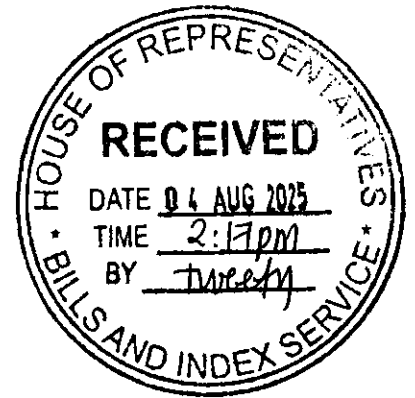


Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 2927



Introduced by Hon. Florabel Co Yatco

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Masakit para sa isang magulang, lalo na isang nanay, na masabihan na ang kanyang anak ay may diperensya.

But would it not be more helpful for the child's situation if, early on, it is already known that they have special needs? Many children are not assessed and diagnosed because their families cannot afford to consult specialists. As a result, they grow up misunderstood by others and unable to communicate with the world around them.

The 1987 Philippine Constitution mandates the State to protect and promote the rights of all citizens, especially the rights of children, particularly those with special needs, to access education, health, and development services. Republic Act No. 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, and Republic Act No. 11650 or the Inclusive Education Act, forges this mandate by institutionalizing inclusive learning for learners with disabilities further underscoring the obligation of the State to ensure that children with disabilities and special needs are not left behind in the pursuit of inclusive, equitable, and quality education.

Unfortunately, despite the enactment of these progressive laws, many children with special needs across the country continue to remain undiagnosed, unsupported, and excluded from appropriate educational and developmental interventions. The lack of an institutionalized and systematized early detection, assessment, and support mechanism, such as accessible specialists, diagnostic tools, and community-level support systems, prevents many children from receiving the assistance they need at a critical stage in their growth and development. Early intervention is vital in ensuring that these children reach their full potential, avoid further developmental delays, and participate meaningfully in society, especially in remote and underserved areas.

Thus, this bill seeks to establish and institutionalize a national program for the early detection, assessment, and support of children with special needs as a vital component of the country's inclusive education strategy by establishing a National Early Detection and Support Program under the Department of Health. The proposed measure aims to create a framework that ensures the following:

1. Systematic and community-based screening and detection of children with special needs starting from early childhood;

2. Accessible and timely assessment services provided by trained professionals in schools and community centers;
3. Individualized support programs and interventions, integrated into the education system and implemented in collaboration with families, educators, health professionals, and social workers;
4. Capacity-building of stakeholders, including teachers, barangay health workers, and local government units to identify and respond to the needs of children with special needs;
5. Allocation of adequate funding and resources to support the sustainability and nationwide implementation of the program.

It mandates all local government units to implement localized screening and support services, which can equip parents and caregivers with the knowledge to support their children. Also, the measure emphasizes the importance of a multi-sectoral and rights-based approach, guided by the principles of equity, inclusion, and respect for diversity, in accordance with international commitments such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

Para sa mga anak na kulang man sa tingin ng iba, kayo ang kumukumpleto sa buhay naming mga nanay.

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



HON. FLORABEL CO YATCO

Representative

Nanay Partylist

Twentieth Congress of the
Republic of the Philippines
First Regular Session

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
H.B. No. 2927

Introduced by Hon. Florabel Co Yatco

**AN ACT ESTABLISHING AND INSTITUTIONALIZING THE EARLY
DETECTION, ASSESSMENT, AND SUPPORT OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL
NEEDS PROVIDING THEM PROGRAM AS A NATIONAL STRATEGY IN
SUPPORT OF THE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION ACT, APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

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 "Early Detection and Support for Children with Special Needs Act".

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. - It is the policy of the State to uphold and protect the rights of children with disabilities to inclusive education and equal opportunities. This Act seeks to provide a program to enhance early detection, assessment, and timely intervention for children with special needs, especially in underserved and marginalized areas. Towards this end, the State shall institutionalize early detection, assessment, and intervention strategies to ensure that all children, regardless of disability, are provided with the necessary support and services that will enable them to fully develop their potential and participate meaningfully in society.

SECTION 3. Objectives.

This Act aims to:

- a) Establish a national program for the early detection, assessment, and support of children with special needs;
- b) Ensure access to early intervention programs and services for children from birth up to age 12;
- c) Strengthen the implementation of Republic Act No. 11650 or the Inclusive Education Act by integrating early intervention as a foundational component;
- d) Build the capacity of schools, local government units (LGUs), and community health workers to identify and respond to the needs of children with special needs;

- e) Promote awareness, inclusion, and support for children with special needs among families, educators, and the general public.

SECTION 4. Definition of Terms.- As used in this Act:

- a) *Children with Special Needs (CWSN)* refer to children with physical, sensory, developmental delay, or behavioral disabilities that require additional care and support and specialized educational interventions;
- b) *Early Detection* is the process of identifying developmental delays, disabilities, or atypical behaviors in young children at the earliest possible stage;
- c) *Assessment* is a comprehensive evaluation conducted by qualified professionals to determine a child's developmental status and specific support needs;
- d) *Early Intervention* consists of programs or services designed to support the development of children with special needs, including therapies, specialized education, and family support;
- e) *Inclusive Education* is a system of education that ensures access and participation of all learners, particularly those with disabilities, in regular schools and learning environments;
- f) *Inclusive Learning Resource Center (ILRC)* refers to learning support centers established under RA 11650 to facilitate inclusive education;
- g) *Intervention* refers to medical, developmental, behavioral, or educational programs and therapies to support a child's development;
- h) *Developmental Pediatrician* refers to a pediatric specialist in child development and behavior;
- i) *Speech and/or Language Therapist* refers to a licensed healthcare professional who evaluates and treats communication disorders and delays; and
- j) *Occupational Therapist* refers to a licensed healthcare professional who provides occupational therapy services. This involves activities that help individuals across all ages with physical, psychosocial, developmental, or emotional disabilities.

SECTION 5. National Program for Early Detection, Assessment, and Support.-The Department of Education (DepEd), in coordination with the Department of Health (DOH), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), shall establish and implement a National Program for the Early Detection, Assessment, and Support of Children with Special Needs. This program shall include:

- a) Community-based screening and identification systems;
- b) Provision of multidisciplinary assessment services in schools and health centers;
- c) Individualized intervention plans and inclusive education support services;

- d) Training and capacity-building for teachers, child development workers, and health professionals; and
- e) Family education, guidance, and counseling services.

SECTION 6. National Early Detection and Support Program for Children with Special Needs (CWSN).- The National Program for the Early Detection, Assessment, and Support of Children with Special Needs shall be established and shall be led by the Department of Health (DOH), in close coordination with the Department of Education (DepEd), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and Local Government Units (LGUs).

SECTION 7. Role of Local Government Units (LGUs) in the establishment of Early Detection and Support Units.- All provincial, city, and municipal LGUs shall establish an Early Detection and Support Units (EDSUs) within their health offices or ILRCs. LGUs shall integrate early detection and intervention services in their local health and education programs. They shall establish or designate Child Development and Assessment Centers (CDACs) to provide localized support and referral services. They shall also be mandated to deploy and train barangay health workers to conduct initial screening and referral, and maintain a registry of children assessed and provided interventions.

The Department of Health (DOH) shall assign a developmental pediatrician and speech therapist in provinces that shall be part of the EDSUs.

SECTION 8. Integration with the Inclusive Education Act.

The services and programs under this Act shall form an integral part of the implementation of Republic Act No. 11650 (Inclusive Education Act), and all public and private schools shall incorporate early detection and intervention mechanisms in their school programs and services.

The DepEd, in coordination with teacher education institutions and relevant agencies, shall develop and implement a training program for teachers, guidance counselors, barangay health workers, and other stakeholders involved in the delivery of services to children with special need

SECTION 9. Capacity Building and Standardization.- The DOH, in coordination with the city and municipal health offices of local government units (LGUs), shall develop and implement the standardized developmental screening and assessment protocols; facilitate training for LGU health personnel in early detection, including barangay health workers; and provide support in hiring and deployment of developmental pediatricians, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, and other related specialists.

SECTION 10. Parent and Caregiver Education.- All EDSUs shall conduct mandatory seminars and workshops for parents and caregivers of children identified with developmental concerns. These sessions shall:

- a) Promote understanding of their child's condition;
- b) Provide practical strategies for home-based support and care; and

- c) Encourage active participation in the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) development process.

SECTION 11. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting. – The DOH, in coordination with the Philippine Society for Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics (PSDBP), Department of Education (DepEd), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and city and municipal health offices, shall develop indicators to monitor the detection, assessment, diagnosis, and management outcomes of EDSUs and their CWSN clients. They shall conduct an annual monitoring of the Act and submit an annual report of its status to the Office of the President and to the Joint Congressional Oversight Committee.

SECTION 12. Joint Congressional Oversight Committee. – A Joint Congressional Oversight Committee, hereafter referred to as the Oversight Committee, is hereby constituted. The Oversight Committee shall set the overall framework to review the implementation of this Act. It shall also determine the inherent weaknesses in the law and recommend the necessary remedial legislation or executive measures.

The Oversight Committee is composed of seventeen (17) members, with the chairpersons of the Committee on the Welfare and the Children, Committee on Health and Committee on Social Services of the House of Representatives, and the Committee on Health and Demography and Committee on Women, Children and Family and Gender Equality of the Senate as co-chairpersons; and six (6) members from each House, to be designated by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Senate President, respectively.

The review of the implementation of this Act must include a systematic evaluation of its impact, accomplishments of the program, and performance of its implementing agencies. The Oversight Committee shall conduct the review every three (3) years reckoned from the effectivity of this Act, or whenever deemed necessary by a majority of the members of the Oversight Committee.

SECTION 13. Appropriations. – The amount needed for the implementation of this Act shall be charged to the current year's appropriations of the Department of Health (DOH). Thereafter, such amount as may be necessary for the continued implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SECTION 14. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Secretary of the Department of Health, in coordination with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Education (DepEd), National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA), National Center for Mental Health (NCMH), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), non-government organizations (NGOs) and other relevant agencies and stakeholders, shall promulgate the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) necessary for the effective implementation of this Act.

SECTION 15. Separability Clause. – If any provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain valid and subsisting.

SECTION 16. Repealing Clause. – All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations, and other issuances or parts thereof inconsistent with or contrary to the provisions of this Act are repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SECTION 17. Effectivity Clause. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation in the Philippines.

Approved,