

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Constitution Hills, Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 5514



Introduced by 2nd District of Iloilo Representative
HON. KATHRYN JOYCE F. GORRICETA, M.D.

AN ACT

ESTABLISHING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWD) CENTERS IN ALL REGIONAL TERTIARY MEDICAL CENTERS UNDER THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MANDATING THE PHILIPPINE HEALTH INSURANCE CORPORATION TO COVER THERAPY SERVICES AND ASSISTIVE REHABILITATION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, AMENDING SECTION 20 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7277, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "MAGNA CARTA FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES," AS AMENDED

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article II, Section 11 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution directs the State to value the dignity of every person and guarantee full respect for human rights. It further mandates a comprehensive approach to health development to make essential services accessible to all (Article XIII, Section 11) and the creation of mechanisms to promote the rehabilitation, self-reliance, and integration of persons with disabilities (Article XIII, Section 13). These provisions affirm the State's duty to ensure that every Filipino—regardless of physical, sensory, or developmental condition—enjoys equal access to quality health care and rehabilitation.

Republic Act No. 7277, or the Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities, translated these constitutional guarantees into law in 1992. However, more than three decades later, rehabilitation and therapy services for persons with disabilities (PWDs) remain largely dependent on geography and income. The current system is fragmented—limited by workforce shortages, uneven facility distribution, and inadequate financing mechanisms. Developmental conditions such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), cerebral palsy (CP), and global developmental delay (GDD) affect thousands of Filipino families each year, yet the country has fewer than 120 developmental pediatricians and only a small pool of speech, occupational, and behavioral therapists, most of whom are concentrated in urban centers. For many Filipinos, early detection and consistent intervention remain out of reach.

The Department of Health (DOH), as the lead agency for health system development, has undertaken reforms under the Universal Health Care Act (Republic Act No. 11223) and the National Health Facility Development Plan (NHFDP) to promote equitable access to specialized and rehabilitative services. These frameworks emphasize the upgrading and

rational distribution of tertiary, regional, and DOH-retained hospitals, which serve as apex referral facilities within provincial and regional health networks. In 2017, the DOH, through its attached corporation—the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth)—introduced the Z Benefit Package for Children with Developmental Disabilities under PhilHealth Circular No. 2017-0029. While this program provides developmental assessments and therapy bundles for select conditions, it remains limited to a few contracted hospitals, covers only children aged 0–17, and has seen little budget or facility expansion since its issuance.

This bill strengthens and institutionalizes a more comprehensive framework for disability-inclusive health care. It mandates the Department of Health to establish Persons with Disabilities (PWD) Centers in all regional tertiary DOH hospitals nationwide. These centers will function as dedicated facilities for assessment, therapy, and rehabilitation, staffed by multidisciplinary teams composed of developmental pediatricians, occupational, speech, and physical therapists, with behavioral therapists or clinical psychologists designated in tertiary and regional centers. The measure also directs PhilHealth, in coordination with the DOH, to expand its mandatory benefits package to include full or partial coverage for developmental consultations, therapy services, and assistive rehabilitation devices. To ensure financial sustainability, the DOH shall implement complementary subsidy mechanisms within its hospitals and include the necessary appropriations in the annual General Appropriations Act.

Through these reforms, the bill elevates rehabilitation and therapy from being fragmented and city-based services to integral components of universal health care accessible across all regions. It reinforces the DOH’s leadership in establishing a rights-based, regionally equitable system of PWD care, while empowering PhilHealth to provide sustainable financial protection. In doing so, the measure operationalizes the vision of the Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities within the modern health system—where accessibility, inclusion, and dignity are not aspirations but guaranteed rights for every Filipino.

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


KATHRYN JOYCE F. GORRICETA, M.D.
Representative
2nd District of Iloilo

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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 “PWD Health Care Access and Rehabilitation Support Act of 2025.”

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* It is hereby declared the policy of the State to uphold the inherent dignity and equality of all persons with disabilities and to guarantee their full participation in society. Consistent with Article II, Section 11 and Article XIII, Sections 11 and 13 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, the State shall ensure that health development shall adopt an integrated and comprehensive approach that makes essential health services available and accessible to all, especially to persons with disabilities.

In accordance with the Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities (Republic Act No. 7277) and the Universal Health Care Act (Republic Act No. 11223), the State recognizes that therapy, rehabilitation, and assistive services are essential components of public health care. It shall therefore strengthen the capacity of the national health system, led by the Department of

Health (DOH) and supported by its attached agency, the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth), to provide inclusive, multidisciplinary, and affordable rehabilitation and therapy services for persons with disabilities.

The State further affirms the importance of equitable access to developmental and rehabilitative care across regions. In pursuit of this policy, the Department of Health shall ensure the establishment of functional PWD Centers in regional tertiary hospitals under its supervision, consistent with the National Health Facility Development Plan.

SEC. 3. Section 20 of Republic Act No. 7277 is hereby amended to read as follows:

“SECTION 20. Health Services. – The State shall protect and promote the right to health of persons with disabilities and shall adopt an integrated and comprehensive approach that makes essential health services accessible and affordable.

“The National Government shall provide integrated health services for persons with disabilities, which shall include the following:

“(a) Prevention and Early Detection. — Programs for the prevention of disability through immunization, nutrition, environmental protection, preservation, genetic counselling, and early detection and timely intervention to arrest disabling conditions;

“(b) Medical Treatment, Rehabilitation, and Assistive Technologies. — Provision of medical care, therapy, and sustained access to assistive health technologies necessary for rehabilitation and social integration;

“(c) Establishment of PWD Centers in DOH Hospitals. — The Department of Health (DOH) shall establish Persons with Disabilities (PWD) Centers in all regional tertiary medical centers under its supervision.

“These PWD Centers shall serve as dedicated units for the assessment, therapy, and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities and as coordination points for PhilHealth-covered benefits.

“Each PWD Center shall maintain, within its staff complement or through contractual arrangements, at least:

- one (1) Developmental Pediatrician;

- one (1) Occupational Therapist;
- one (1) Speech and Language Therapist; and
- one (1) Physical Therapist.

“Each tertiary, specialty, or regional medical center shall additionally designate at least one (1) Behavioral Therapist or Clinical Psychologist for PWD care and intervention.

“The DOH shall ensure that these centers are adequately equipped, accessible, and supported by trained personnel for the delivery of inclusive and multidisciplinary health care services to PWD patients.

“(d) Integration of Therapy Services and Subsidies under PhilHealth. — The Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth), in coordination with the DOH, shall include in its mandatory benefits package full or partial coverage for developmental pediatric consultations and therapy services required by persons with disabilities.

“Covered services shall include, but not be limited to, speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical rehabilitation, behavioral therapy, and other emerging assistive and rehabilitative interventions as determined by the DOH and PhilHealth based on updated clinical guidelines.

“The DOH shall implement subsidy mechanisms within its tertiary, specialty, and regional medical centers to complement PhilHealth’s coverage, thereby expanding and institutionalizing the Z Benefit Package for PWD patients.

“(e) Capacity Building and Monitoring. — The DOH shall implement continuing education and training programs for therapy providers and other medical staff involved in PWD care, and shall submit to Congress an annual report on the operation and performance of PWD Centers.”

SEC. 4. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DOH and the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation, in consultation with the National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA), the Department of Social

Welfare and Development (DSWD), and relevant stakeholders, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for its effective implementation.

The implementing rules and regulations shall be consistent with Republic Act No. 11223, or the Universal Health Care Act, and with the mandates of the National Council on Disability Affairs under existing laws and executive issuances.

SEC. 5. *Appropriations.* The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current appropriations of the Department of Health and the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for its continued implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA).

SEC. 6. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 7. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules, and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC 8. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,