

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 5515



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

AN ACT
STRENGTHENING INCLUSIVE AND SPECIAL EDUCATION FOR
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES THROUGH SPECIALIZED PROGRAMS,
TEACHER TRAINING, AND INCENTIVES, AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT
NO. 7277, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE 'MAGNA CARTA FOR PERSONS
WITH DISABILITIES,' AS AMENDED

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The 1987 Philippine Constitution guarantees the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and obligates the State to make such education accessible to all (Article XIV, Section 1). It further directs the State, under Article II, Section 11, to value the dignity of every human person and guarantee full respect for human rights, while Article XIII, Section 13 mandates the State to establish measures that promote the rehabilitation, self-reliance, and integration of persons with disabilities (PWDs) into mainstream society.

Republic Act No. 7277, otherwise known as the Magna Carta for Persons with Disability, was enacted in 1992 to implement these constitutional mandates. Despite amendments, Filipino children and youth with disabilities continue to face systemic barriers in accessing education. The Philippine Statistics Authority's 2020 Census reported that 8.7 percent of Filipinos aged five and older live with functional difficulties, while UNICEF estimates that one in seven Filipino children—about five million—live with some form of disability. Yet participation rates in education for PWDs remain significantly lower than those of their peers without disabilities.

A key reason for this persistent gap is the shortage of trained educators and auxiliary service providers—such as speech, occupational, and behavioral therapists—within schools and communities. These services are concentrated in urban areas, leaving rural and low-income families underserved. As of 2022, fewer than 120 developmental pediatricians and only a modest number of licensed therapists serve millions of Filipino learners with disabilities. In effect, mainstream teachers are left to manage complex classroom needs without the tools, training, or institutional support to do so.

This workforce limitation is compounded by chronic underfunding of Special Education (SPED). Proposed appropriations have been repeatedly reduced or deleted in recent years—such as the ₱532 million SPED line item for FY 2023 that was scrapped and the ₱560 million for FY 2022 that saw minimal disbursement. In the FY 2024 and FY 2025 General Appropriations Acts, no distinct

SPED allocation was provided, with programs for learners with disabilities merely folded under broader “inclusive education” categories. This continued absence of clear, dedicated funding underscores how inclusive education remains marginalized in national investment priorities and undermines the constitutional guarantee of equal access to quality education.

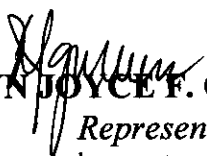
At the same time, the government already implements several publicly funded training programs that demonstrate the feasibility of sustained teacher capacity building. The Department of Education’s National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP) offers competency-based and continuing professional development (CPD) programs at no cost to participants. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED), through initiatives such as the K to 12 Transition Program and the Higher Education Development Fund (HEDF), and the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), through its CPD Council, support subsidized specialization courses and certifications for educators and allied professionals. The Civil Service Commission (CSC) and TESDA likewise provide learning and upskilling pathways for public servants and technical trainers. These existing models prove that structured, State-funded teacher training is both possible and sustainable; what remains is to extend this support specifically to Special Education (SPED) and inclusive education.

This measure institutionalizes that extension. It mandates the Department of Education (DepEd), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), in coordination with the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), to provide free and regular SPED and inclusive education training programs for teachers at all levels. These programs will equip educators with inclusive teaching strategies, classroom adaptations, early intervention techniques, and proficiency in using assistive technologies to support learners with disabilities.

The bill also strengthens the professional pipeline by directing CHED and PRC to develop and accredit specialized tertiary programs and certification pathways in fields such as physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech-language pathology, and behavioral intervention. It further recognizes the critical role of Special Education teachers by granting salary-grade adjustments, hardship allowances, and incentive packages to ensure retention and professional growth in the sector.

By linking constitutional principles with practical and sustainable reforms, this measure addresses the twin challenges of underfunded SPED programs and inadequately trained educators. It builds upon existing government training systems, expands them to cover inclusive education, and secures their funding within the General Appropriations Act. In doing so, it ensures that inclusive education is not a temporary initiative but a permanent State commitment—so that every Filipino learner, regardless of ability, is taught by teachers equipped to help them succeed.

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


KATHRYN JOYCE F. GORRICETA, M.D.
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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 “Inclusive and Special Education Development Act of 2025.”

SEC. 2. Section 12 of Republic Act No. 7277, as amended, is hereby further mended to read as follows:

“SECTION 12. Access to Quality Education. – The State shall ensure that persons with disabilities are provided with adequate access to quality education and ample opportunities to develop their skills. It shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all persons with disabilities. It shall be unlawful for any learning institution to deny a person with disability admission to any course it offers by reason of handicap or disability.

“For purposes of this Act, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) shall include, but not be limited to:

- individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD), including high-functioning forms;
- individuals with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and other neurodevelopmental disorders;
- persons with intellectual disabilities, such as Down Syndrome;
- persons with physical disabilities, including those caused by conditions such as polio;
- persons with sensory disabilities, including those who are deaf, hard of hearing, mute, or with speech impairments;
- and such other mental, intellectual, sensory, or physical impairments as may be determined by the National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA) in consultation with the Department of Health (DOH) and other relevant agencies.

“The State shall take into consideration the special requirements of persons with disabilities in the formulation of education policies and programs. It shall encourage learning institutions to take into account the special needs of persons with disabilities with respect to the use of school facilities, class schedules, physical education requirements, and other pertinent considerations.

“The State shall also promote the provision by learning institutions of auxiliary services that will facilitate the learning process for persons with disabilities.

“THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (DEPED), THE COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION (CHED), AND STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES (SUCs), IN COORDINATION WITH THE PROFESSIONAL REGULATION COMMISSION (PRC), SHALL DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT FREE TRAINING PROGRAMS AND CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODULES FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS AT THE ELEMENTARY, SECONDARY,

AND TERTIARY LEVELS TO EQUIP THEM WITH SPECIALIZED SKILLS IN HANDLING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES. THESE PROGRAMS SHALL COVER, AMONG OTHERS, INCLUSIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES, CLASSROOM ADAPTATIONS, EARLY INTERVENTION TECHNIQUES, AND THE USE OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES.”

“THE COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION (CHED) AND THE PROFESSIONAL REGULATION COMMISSION (PRC) SHALL DEVELOP, ACCREDIT, AND REGULATE SPECIALIZED TERTIARY COURSES AND CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS FOR TEACHERS AND ALLIED PROFESSIONALS DIRECTLY HANDLING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES. THESE SHALL INCLUDE, BUT SHALL NOT BE LIMITED TO, PROGRAMS IN PHYSICAL THERAPY, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY, SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY, AND BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION, WITH SPECIALIZATION IN CHILD AND ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT FOR LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES.”

SEC. 3. A new section is hereby inserted after Section 13 of Republic Act No. 7277, as amended, and shall read as follows:

“SECTION 13-A. SALARY AND INCENTIVES FOR SPED TEACHERS. – SPECIAL EDUCATION (SPED) TEACHERS DIRECTLY HANDLING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES SHALL BE ENTITLED TO ADDITIONAL SALARY GRADE ADJUSTMENTS, SPECIAL HARDSHIP ALLOWANCES, AND INCENTIVE PACKAGES TO RECOGNIZE AND REINFORCE THE EXTRA EFFORTS AND COMPETENCIES REQUIRED IN THEIR FIELD.

THE DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND MANAGEMENT (DBM), IN COORDINATION WITH CONCERNED AGENCIES, SHALL ISSUE THE NECESSARY RULES AND REGULATIONS TO IMPLEMENT THIS PROVISION.”

SEC. 4. *Appropriations.* – The funds necessary for the effective implementation of this Act, including but not limited to teacher training programs, compensation adjustments for SPED teachers, and the development of specialized programs, shall be provided under the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA).

The Department of Budget and Management (DBM), in coordination with concerned agencies, shall ensure that adequate appropriations are incorporated to carry out the objectives of this Act.

SEC. 5. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Department of Education (DepEd), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), in coordination with other concerned agencies, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

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,