

TWENTIETH CONGRESS OF THE
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
First Regular Session

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
HOUSE BILL NO. 4231



Introduced by **REPRESENTATIVE MA. NINA FRANCESCA P. LACSON**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill, known as the Students' Guidance Counseling Act, has been crafted with a resolute determination to address the burgeoning mental health crisis, particularly among the youth. The pressing need for comprehensive mental health infrastructure and support systems has been underscored by alarming statistics and distressing incidents within our public education system. The proposed legislation seeks to create a robust framework that enables educational institutions to play a pivotal role in identifying, addressing, and alleviating mental health challenges.

The Philippines is grappling with a concerning "mental health pandemic," affecting millions of citizens. As of 2020, approximately 3.6 million Filipinos were reported to suffer from mental illnesses, a number that is expected to have increased since then. Tragically, the school year 2021-2022 witnessed the loss of 404 students due to mental health-related causes, underscoring the gravity of the issue.

The Students' Guidance Counseling Act represents a collective commitment to securing the well-being of our nation's youth. By fostering a compassionate and accessible mental health infrastructure, the legislation aims to save lives, nurture potential, and safeguard our collective future. This bill serves as a call to all legislators, urging them to unite in the fight against the silent pandemic of mental health issues, and to pave the way for a brighter and healthier future for our beloved country.

For the foregoing reasons, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nina Lacson".

HON. MA. NINA FRANCESCA P. LACSON
Manila Teachers Party-list

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Introduced by **REPRESENTATIVE MA. NINA FRANCESCA P. LACSON**

AN ACT
TO RECRUIT, HIRE, AND TRAIN ADDITIONAL SCHOOL-BASED GUIDANCE
COUNSELORS, PSYCHOLOGISTS, SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS AND MENTAL
HEALTH PERSONNEL

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 "Students' Guidance Counseling Act."

SEC 2. *Purposes.* - The purpose of this Act is to:

- a. Facilitate the recruitment, training, and employment of added mental health personnel, counselors, social workers, and school psychologists within elementary and secondary educational institutions.
- b. Effectively tend to the mental, emotional, and developmental requirements of primary and high school students.
- c. Eliminate emotional, behavioral, and psychosocial obstacles that hinder learning, thereby augmenting students' readiness and capacity to learn.
- d. Provide assistance to school staff and educators in enhancing classroom management, implementing behavioral interventions to ameliorate school discipline, and fostering the ability to promptly detect early indicators of violence and the necessity for mental health services.
- e. Assist parents in fostering improved school conduct and academic accomplishments in their children.

SEC 3. *Definitions.* - For purposes of this Act -

- (1) "Mental Health and Student Service Provider" includes a qualified counselor, associate counselor or school social worker.
- (2) "Mental Health and Student Services" includes direct, individual, and group services provided to students, parents, and school personnel by mental health and

student service providers, or the coordination of prevention strategies in schools or community-based programs.

(3) "Qualified Counselor" refers to an individual who has documented competence in counseling children and adolescents in a school setting and who:

- (A) Possesses licensure or certification granted by a professional regulatory authority;
- (B) In the absence of such licensure or certification, possesses national certification in school counseling or a specialty of counseling granted by an independent professional organization; or,
- (C) Holds a minimum master's degree in school counseling.

(4) "Associate Counselor" refers to a psychology graduate who is not a licensed counselor but possesses relevant qualifications and training to provide supportive counseling services to students as determined by the Department of Education.

(5) "School Social Worker" refers to an individual who holds a degree in social work.

SEC. 4. *Guidelines.* - Subject to the existing guidelines outlined by the Department of Education, the Civil Service Commission, and the Department of Budget and Management, the Secretary of Education is charged with the responsibility of facilitating the recruitment process for either (1) Associate Counselor or (1) School Social Worker within each public school. The role of these appointed individuals, denoted as the Associate Counselor or School Social Worker, will be conducted under the guidance and supervision of a Qualified Counselor. The Secretary of Education shall likewise cause the appointing of aforementioned Qualified Counselor for each school district.

SEC 5. *Selection, hiring and recruitment.* - The Secretary of Education shall, one hundred twenty (120) days after the enactment of this Act, issue the necessary guidelines in the selection, recruitment and hiring of personnel and the nature and scope of the mental health and services to be offered to students.

SEC 6. *Appropriations.* - - The necessary funds for the implementation of this Act shall be appropriated through the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC 7. *Separability Clause.* - If any provision or part hereof is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

SEC 8. *Repealing Clause.* - Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act is hereby modified or amended accordingly.

SEC 9. *Effectivity.* This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,