

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 4543



INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVE PM VARGAS

AN ACT
MANDATING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH CENTERS IN
EVERY DISTRICT AND MUNICIPALITY, PROVIDING FOR THE
EMPLOYMENT OF PSYCHOLOGISTS AND PSYCHIATRISTS, AND
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article II, Section 15 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution mandates the State to protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them.

In pursuit of this mandate, Republic Act No. 11036, otherwise known as the *Mental Health Act*, was signed into law in June 2018. This legislation established a national policy on mental health, including 24/7 nationwide hotlines to assist individuals in distress and provisions for integrating mental health services in the public health system.

Despite this legal progress, many Filipinos still lack convenient access to sustained mental health care. For instance, in Quezon City, although the Mental Wellness Access Hubs (MWAH) offers comprehensive mental health services to constituents, service are only offered in select day services are offered only in select days (e.g. Tuesdays and Thursdays), revealing the insufficiency of intermittent, non-permanent systems.

The need for accessible services is urgent. Studies show that over 11% Filipinos—or roughly 12 million individuals—suffer from mental health disorders, with depression and anxiety being the most common¹. Among children, the situation is even more concerning, with a prevalence rate of 16%.² Despite the passage of RA 11036, many communities, particularly in

¹ Alibudbud, R. (2023) Towards transforming the mental health services of the Philippines. *National Library of Medicine*. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10625027/>

² Malolos, G. Z. et. Al. (2021) Mental health and well-being of children in the Philippine setting during the COVID-19 pandemic. *National Library of Medicine*. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8501475/>

rural areas, remain underserved due to the absence of permanent and fully operational facilities.

This bill, therefore, seeks to institutionalize the establishment of mental health facilities in every district and municipality to ensure accessible, sustainable, and community-based mental health services. By ensuring the presence of qualified psychologists and psychiatrists at the local level, the State will be able to better respond to the growing mental health needs of Filipinos, while strengthening prevention, early intervention and long-term care.

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



REP. PM VARGAS

Fifth District, Quezon City

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MANDATING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH CENTERS IN EVERY CITY AND MUNICIPALITY, PROVIDING FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF PSYCHOLOGISTS AND PSYCHIATRISTS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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

SECTION 1. Short Title. – This Act shall be known as the “*Establishment of Mental Health Facilities in Every LGU Act*”.

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to protect and promote the right to health of the people as enshrined in Article II, Section 15 of the 1987 Constitution. Towards this end, the State shall ensure accessible, affordable, and comprehensive mental health care services for all Filipinos through the establishment of mental health facilities in every district and municipality.

SECTION 3. Objectives. – The mental health facilities established under this Act shall provide free and accessible services to all constituents, which shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- a) *Counseling and Psychotherapy* – Provision of individual, group, and family counseling sessions to address emotional, behavioral, and psychological concerns;
- b) *Psychiatric Treatment and Medication Management* – Diagnosis, treatment, and continuing care of mental health conditions, including the administration and monitoring of prescribed medications;
- c) *Community-Based Mental Health Programs* – Implementation of outreach programs designed to promote mental well-being and provide

support at the community level;

d) *Crisis Intervention and Hotline Services* – Immediate and accessible support for individuals in mental health crises, including 24/7 hotlines and emergency interventions; and

e) *Mental Health Awareness and Education Campaigns* – Conduct of seminars, workshops, and information drives to reduce stigma, raise awareness, and promote mental health literacy in the community.

SECTION 4. *Establishment of Mental Health Centers* – There shall be established in every city and municipality a public mental health center, which shall be under the direct control and supervision of the city or municipal local government unit (LGU), in consultation with the Department of Health. Each facility shall be designed to provide preventive, promotive, curative, and rehabilitative mental health services.

SECTION 5. *Staffing and Employment of Mental Health Professionals.* — Each center established under this Act shall be staffed with licensed mental health professionals, which shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

a) At least one (1) Psychiatrist, with a salary grade equivalent to Medical Officer III (Salary Grade 21);

b) At least two (2) Clinical Psychologists, with a salary grade not lower than Salary Grade 16;

c) At least two (2) Social Welfare Officers trained in mental health, with a salary grade not lower than Salary Grade 11; and

d) Such number of mental health nurses, guidance counselors, support staff, and administrative personnel as may be necessary to ensure efficient service delivery.

The salary grades herein provided shall be in accordance with the latest Salary Standardization Law (SSL) and as may be determined by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM). The DOH, in coordination with the Civil Service Commission (CSC), shall determine and prescribe the plantilla positions, qualifications, and salary grades for the positions provided under this Section.

SECTION 6. *Implementing Agency.* — The Department of Health (DOH) shall be the primary implementing agency of this Act. For its effective implementation, the DOH shall coordinate with the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), local government units (LGUs), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and such other concerned agencies as may be deemed necessary.

SECTION 7. *Appropriations.* — The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current appropriations of the Department of Health (DOH). Thereafter, the funds required for the continued operation and maintenance of mental health facilities established under this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA).

In addition, local government units (LGUs) are mandated to allocate a portion of their annual health budget, specifically to support the operation and sustainability of these facilities.

SECTION 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).* — Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DOH, in consultation with the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Civil Service Commission (CSC), Department of Education (DepEd), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and other concerned stakeholders, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for its effective implementation.

SECTION 9. *Non-Impairment Clause.* – Nothing in this Act shall be construed as to diminish, impair, or repeal rights recognized, granted, or made available to disadvantaged, marginalized, or specific sectors under existing laws.

SECTION 10. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining provisions not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 11. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SECTION 12. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,