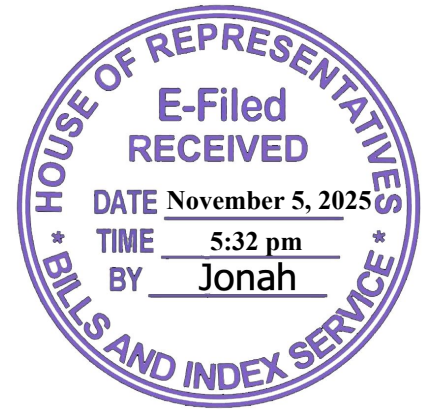


Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
Quezon City  
**TWENTIETH CONGRESS**  
First Regular Session



**HOUSE BILL NO. 5770**

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Introduced by **REP. BERNADETTE "DETTE" G. ESCUDERO**

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**AN ACT**  
**STRENGTHENING THE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES OF STATE**  
**UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND**  
**FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

Mental health has become a critical issue in Philippine education, profoundly impacting academic success and, in tragic cases, costing lives. The urgency is stark: CHED recorded 404 student suicides and 2,147 attempted suicides in the 2021-2022 academic year alone.<sup>1</sup> Latest data of these matter are yet to be reported.

Likewise, the mental health and well-being are alarming considering latest studies with high rates of student depression and anxiety (80-86%), sadly, another study found that only 12% of students had accessed campus-based mental health services, citing barriers like stigma, lack of awareness, and inaccessibility.<sup>2</sup>

This measure directly addresses the aforementioned gap by mandating all State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) to establish an operational and fully functional Mental Health Office. This office will be responsible for implementing comprehensive mental health programs and ensure effective, specialized care. The bill also mandates the hiring of licensed and competent professionals to support not only the operations of the office but to cater to the needs of the students.

  
**HON. BERNADETTE "DETTE" G. ESCUDERO**  
Representative  
1st District, Sorsogon

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<sup>1</sup> Cabato, L. (18 June 2024) *CHED: Special approaches needed to address mental health among students*. Accessed last 5 November 2025 from: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1952743/ched-special-approaches-needed-to-address-mental-health-among-students>

<sup>2</sup> Rubio, R. R. M., et al (2025). *Toward sustainable well-being in higher education: mental health status, attitudes, social support, and service utilization among college students*. *Mental Health: Global Challenges Journal*, 8(1), 128-139.

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**AN ACT**  
**STRENGTHENING THE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES OF STATE UNIVERSITIES**  
**AND COLLEGES, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER**  
**PURPOSES**

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

1       **Section 1. Short Title.** – This Act shall be known as the "State Universities  
2       and Colleges Mental Health Services Act."

3       **Sec. 2. Declaration of Policies.** – It is hereby declared the policy of the  
4       State to uphold the basic right of every Filipino to sound mental health and ensure  
5       access to appropriate and needed interventions, therapy, and treatment. Pursuant to  
6       this mandate, the State shall institute policies to promote the mental health and  
7       wellness of students, faculty, teaching and non-teaching staff, and other personnel of  
8       state universities and colleges (SUCs) through, among others, the establishment of a  
9       Mental Health Office in all SUCs, and recruitment, deployment and training of  
10      additional SUC-based mental health service personnel.

11       All SUCs shall ensure the provision of proper and adequate mental health  
12      services to their respective students, faculty, non-teaching staff and other personnel.  
13      In this regard, all SUCs, through their Mental Health Offices, shall design programs  
14      and provide services to assist in the resolution of emotional, behavioral, and  
15      psychosocial issues and to foster an enabling environment for knowledge acquisition  
16      and intellectual development.

17      **Sec. 3. Definition of Terms.** – As used in this Act:

18       (a) *Guidance Counselor* shall refer to a natural person who has been registered  
19      and issued a valid Certificate of Registration and a valid Professional Identification  
20      Card by the Professional Regulatory Board of Guidance and Counseling and the  
21      Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) in accordance with Republic Act No. 9258,  
22      otherwise known as the "Guidance and Counseling Act of 2004," and, by virtue of

1 specialized training, performs the functions of guidance and counseling for a fee,  
2 salary or other forms of compensation: *Provided*, That this definition shall be without  
3 prejudice to those registered as guidance counselor pursuant to Section 14 of Republic  
4 Act No. 9258;

5 (b) *Mental Health* shall refer to a state of well-being in which the individual  
6 realizes one's own abilities and potentials, copes adequately with the normal stresses  
7 of life, displays resilience in the face of extreme life events, works productively and  
8 fruitfully, and is able to make a positive contribution to the community;

9 (c) *Mental Health Professional* shall refer to a medical doctor, nurse, guidance  
10 counselor, psychologist, or any other appropriately-trained and qualified person with  
11 specific skills relevant to, and necessary for, the provision of mental health services;

12 (d) *Mental Health Services* shall refer to the psychosocial, psychiatric, or  
13 neurologic activities and programs along the whole range of mental health support  
14 services including promotion, prevention, treatment, and aftercare, which are provided  
15 by mental health facilities and mental health professionals;

16 (e) *Psychologist* shall refer to a natural person who is duly registered and holds  
17 a valid certificate of registration and a valid professional identification card as a  
18 professional psychologist, issued by the Professional Regulatory Board of Psychology  
19 and the PRC pursuant to Republic Act No. 10029, otherwise known as the "Philippine  
20 Psychology Act of 2009," for the purpose of delivering different psychological services:  
21 *Provided*, That this definition shall be without prejudice to those registered as  
22 psychologists pursuant to Section 16 of Republic Act No. 10029;

23 (f) *State Universities and Colleges or SUCs* shall refer to public higher education  
24 institutions established by law and managed by their respective independent and  
25 separate governing boards; and

26 (g) *SUC-Based Mental Health Service Personnel* shall refer to any mental health  
27 professional who is hired or deployed by, or has a contract with an SUC to render  
28 mental health services in its campus.

29 **Sec. 4. Establishment of Mental Health Offices in Campuses of State**  
30 **Universities and Colleges.** – All SUCs shall be mandated to establish a Mental  
31 Health Office in their respective campuses to be operated by trained mental health  
32 professionals serving as mental health service personnel of SUCs: *Provided*, That the  
33 establishment and operation of mental health offices in SUC campuses shall be subject  
34 to the policies, standards and guidelines issued by Commission on Higher Education  
35 (CHED), Department of Budget and Management (DBM) and Civil Service Commission  
36 (CSC).

37 The Mental Health Offices in SUCs shall perform the following duties and  
38 functions:

39 (a) Implement mental health programs and projects designed to promote  
40 mental health and well-being of students, faculty, teaching and non-teaching staff,  
41 and other personnel employed in SUC campuses;

42 (b) Set up twenty-four seven (24/7) campus hotline numbers attended by  
43 dedicated and trained guidance counselors to provide assistance to the whole SUC  
44 community, with special attention paid to the needs of students, individuals with

1 history of mental health problems or conditions, and those who have high-risk factors  
2 for self-harm or suicide;

3 (c) Initiate and sustain a heightened campaign to raise the collective  
4 consciousness about mental health, with emphasis on preventing suicides, handling  
5 life stresses, promoting mental health and nutrition, and guidance and counseling;

6 (d) Create a mechanism for crisis intervention and response, particularly for  
7 cases involving suicide and other immediate or life-threatening emergencies;

8 (e) Establish systems to maximize the utilization of existing mental health  
9 services provided by other government agencies, such as, but not limited to,  
10 Department of Health (DOH) and Department of Social Welfare and Development  
11 (DSWD); and

12 (f) Perform other duties and functions in relation to mental health awareness  
13 and promotion as may be identified by CHED.

14 **Sec. 5. Recruitment, Training and Deployment of Mental Health**  
15 **Professionals in State Universities and Colleges.** — Within five (5) years from  
16 the effectivity of this Act, all SUCs shall ensure that their respective mental health  
17 offices are staffed with mental health professionals. For this purpose, SUCs shall, in  
18 coordination with CHED and subject to evaluation and approval of DBM, formulate the  
19 appropriate organizational structure and staffing pattern for their respective mental  
20 health offices.

21 Notwithstanding the provisions of Republic Act No. 9258, SUCs shall be  
22 authorized to recruit individuals with undergraduate degrees in psychology or other  
23 related disciplines but lack other requisites to qualify as mental health professionals:  
24 *Provided,* That the services rendered such individuals shall be performed under the  
25 supervision of qualified mental health professionals: *Provided, further,* That CHED and  
26 the SUC concerned shall provide for the appropriate training, instruction and  
27 assistance to enable them to develop the necessary skills to render counselling and  
28 other mental health services to students, faculty, teaching and non-teaching staff, and  
29 other personnel employed in SUC campuses: *Provided,* finally, That individuals  
30 recruited without the required licenses or certification under this Act shall, within three  
31 (3) years from the date of recruitment, secure such licenses and certification required  
32 in the performance of the responsibilities as mental health professionals.

33 **Sec. 6. Professional and Career Development Program for In-Campus**  
34 **Mental Health Professionals.** – In accordance with the provisions of Republic Act  
35 No. 10912, otherwise known as the “Continuing Professional Development Act of  
36 2016,” CHED shall formulate continuing professional development and training  
37 programs for SUC mental health personnel and shall ensure the adoption of the  
38 appropriate mental health interventions for students, faculty, teaching and non-  
39 teaching staff, and other personnel employed in SUC campuses.

40 The CHED shall, in coordination with DBM, CSC, DOH, and PRC, perform the  
41 following:

1 (a) Prepare a uniform career and personnel development plan that includes  
2 provisions on personal wellness, merit promotion, performance evaluation, in-service  
3 training, graduate scholarships, research grants, and incentive award systems;

4 (b) Ensure that compensation of mental health professionals employed by  
5 SUCs are commensurate with other related plantilla items under the provisions of  
6 Republic Act No. 6758, otherwise known as the "Compensation and Position  
7 Classification Act of 1989," as amended;

8 (c) Align the qualifications and standards for the qualification outcomes of  
9 Mental Health Professionals to the provisions of Republic Act No. 10968, otherwise  
10 known as the "Philippine Qualifications Framework Act;"

11 (d) Review the organizational structure of all SUCs to ensure the availability of  
12 competent and professional personnel that can supervise and provide technical  
13 assistance to the guidance counselors;

14 (e) Review, revise and develop the duties and responsibilities of mental health  
15 professionals in accordance with the laws governing their professions;

16 (f) Prepare a performance evaluation plan geared towards the improvement of  
17 the efficiency and effectiveness of each mental health professional: Provided, That the  
18 employees shall be adequately informed by their immediate supervisor of the  
19 evaluation of their performance; and

20 (g) Provide periodic training, aimed at retooling and upgrading the skills of  
21 mental health professionals.

22 **Sec. 7. Salary Scale.** – The career and salary scales of mental health  
23 professionals in SUCs shall provide for a progression from a minimum to a maximum  
24 salary by means of salary adjustments and/or regular increments, to be given based  
25 on necessity, merit and competencies: *Provided*, That the entry level for qualified  
26 mental health professionals employed by SUCs shall not be lower than Salary  
27 Grade 16.

28 **Sec. 8. Recruitment of Mental Health Personnel Under a Contract-of-**  
29 **Service and Other Similar Work Arrangements.** – In cases where SUCs are  
30 unable to engage the services of qualified personnel for regular appointment, the SUC  
31 concerned shall be authorized to engage the services of mental health professionals  
32 under a contract-of-service and other similar work arrangements, whether full-time or  
33 part-time basis, subject to existing laws, rules and regulations.

34 **Sec. 9. Benefits of Mental Professionals in SUCs.** – All mental health  
35 professionals employed in SUC Mental Health Offices shall enjoy the rights, privileges,  
36 and other benefits provided in Republic Act No. 7305, otherwise known as the "Magna  
37 Carta of Public Health Workers," Republic Act No. 11036, otherwise known as the  
38 "Mental Health Act," and other pertinent laws.

39 **Sec. 10. Appropriations.** – The amount necessary to carry out the provisions  
40 of this Act shall be included in the Annual General Appropriations Act or sourced from  
41 the internally-generated income of SUCs.

1       **Sec. 11.** Suppletory Application. – The applicable provisions of Republic Act  
2 No. 11036 insofar as such provisions are not inconsistent with the provisions and  
3 objectives of this Act, shall suppletorily apply.

4       **Sec. 12.** Separability Clause. – If any provision or part hereof is declared  
5 unconstitutional, the remainder of this Act or any provision not affected thereby shall  
6 remain in full force and effect.

7       **Sec. 13.** Repealing Clause. – All laws, acts, decrees, executive orders,  
8 issuances, and rules and regulations or parts thereof which are contrary to and  
9 inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

10       **Sec. 14.** Effectivity. – This Act shall take effect immediately following its  
11 publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

*Approved,*