

Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
Batasan Hills, Quezon City

Twentieth Congress  
First Regular Session

House Bill No. **3198**



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**Introduced by AKBAYAN Representatives Percival Cendaña, Atty. Jose Manuel “Chel” Diokno, and Dadah Kiram Ismula and Dinagat Islands Representative Kaka Bag-ao**

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One in every 100 Filipinos are affected by autism.

Data from the Autism Society of the Philippines indicates that lifelong developmental issues challenging almost 1.2 million Filipinos need to be addressed by governmental programs.

Parents with autistic children experience greater levels of physiological stress (Costa et al., 2017). Previous studies reveal that mothers of children with autism reported being overloaded with emotional and physical burdens, experiencing helplessness and even depression (Aguilar & Ponde, 2019; Hall, 2011; McStay et al., 2014). Meanwhile, Dunn et al. (2001) provided a comprehensive source of stress associated with the condition, which includes financial strain, limited support from family and friends, difficulties in accessing services for their child, and challenges related to their child’s behavior and communication. In addition, the quality of life of children with autism and their parents is found to be affected by the experience of stigma and poor understanding of their children’s condition (Carr & Lord, 2016).<sup>1</sup>

Given these challenges, this proposed legislation aims to: establish institutional and social mechanisms to support children and adult persons on the autism spectrum and their families; develop a clear and consistent pathway to early detection and diagnosis; provide easy access to quality health care, education, and employment opportunities such that persons on the autism spectrum may live independently within the community, to minimize or completely eradicate discrimination; and to enable the private sector to extend relevant services that will complement the government’s programs.

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict F. Reyes, Peachy G. Domingo. 2024. “A Phenomenological Study of the Lived Experience Families of Children with Autism in the Philippines” HCMCOUJS-Social Sciences, 15(1), 137-151.

Upon enactment, the “National Autism Care Plan Act” will ultimately promote an environment conducive to developing persons on the autism spectrum to become independent, self-reliant, and productive members of society, realizing their full potential and upholding their dignity.

The passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



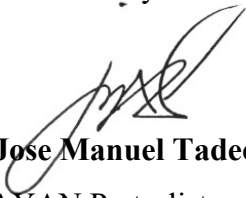
**Rep. Percival Cendaña**

AKBAYAN Party-list



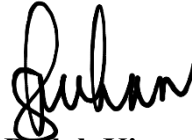
**Rep. Kaka Bag-ao**

Lone District of Dinagat Islands



**Rep. Jose Manuel Tadeo “Chel” Diokno**

AKBAYAN Party-list



**Rep. Dadah Kiram Ismula**

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**AN ACT**  
**INSTITUTING A NATIONAL AUTISM CARE PLAN, ESTABLISHING A**  
**SUB-COMMITTEE ON AUTISM UNDER THE NATIONAL COUNCIL ON**  
**DISABILITY AFFAIRS, AND PROVIDING 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 "National Autism Care Plan Act".

2  
3 **SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.*** – It is the policy of the State to protect and promote the right to  
4 health of the people to full, healthy, and holistic development. To this end, the State shall promote  
5 an environment conducive to developing persons on the autism spectrum to become independent,  
6 self-reliant, and productive members of society, realizing their full potential.

7  
8 The State commits itself to the establishment of institutional and social mechanisms to support  
9 children and adult persons on the autism spectrum and their families, develop a clear and consistent  
10 pathway to early detection and diagnosis, provide easy access to quality health care, education,  
11 and employment opportunities such that persons on the autism spectrum may live independently  
12 within the community, to minimize or completely eradicate discrimination, and to enable the  
13 private sector to extend relevant services that will complement the government’s programs. The  
14 State recognizes and respects the preferences and differences of community members, including  
15 the use of identity-first or person-first language.

16  
17 In the implementation of this policy, the State guarantees its commitment to the Universal  
18 Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Persons with  
19 Disabilities, United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child, and other relevant  
20 international human rights obligations.

1 **SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.*** – As used in this Act:

2  
3 a. *Autism* or *autism spectrum disorder (ASD)* refers to a neurodevelopmental condition  
4 characterized by challenges with communication, social skills, restrictive and repetitive behaviors,  
5 as well as by unique strengths, as defined in the latest version of the Diagnostic and Statistical  
6 Manual of Mental Disorders;

7  
8 b. *Diagnosis* refers to necessary assessments, including, but not limited to, neuropsychological and  
9 neurodevelopmental evaluations, genetic testing, neuroimaging, neurophysiological examination,  
10 hearing tests, and psychometric tests to diagnose autism/and or developmental disabilities in  
11 individuals;

12  
13 c. *Disability* refers to 1) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more  
14 psychological, physiological, or anatomical function of an individual or activities of such  
15 individual; 2) a record of such an impairment; or 3) regarded as having such an impairment;

16  
17 d. *Epidemiology* refers to the study and analysis of the distribution and determinants of health  
18 conditions in defined populations;

19  
20 e. *Habilitation* refers to an integrated approach to physical, psychological, cultural, spiritual,  
21 educational, or vocational measures that create conditions for individuals to attain the highest  
22 possible level of functional ability and quality of life;

23  
24 f. *Inclusive Education* refers to the process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs  
25 of all learners by moving towards the end-goal of full participation, presence, and achievement in  
26 learning cultures and communities, which involves accommodating, modifying, adapting, and  
27 individualizing content, approaches, structures, and strategies. It involves equitable opportunities  
28 for learners with disabilities to receive educational services, and the needed support and related  
29 services with their age-appropriate peer groups and, as far as practicable, in such schools or  
30 Inclusive Learning Resource Centers (ILRCs) nearest their homes or residences, to prepare them  
31 to live as fully functional members of society;

32  
33 g. *Intervention* refers to the actions taken to help improve the prognosis of autism. Intervention in  
34 autism may take the form of medical, pharmacological, therapeutic, educational, and non-  
35 traditional habilitative care, and all other support services;

36  
37 h. *Reasonable accommodation* means the necessary and appropriate modification and  
38 adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular  
39 case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with  
40 others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms; Reasonable Accommodation includes (1)  
41 improvement of existing facilities used by employees in order to render these readily accessible to  
42 and usable by disabled persons; and (2) modification of work schedules, reassignment to a vacant  
43 position, acquisition or modification of equipment or devices, appropriate adjustments or  
44 modifications of examinations, training materials or company policies, rules and regulations, the  
45 provisions of auxiliary aids and services, and other similar accommodations;

1 i. *Rehabilitation* is a set of interventions designed to optimize functioning and reduce disability in  
2 individuals with health conditions in interaction with their environment; and  
3

4 j. *Service providers* – any person or entity that provides a service to the public. This can include  
5 businesses, government agencies, and non-profit organizations.  
6

7 **SEC. 4. *Inter-Agency and Multi-Sectoral Mechanism.*** – A Sub-Committee on Autism, herein  
8 referred to as the Sub-Committee, is hereby created, under the National Council on Disability  
9 Affairs (NCDA), which shall serve as an inter-agency and multi-sectoral policy-making and  
10 coordinative mechanism to develop and implement a sustainable National Autism Care Plan  
11 (NACP).  
12

13 **SEC. 5. *Powers and Functions of the Sub-Committee.*** - The Sub-Committee shall have the  
14 following powers and functions:  
15

- 16 (a) Develop the NACP, a roadmap in addressing the holistic needs of Filipinos on the autism  
17 spectrum and their families, such as health, education, employment, among others, for the  
18 guidance of stakeholders in the private and public sectors, calibrated to meet the changing  
19 needs of society and developments in technology;
- 20 (b) Coordinate, monitor, and evaluate the implementation of the NACP and the protection of  
21 rights of persons on the autism spectrum, with the concerned government and non-  
22 governmental agencies;
- 23 (c) Design campaigns that promote public awareness, acceptance, accommodation, and  
24 appreciation of persons on the autism spectrum;
- 25 (d) Undertake research in collaboration with private and public entities regarding autism in the  
26 Philippines;
- 27 (e) Enhance the programs and capabilities of the government to provide nationally available  
28 services that support persons on the autism spectrum and their families, in areas including,  
29 but not limited to, screening, diagnosis, early intervention, education, training,  
30 employment, and livelihood;
- 31 (f) Assist the private and public sectors in the design and delivery of support programs for  
32 persons on the autism spectrum and their families;
- 33 (g) Develop capacity-building programs, incentives, and awards for persons on the autism  
34 spectrum to enhance their potential as independent, self-reliant, and productive members  
35 of society;
- 36 (h) Establish networks with other organizations, institutions, and professionals working for the  
37 promotion of public policy and programs for persons on the autism spectrum, and support  
38 groups for families of persons on the autism spectrum;
- 39 (i) Receive donations and grants from international donor institutions, foundations, and  
40 multilateral and bilateral foreign donor agencies, involved in the direct services for persons  
41 on the autism spectrum;
- 42 (j) Enter into memoranda of agreement with government and non-governmental entities for  
43 the implementation of various programs for persons on the autism spectrum;
- 44 (k) Submit an annual report to Congress and the Commission on Human Rights comprising an  
45 evaluation of the implementation of the NACP, as well as the compliance of relevant  
46 government agencies to this Act;

- 1 (l) Perform other acts as may be necessary, proper, or incidental to the attainment of the  
2 purposes and objectives of this Act.  
3

4 **SEC. 6. *Composition of the Sub-Committee on Autism.*** – The Sub-Committee shall be composed  
5 of the heads of office of the following agencies:  
6

- 7 a. The National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA) as Chairperson;  
8 b. The DOH as Vice Chairperson;  
9 c. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD);  
10 d. The Department of Education (DepEd);  
11 e. The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG);  
12 f. The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE);  
13 g. The Department of Science and Technology-Philippine Council for Health and Research  
14 Development (DOST-PCHRD);  
15 h. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED);  
16 i. The Commission on Civil Service (CSC);  
17 j. The Technical Skills and Development Authority (TESDA);  
18 k. The Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC);  
19 l. Philippine Council for Mental Health (PCMH);  
20 m. The National Institutes for Health (NIH);  
21 n. The National Authority for Child Care;  
22 o. Commission on Human Rights (CHR);  
23 p. Three (3) representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with active  
24 service programs for Filipinos on the autism spectrum;  
25 q. Three (2) representatives from NGOs composed of autism self-advocates, with active  
26 service programs for Filipinos on the autism spectrum.  
27

28 The chairperson of the subcommittee shall appoint the members, except those from  
29 government agencies.  
30

31 The heads of office of government agencies may designate official permanent  
32 representatives to the Sub-Committee, whose rank shall not be lower than an Assistant  
33 Secretary or its equivalent: *Provided*, that the designated representative has no vote, unless  
34 authorized in writing.  
35

36 The NGOs designated to the subcommittee must be duly registered with the Securities and  
37 Exchange Commission, the Bureau of Internal Revenue, and the local government in which  
38 they operate. They must also provide the subcommittee with copies of their annual  
39 requirements submitted to these government units, reflecting their organizational capacity  
40 and commitment to good governance.  
41

42 The members of the Subcommittee shall be appointed not later than thirty (30) days after  
43 the enactment of this Act. Members representing non-government agencies shall serve for  
44 three (3) years, renewable upon the Subcommittee's recommendation and the President's  
45 approval for a maximum of two (2) consecutive terms. In case of vacancy, the successor

1 appointed to fill the same shall serve only the unexpired portion of the member's term to  
2 whom he/she succeeds.

3  
4 All members of the Sub-Committee shall receive a per diem of a reasonable amount as  
5 determined by the Sub-Committee, in accordance with the existing budget and accounting  
6 rules and regulations.

7  
8 The Subcommittee shall meet at least quarterly or as often as necessary. A quorum is  
9 formed when a majority of the members are present.

10  
11 The Subcommittee shall have a Secretariat consisting of personnel with the necessary  
12 technical expertise and capacity that shall be conferred permanent appointments, subject to  
13 Civil Service rules and regulations. The Secretariat shall be headed by an Executive Director  
14 who shall be under the direct supervision of the Chairperson of the Subcommittee. The  
15 Secretariat shall coordinate the functions and organize the programs, plans, and activities  
16 under this Act.

17  
18 The NCDA shall determine the necessary staffing requirements of the Subcommittee, subject  
19 to evaluation and approval by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), and in  
20 compliance with civil service and other pertinent laws, rules, and regulations.

21  
22 **SEC. 7. *The National Autism Care Plan.*** The Subcommittee on Autism shall spearhead and  
23 coordinate with government agencies and other stakeholders to implement the NACP. The  
24 programs and services under the NACP shall include, among others, the following:

25  
26 (a) *Information campaigns* - The DOH, DepEd, NCDA, DSWD, CHED, TESDA, and  
27 PCMH shall, following their respective mandates, conduct various forms of information  
28 campaigns, such as, but not limited to:

29  
30 1. Printed and digital publications such as manuals, infographics, and easily readable  
31 instruction materials on early detection, management, intervention, habilitation,  
32 rehabilitation, care of autism, best practices, resources, and research on autism -- with  
33 translations to local languages;

34  
35 2. A central database of professionals and childcare institutions concerned with the care  
36 and development of persons on the autism spectrum;

37  
38 3. Collaborative information campaigns and activities as necessary.

39  
40 (b) *Health* -

41  
42 1. The DOH shall implement epidemiological surveillance programs to establish a databank  
43 and information and monitoring system (IMS) on the demographic, socio-economic, and  
44 total incidence and prevalence of persons on the autism spectrum in the country;

45 2. The DOH, PCMH, PCHRD, the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD)  
46 Council, and DepEd's ILRCs shall, in coordination with other concerned agencies:

- a. Strengthen research focus on autism;
- b. Promote, create, develop, and adopt strategic plans that will continue to determine and establish evidence-based practices for interventions, care, and integration into society of persons on the autism spectrum;
- c. Expand research into the link between environmental factors and autism; and
- d. Continue investigations into causation, diagnosis, early detection, and interventions for autism spectrum disorders.

Such factors that will be studied shall include, among others, infection and immune function, hormonal and reproductive factors, genetic factors, gastro-intestinal factors, and sociodemographic factors; and

3. The Sub-Committee may initiate and conduct collaborative health programs, plans, and activities as necessary.

(c) *Education* – The DOH, DepEd, CHED, TESDA, DSWD, and shall, following their respective mandates, conduct various forms of education programs, plans, and activities in cooperation with other concerned agencies, as follows:

1. Continuing education and training on autism for public service providers to sensitize and empower them as effective front liners in the delivery of services to persons on the autism spectrum and their families;
2. Continuing education and training of families, teachers, therapists, and caregivers of persons on the autism spectrum through seminars, conventions, and other forms of educational tools;
3. Continuing education and training of professional teachers and trainers through seminars, conventions, and other forms of educational tools to ensure nationwide implementation;
4. Formulation of guidelines, policies, protocols, and individualized programs on inclusive education for school children, young students, and other learners on the autism spectrum, in matters including, but not limited to, discrimination, acceptance to academic or training programs, instructional support, and behavior management; and
5. The Sub-Committee may initiate and conduct collaborative education programs, plans, and activities as necessary.

(d) *Employment and livelihood* - The DOLE and CSC shall formulate policies and initiate and implement programs to ensure that persons on the autism spectrum are provided opportunities for gainful employment and apprenticeship, both in the private and public sectors.

1 (e) *Other Support Programs* –  
2

3 1. The DILG and the Department of National Defense shall provide lifesaving support  
4 to persons on the autism spectrum with behavioral and communication challenges, in times  
5 of disasters, calamities, armed conflict, and other emergencies, and ensure their  
6 inclusion on the list of priority sectors;  
7

8 2. The DSWD shall develop a program to provide support for parents, guardians, or care  
9 givers who are providing full time care to their dependent on the autism spectrum in the form  
10 of care work compensation or allowances.  
11

12 3. The Department of Transportation shall formulate policies and protocols to ensure  
13 that persons on the autism spectrum with behavioral and communication challenges and their  
14 families are given reasonable accommodation in accessing all forms of transportation by  
15 land, sea, and air;  
16

17 4. The Department of Justice (DOJ) shall formulate policies and protocols to ensure that  
18 criminal justice agencies and professionals provide the accommodations and protections to  
19 persons on the autism spectrum with behavioral and communication challenges, who may  
20 be accused of, are victims of, or are witnesses to crimes;  
21

22 5. The DOJ and the Commission on Human Rights shall promulgate guidelines and standards  
23 to ensure that interventions and programs for Filipinos on the autism spectrum do not violate  
24 their fundamental human rights, particularly their right to make their own decisions. They  
25 shall likewise establish a mechanism for reporting discrimination, violation of rights, denial  
26 or lack of access to services, and other forms of abuses against persons on the autism  
27 spectrum. The aforementioned mechanism shall require disaggregated data collection and  
28 monitoring to track and properly address discrimination and other violations of rights or  
29 persons on the autism spectrum.  
30

31 6. All other concerned agencies shall, following their respective mandates, conduct  
32 orientation and counselling services for families of persons newly diagnosed on the autism  
33 spectrum and establish family support networks and sibling programs;  
34

35 7. The Sub-Committee may initiate and conduct other collaborative support programs,  
36 plans, and activities as necessary.  
37

38 **SEC. 8. *Panel of Technical Experts.*** – The Sub-Committee shall constitute a national panel of  
39 technical experts consisting of practitioners related to autism, such as, but not limited to:  
40

- 41 a. One (1) representative from the national association of speech-language pathologists, duly  
42 recognized by the Professional Regulation Commission;  
43 b. One (1) representative from the national association of developmental and behavioral  
44 physicians, duly recognized by the Professional Regulation Commission;  
45 c. One (1) representative from the national association of occupational therapists, duly  
46 recognized by the Professional Regulation Commission;

- 1 d. One (1) representative from the national organization of psychologists, duly recognized  
2 by the Professional Regulation Commission;  
3 e. One (1) representative from the national association of social workers, duly recognized by  
4 the Professional Regulation Commission;  
5 f. One (1) representative from the national association of inclusive education specialists, duly  
6 recognized by the Professional Regulation Commission; and  
7

8 The Panel shall provide the Subcommittee with professional and technical advice on science,  
9 technologies, and best practices for autism. The Subcommittee shall set the qualifications and per  
10 diems for the technical experts and, through the collaborative programs and plans of its member  
11 agencies and organizations, provide resources for the Panel's operations and activities.  
12

13 **SEC. 9. Local Government Support.** Local government units (LGUs) shall implement and  
14 promote the NACP in their respective jurisdictions. LGUs may enter into joint ventures or  
15 partnerships with national agencies, organizations, or associations that offer programs and  
16 advocacy for persons on the autism spectrum to explore livelihood opportunities and other  
17 undertakings that promotes the health, physical fitness, and economic and social well-being of  
18 persons on the autism spectrum. The Sub-Committee and the DILG shall provide the necessary  
19 support and technical assistance to LGUs to ensure the mainstreaming of the NACP.  
20

21 **SEC. 10. Consultation with Stakeholders.** The Subcommittee shall conduct broad consultations,  
22 in collaboration with government and non-governmental stakeholders, on various programs and  
23 campaigns involving individuals on the autism spectrum, their families, and professionals through  
24 legally established NGOs.  
25

26 **SEC. 11. PhilHealth Coverage.** – The Subcommittee shall facilitate the necessary Philippine  
27 Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) coverage for persons on the autism spectrum  
28 immediately after this Act becomes effective.  
29

30 **SEC.12. Persons With Disability.** –The Subcommittee shall issue guidelines to facilitate the  
31 access of persons on the autism spectrum to benefits and services under Republic Act No. 7277,  
32 or the “Magna Carta for Persons with Disability,” as amended.  
33

34 **SEC. 13. Protection Against Discrimination in Insurance and Other Financial**

35 **Instruments.** – The Department of Finance shall, within 180 days from the effectivity of this Act,  
36 formulate policies and protocols to ensure that all financial service providers, such as banks,  
37 insurance companies, and health maintenance organizations (HMOs), shall provide persons on the  
38 autism spectrum with equitable access to their services and products.  
39

40 **SEC. 14. Enforcement and Penalties.** - Any person, institution, or entity found to be in violation  
41 of the provisions of this Act, its implementing rules and regulations (IRR), or any guidelines issued  
42 pursuant thereto, shall be subject to administrative sanctions, fines, or other penalties as may be  
43 prescribed by the IRR.  
44

45 The NCDA, in coordination with the Sub-Committee on Autism, shall recommend appropriate  
46 penalties and enforcement mechanisms, subject to applicable laws and due process.

1 **SEC. 15. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – The Sub-Committee shall, in consultation and  
2 coordination with appropriate national government agencies, NGOs, and other stakeholders,  
3 promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act, no  
4 later than 180 days upon the effectivity of this Act.

5  
6 **SEC. 16. *Appropriations.*** – The amount necessary for implementing this Act shall be included in  
7 the annual General Appropriations Act.

8  
9 **SEC. 17. *Separability Clause.*** – If any section or provision of this Act is held unconstitutional or  
10 invalid, the other sections or provisions not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and  
11 effect.

12  
13 **SEC. 18. *Repealing Clause.*** – All laws, executive orders, presidential decrees, presidential  
14 proclamations, letters of instruction, rules and regulations, or parts inconsistent with this Act's  
15 provisions are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

16  
17 **SEC. 19. *Effectivity.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its publication in the  
18 Official Gazette or two (2) newspapers of general circulation in the Philippines.

*Approved,*