated to establish and evaluate activities that will:

1. **Inform and educate the public** on such disabilities, increasing awareness regarding their causes, early detection, management, treatment, and developmental milestones.
2. **Promote research** for the development and validation of reliable screening tools for these disabilities.

- 1 3. **Develop a comprehensive curriculum** for continuing education to
2 assist professionals in recognizing the need for and effectively using valid
3 and reliable screening tools.
- 4 4. **Promote early screening** of children and individuals identified as higher
5 risk for such disabilities.
- 6 5. **Advance research** to determine evidence-based practices for
7 interventions, develop robust guidelines for these interventions, and
8 widely disseminate related research and guidelines.
- 9 6. **Encourage public participation** in decisions affecting individuals with
10 such disabilities.

11 **Section 6. Continuing Education and Training for Public Service Providers.**

12 All officers and staff providing public services, including but not limited to
13 personnel from the Department of Health (DOH), Department of Social Welfare
14 and Development (DSWD), Department of Education (DepEd), Department of
15 Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of
16 Transportation (DOTr), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG),
17 the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), Commission on Higher
18 Education (CHED), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
19 (TESDA), National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA), Persons with
20 Disabilities Affairs Offices (PDAOs) at the Local Government Units (LGUs), and
21 Public Safety Units (military, police, firemen, and other first responders), shall
22 undergo mandatory continuing education. This training aims to empower service
23 providers to be more responsive, sensitive, and compassionate in delivering
24 services to children with special needs and their families.

25 **Section 7. Epidemiological Surveillance Programs.**

26 The Department of Health (DOH), in coordination with various academic
27 institutions and non-governmental organizations, is hereby mandated to conduct
28 an annual epidemiological survey to determine the national prevalence of
29 special needs. The data collected from these surveys shall be provided to
30 government agencies and the private sector to facilitate the provision of
31 necessary services to children with special needs and their families.

32 **Section 8. Evidence-based Research.**

33 The DOH, the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development
34 (PCHRD), and the National Institute of Health (NIH) are mandated, in
35 coordination with local and international mental health institutions, to promote,
36 create, develop, and adopt research and strategic plans. These efforts shall
37 continually determine and establish evidence-based practices for interventions
38 in the treatment, care, and societal integration of children with special needs.

39 **Section 9. Early Detection and Intervention of Special Needs.**

40 The DOH, in coordination with the DepEd, is hereby mandated to establish a
41 comprehensive program for early screening and detection of special needs. This
42 program shall provide appropriate services to infants and toddlers with

1 developmental delays associated with special needs and ensure the central
2 PWD registry is accurately and timely updated.

3 **Section 10. Protection Against Discrimination in Education.**

4 The DepEd, CHED, and TESDA shall formulate or update policies and protocols
5 to ensure that all educational institutions are truly inclusive for learners with
6 special needs. This inclusivity shall cover, but not be limited to, acceptance into
7 academic or training programs, provision of instructional supports, and
8 appropriate behavior management.

9 **Section 11. Provision of Equal Opportunities for Employment.**

10 The DOLE and the Civil Service Commission (CSC) shall formulate policies and
11 programs to ensure that children with special needs are provided equal
12 opportunities for gainful employment and apprenticeship in both the private and
13 public sectors.

14 **Section 12. Mandatory Insurance Coverage and Prohibition Against
15 Discrimination Thereof.**

16 All children with special needs shall be covered by the National Health Insurance
17 Program of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PHIC). Necessary
18 funds to ensure the enrollment of children with special needs, who may not be
19 covered under existing categories, shall be sourced from the National Health
20 Insurance Fund of PHIC, specifically earmarked from the proceeds of sin tax
21 collections, as stipulated in Republic Act No. 10351. This coverage shall also
22 include the cost of early screening and detection programs as an available
23 benefit to its members. Furthermore, the Department of Finance (DOF) shall
24 issue guidelines to ensure that all insurance providers offer children with special
25 needs **access to life insurance instruments and include allied medical
26 procedures** (such as occupational and speech therapies) in the health
27 insurance benefits of policyholders.

28 **Section 13. Protection in Cases of Disaster and Emergencies.**

29 The DILG, DSWD, and the DND shall formulate the necessary policies and
30 protocols to ensure that the military, public safety professionals, local
31 government units, and first responders provide essential life-saving support to
32 children with special needs, particularly those with behavioral and
33 communication challenges, during disasters, calamities, and other emergencies.

34 **Section 14. Access to Transportation.**

35 The DOTr shall formulate the necessary policies and protocols to ensure that
36 children with special needs, especially those with behavioral and communication
37 challenges, and their families are given reasonable accommodation in accessing
38 all forms of transportation by service providers over land, sea, and air.

39 **Section 15. Reasonable Accommodation in Legal Proceedings.**

40 The DOJ shall formulate the necessary policies and protocols to ensure that
41 criminal justice agencies and professionals provide essential accommodations

1 and protections to children with special needs with behavioral and
2 communication challenges, whether they are the accused, victims, or witnesses
3 in criminal cases.

4 **Section 16. The Philippine Care and Support Plan.**

5 The Philippine Council for Mental Health (PCMH), a multi-sector body
6 established by the Mental Health Act, in coordination with other government
7 agencies and stakeholders, shall develop, regularly update, and meticulously
8 monitor the implementation of the Philippine Care and Support Plan (PCSP).
9 This PCSP shall serve as a holistic medium-term plan embodying the provisions
10 of this Act, designed to effectively respond to the needs of children with special
11 needs and their families, providing essential guidance for stakeholders in both
12 public and private sectors. The PCMH shall also coordinate the development
13 and implementation of necessary policies and programs to fully operationalize
14 all PCSPs and ensure the comprehensive needs of children with special needs
15 are met.

16 **Section 17. Appropriations.**

17 The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act shall be included
18 and incorporated in the annual General Appropriations Act for the Department
19 of Health (DOH), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD),
20 the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), and the Philippine Health
21 Insurance Corporation (PHIC). Furthermore, financial assistance shall be
22 provided to Local Government Units (LGUs) to support the implementation of
23 programs and services for children with special needs at the grassroots level,
24 the funding for which shall also be incorporated in the annual General
25 Appropriations Act.

26 **Section 18. Separability Clause.**

27 Should any provision of this Act be declared invalid or unconstitutional, the
28 remaining provisions not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and
29 effect.

30 **Section 19. Repealing Clause.**

31 All laws, executive orders, presidential decrees, presidential proclamations,
32 letters of instruction, rules and regulations or parts thereof inconsistent with the
33 provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

34 **Section 20. Effectivity.**

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

37 Approved,