

TWENTIETH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HOUSE BILL NO. 5125

Introduced by Rep. CARMELO G. LAZATIN, JR.

AN ACT
MANDATING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL
CENTERS FOR AUTISM AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Autism is a prevalent condition in the Philippines, yet there remains a pressing need to promote public awareness and establish appropriate support system for individuals with autism. Based on 2018 data from the Autism Society of the Philippines, it is estimated that approximately 1.2 million Filipinos are affected by autism.

Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) face lifelong challenges related to social interaction, communication, and behavior. They are often stigmatized and isolated due to a lack of proper understanding of ASD as a condition that may limit one's intellectual capacity and ability to interact normally.

This bill seeks to establish National and Provincial Centers for Autism to address these concerns and provide support to affected individuals and their families. It is worth noting that many individuals manifest signs of ASD at an early age, but due to financial constraints and the lack of facilities catering to their condition, some have never received proper diagnosis, counseling, therapy, or rehabilitation.

It is time for the government to provide the necessary support to help improve their condition. By establishing Autism Centers, families of persons with ASD will have a place to seek assistance, access education for their affected relatives, and find a community where persons with autism, both young and old, may feel that they belong.

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


CARMELO G. LAZATIN, JR.



**Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives**

Quezon City, Metro Manila

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

1 **SECTION 1. Short Title.**-This Act shall be known as the “*Establishment of National*
2 *and Provincial Centers for Autism Act*”

3 **SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy.**- It is hereby declared the policy of the State to
4 protect and promote the right to health of the people and to instill health consciousness among
5 them. The State also recognizes the need to address the lack of awareness and appropriate support
6 for individuals with autism, which hampers their rehabilitation and development.

7 To this end, the State shall endeavor to establish National and Provincial Autism Centers
8 to cater to the needs of persons with autism.

9

SECTION 3. Definition of Terms.- For purposes of this Act, the following terms shall mean:

- a) *Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)*- refers to a developmental disability caused by differences in the brain.
- b. *Disability* – refers to (1) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more psychological, physiological or anatomical function of an individual or activities of such individual; (2) a record of such an impairment; or (3) being regarded as having such an impairment;
- c. *Disabled Gifted* – refers to persons who are intellectually gifted and have a learning disability;
- d. *Disabled Worker*- refers to a worker whose earning capacity is impaired by mental, physical, sensory deficiency or injury;
- e. *Handicap* -refers to a disadvantage for a given individual resulting from an impairment or a disability, that limits or prevents the functions or activity, that is considered normal given the age and sex of the individual;
- f. *Impairment*- refers to any loss, diminution, or aberration of psychological or anatomical structure or function;
- g. *Indigent Patient*-refers to a disabled person whose income is below the poverty threshold;
- h. *Rehabilitation*- refers to a holistic approach that includes physical, psychological, spiritual, educational or vocational measures that create conditions for an individual to attain highest possible level of functional ability;
- i. *Special Education*- refers to specially designed education for learners with special needs who cannot adapt to standard curriculum and may require trained personnel, modifications in the curricula, teaching methods, instructional materials and adaptations in facilities and equipment.

SECTION 4. Creation of National and Provincial Centers for Autism.- There are hereby created National and Provincial Centers for Autism, which shall perform the following functions:

- a. Formulate and implement an integrated and comprehensive plan for the diagnosis, therapy and rehabilitation of individuals with autism;
- b. Establish facilities that will provide free diagnosis, therapy and rehabilitation services;
- c. Provide vocational training for adults with autism;
- d. Provide employment opportunities for individuals with autism;
- e. Provide counseling, orientation, and referral services; and
- f. Promote autism awareness through advocacy programs.

SECTION 5. Governing Boards, Composition and Functions.- (a) National Autism Board- There is hereby created a National Autism Board, which shall govern the National Center for Autism and shall be under the Office of the President. The Board shall be composed of the following:

1. One (1) representative from the Department of Health, who shall be the Chairperson;
2. One (1) representative from the Department of Education, who shall be the Vice-Chairperson;
3. One (1) representative from the Department of the Social Welfare and Development as member;
4. Two (2) representatives from the National Council on Disability Affairs as members;
5. Two (2) representatives from the Autism Society of the Philippines as members;
6. Two (2) representatives from the parents of children and adults with autism as members.

(b) Provincial Autism Board. Each province shall have a Provincial Autism Board, under the Office of the Governor, composed of:

1. One (1) representative from the Department of Health- Provincial Office, who shall be the Chairperson;
2. One (1) representative from the Department of Education- Division Office, who shall be the Vice-Chairperson;
3. One (1) representative from the Department of the Social Welfare and Development as member;
4. Two (2) representatives from Persons with Disability Affairs Office as members;
5. Two (2) representatives from the Autism Society of the Philippines as members;
6. Two (2) representatives from the parents of children and adults with autism as members.

SECTION 6. Secretariat- (a) The National Autism Board shall have a Secretariat headed by an Executive officer appointed by the President. The Executive Officer shall manage the daily operations of the National Autism Board and shall be assisted by a Deputy Executive Officer. The Executive Officer shall be responsible for the following functions:

- 1) Execute, administer and implement the policies and measures approved by the Board;
- 2) Direct and supervise the operations of the Board;
- 3) Submit the annual budget and supplemental budgets, if necessary, for review and approval of the Board;
- 4) Represent the Board in all its transactions with other offices, agencies and government instrumentalities, public and private sectors, domestic or foreign;
- 5) Appoint, subject to confirmation and discipline in accordance with Civil Services laws, rules, and regulations, the officers and personnel under the Deputy Executive Officer.

The Deputy Executive Officer shall:

- 1) Assist the Executive Officer in the discharge of his powers and responsibilities;
- 2) Act as the Executive Officer in the latter's absence;
- 3) Discharge such other functions as may be required by the Executive Officer and/or the Board.

(b) The Provincial Autism Board shall have an Executive Officer assisted by a Deputy Officer who shall be appointed by the Governor. The Executive Officer shall:

- 1) Oversee the overall operations of the Provincial Autism Board;
- 2) Submit an annual report to the Provincial Autism Board every January of the following year;
- 3) Represent the Provincial Autism Board in all transactions with government offices, agencies, public and private sectors;

The Provincial Deputy Officer shall perform the following functions:

- 1) Assist the Executive Officer in the discharge of his powers and functions;
- 2) Act as the Executive Officer in his absence;
- 3) Discharge such other functions as may be required by the Executive Officer and the Board.

SECTION 7. *Early Detection and Intervention Program.* – the Provincial Autism Centers shall implement early detection and intervention programs for children under five (5) years old within their jurisdictions. They shall coordinate with barangays for screening, parent education, and early therapy of children.

SECTION 8. *Appropriations.*–The initial amount of Five Million Pesos (P5,000,000.00) necessary for the implementation of the National and Provincial Autism Centers in the amount of P5,000,000.00 shall be appropriated from the available funds of the Office of the President. Thereafter, the necessary budget shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act upon submission of the proposed budget to the Department of Budget and Management.

SECTION 8. *Separability Clause.* - If any part or provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the other parts or provisions not affected thereby shall remain valid.

SECTION 9. *Repealing Clause.*– All laws, acts, presidential decrees, executive orders, administrative orders, rules and regulations inconsistent with or contrary to the provisions of this Act are deemed amended, modified, or repealed accordingly.

SECTION 10. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,