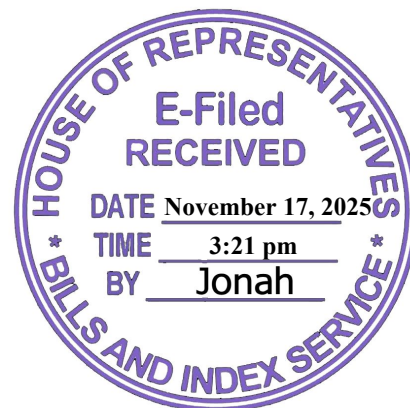


Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
Quezon City, Metro Manila

**TWENTIETH CONGRESS**  
*First Regular Session*

**HOUSE BILL NO. 6063**



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Introduced by **Representatives Ryan S. Recto, Javier Miguel L. Benitez, Brian Daniel Poe Llamanzares, PhD, MNSA**

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### **EXPLANATORY NOTE**

This legislative measure seeks to institutionalize the establishment of accessible and readily available mental health services in all State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) to ensure that students receive immediate support when needed.

Despite the passage of Republic Act No. 11036, or the Mental Health Act, in 2018, an increasing number of mental health problems among youth still occurred. Suicide continues to be a critical public health concern worldwide. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2021), approximately seven hundred thousand (700,000) individuals take their own lives each year. In 2019, suicide ranked as the fourth leading cause of mortality among individuals aged fifteen (15) to twenty-nine (29) years globally, with an estimated seventy-seven (77) percent of these cases occurring in low and middle-income countries. In the Philippines, the Department of Health reported a suicide rate of 2.5 per 100,000 population in 2019, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive mental health interventions and preventive measures to address this growing concern.<sup>1</sup>

The State recognizes that mental health challenges significantly affect students' academic performance, physical well-being, and interpersonal relationships, thereby diminishing their overall quality of life and college experience. Left unaddressed, these issues may lead to long-term consequences, including decreased employability, reduced earning potential, and adverse health outcomes.

According to the Philippine National Police (PNP), nearly two thousand (2,000) suicide cases were recorded across all age groups within the first six (6) months of

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<sup>1</sup> Alibudbud, R. (2023). *Suicide among the youth and school-based suicide prevention: Exemplar and reflections from the Philippines*. *Asian Journal of Psychiatry*.

2025, covering the period from January to June. In Baguio City alone, thirty-five (35) suicide deaths were documented as of September 2025, with the most affected demographic being the youth aged sixteen (16) to thirty (30) years old. Consistent reports from 2023 to 2025 indicate that suicide incidence in the Philippines remains alarmingly high among individuals aged fifteen (15) to twenty-nine (29). Notably, suicide ranks as the fourth leading cause of death among adolescents aged fifteen (15) to nineteen (19) years old. Studies further reveal that many students experience overwhelming emotional stress resulting from academic demands, financial constraints, employment responsibilities and caregiving duties. Such pressures have led numerous students, particularly in community colleges, to consider taking academic leave or withdrawing from their studies.

This measure underscores the urgent need for timely and adequate mental health offices in higher education institutions to safeguard the welfare, productivity and holistic development of students.

This measure was approved by the House of Representatives during the 19th Congress and subsequently transmitted to the Senate. It is hereby refiled in the 20th Congress under the same intent and considerations for which it was previously approved.

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



**Ryan S. Recto**  
**Representative**  
6<sup>th</sup> District, Batangas



**Javier Miguel L. Benitez**  
**Representative**  
3<sup>rd</sup> District, Negros Occidental



**Brian Daniel Poe Llamanzares, PhD, MNSA**  
**Representative**  
FPJ Panday Bayanihan Partylist

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

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

1       SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “*State Universities and*  
2 *Colleges (SUCs) Mental Health Service Act*”.

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

12  
13       All SUCs shall ensure the provision of proper and adequate mental health  
14 services to their respective constituents and communities. Mental Health Offices shall  
15 design and implement programs to address emotional, behavioral, and psychosocial  
16 issues and foster a supportive learning and working environment.

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

- 19  
20       a) *Guidance counselor* refers to an individual who possesses a license or  
21 certification granted by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) and  
22 holds at a minimum a master's degree in Guidance and Counseling,  
23 Guidance, or Counseling, without prejudice to those registered under the  
24 grandfather's clause of Republic Act No. 9258, otherwise known as the  
25 "Guidance and Counseling Act of 2004", and is competent to perform

guidance and counseling, career guidance and implement mental health programs;

- b) *Mental health* refers to a state of well-being in which the individual realizes one's own abilities and potentials, copes adequately with the normal stresses of life, displays resilience in the face of extreme life events, works productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a positive contribution to the community;
- c) *Mental health professional* refers to a medical doctor, nurse, guidance counselor, psychologist, or any other appropriately-trained and qualified person with specific skills relevant to, and necessary for, the provision of mental health services;
- d) *Mental health services* refer to the psychosocial, psychiatric, or neurologic activities and programs along the whole range of the mental health support services, including promotion, prevention, treatment, and aftercare, which are provided by mental health facilities and mental health professionals;
- e) *Psychologist* refers to a natural person who has professional training and clinical skills in psychotherapeutic intervention and assessment for mental health problems and possesses a license or certification granted by the PRC and holds at the minimum a master's degree in Psychology without prejudice to those granted licenses under the grandfather's clause of Republic Act No. 10029, otherwise known as the "Philippine Psychology Act of 2009"; and
- f) *SUC-based mental health service personnel* refer to any mental health professional who is hired or deployed by, or has a contract with an SUC to render mental health services on its campus.

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

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

- a) Implement inclusive mental health programs, projects, and activities designed to promote the mental health and well-being of students, faculty, teaching and non-teaching staff, and other personnel employed in SUC campuses and their satellites in line with the SUC-Based Mental Health Needs and Capacity Assessment;

- b) Operate 24/7 campus hotline numbers attended by dedicated and trained guidance counselors to provide assistance to the SUC community, with special attention to the needs of students, individuals with a history of mental health problems or conditions, and those with higher risk factors for self-harm or suicide;
- c) Initiate and sustain information campaigns to raise mental health awareness, prevent self-harm and suicide, promote wellness, and develop coping skills;
- d) Establish a mechanism for crisis response and intervention, particularly for cases involving suicide and other immediate or life-threatening emergencies, including mental health preparedness for natural disasters, pandemics, or campus violence;
- e) Coordinate with the Department of Health (DOH), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Local Government Units (LGUs), private sector, civil society, and non-government organizations for mental health referrals and support services;
- f) Integrate data privacy and confidentiality safeguards in compliance with Republic Act No. 10173 or the Data Privacy Act;
- g) Submit an annual Mental Health Services Plan and Report to CHED;
- h) Create a Mental Health Advisory Committee (MHAC) composed of the head of the MHO, as Chair, and representatives from students, faculty, non-teaching staff, and mental health professionals to guide program planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation; and
- i) Perform other duties and functions in relation to mental health awareness and promotion as may be identified by PASLUC and CHED.

*Sec. 5. Hiring, Training, and Deployment of Mental Health Professionals. –* Subject to the guidelines set by the CHED and the SUCs, CSC, and DBM, the SUCs shall hire, train, and deploy mental health professionals, including a psychologist, to the Mental Health Office to ensure that each SUC shall have mental health professionals or mental health service providers within five (5) years from the effectivity of this Act.

The SUCs shall, in coordination with the CHED, prepare the appropriate plantilla positions to be submitted to the DBM for evaluation and approval for the additional SUC-based mental health service personnel to be hired under this Act, subject to the

existing organizational, staffing, position classification, and compensation policies, rules, and regulations.

Notwithstanding the provisions of Republic Act No. 9258, otherwise known as the "*Guidance and Counseling Act of 2004*", SUCs may hire, as may be necessary, college graduates who do not yet qualify as mental health professionals but who possess a background in psychology or similar fields to provide mental health services; Provided, That the CHED shall provide for the appropriate training and instruction of such college graduates in order for them to gain and develop the necessary skills to render counselling services to faculty, students, and school personnel, and assist them in managing mental health issues: Provided, further, That such services shall be rendered under the supervision of qualified mental health professionals within the schools division; Provided, finally, That a college graduate hired to work in a Mental Health Office shall, within three (3) years from the date of employment in the SUC, Secure the appropriate license to practice as a mental health professional and meet the relevant qualification requirements of their position.

The CHED and the SUCs, through the Mental Health Offices, shall formulate a scheme for the continuous training of mental health service personnel, taking into consideration the latest scientific studies, psycho-social approaches, and know-how on mental health and mental health services, in accordance with the provisions of Republic Act No. 10912, otherwise known as the "Continuing Professional Development Act of 2016".

*Sec. 6 . Professional and Career Development of Mental Health Professionals.*  
– Pursuant to Republic Act No. 10912, otherwise known as the "Continuing Professional Development Act of 2016," CHED shall formulate and implement training programs and development initiatives for SUC mental health personnel.

In coordination with DBM, CSC, DOH, and PRC, CHED shall:

- a) Develop a career path and development plan, including merit promotion, wellness support, in-service training, and scholarship grants;
- b) Ensure compensation aligns with Republic Act No. 6758 (Compensation and Position Classification Act of 1989);
- c) Align qualifications with Republic Act No. 10968 (Philippine Qualifications Framework Act);
- d) Regularly update job descriptions and responsibilities of mental health professionals;
- e) Implement performance evaluation systems with feedback mechanisms; and
- f) Offer retooling and skills upgrading workshops.

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164       Sec. 7. *Salary Scale.* - The career and salary scales of mental health  
165 professionals in SUCs shall provide for a gradual progression from a minimum to a  
166 maximum salary by means of regular increments, to be given regularly based on merit  
167 and competencies.

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169       The entry level of mental health professionals shall not be lower than Salary  
170 Grade 16. Mental health professionals hired by SUCs as Psychometricians shall be  
171 hired at Salary Grade 11 at the entry level.

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173       Sec. 8. *Contractual Hiring of Mental Health Personnel.* - In case of a scarcity of  
174 mental health professionals who are available to work on a full-time basis in a Mental  
175 Health Office, the concerned SUC may hire qualified professionals on contractual or  
176 part-time basis, subject to the evaluation and approval of the DBM.

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178       Sec. 9. *Monitoring and Evaluation* – CHED, in consultation with PASUC, shall  
179 develop and implement a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework  
180 for the effective implementation of this Act. The M&E framework shall include, but not  
181 be limited to, the assessment of coverage, accessibility, and utilization of mental health  
182 services across all SUCs; the performance, competencies, and training compliance of  
183 SUC-based mental health service personnel; and the utilization and efficiency of  
184 budget allocations and resources designated for mental health services.

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186       SUCs shall be required to submit annual reports to CHED for review and, if  
187 necessary, undergo validation audits and field inspections: Provided, That SUCs found  
188 to be non-compliant shall be required to submit and execute a Corrective Action Plan  
189 (CAP) within a period prescribed by CHED: Provided further. That CHED shall  
190 consolidate its findings into an annual national report to be submitted to Congress and  
191 made publicly available.

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193       Sec. 10. *Appropriations.* — The amount necessary to carry out the provisions  
194 of this Act shall be included in the Annual General Appropriations Act (GAA) and may  
195 also be sourced from the SUCs' internally generated income. CHED shall administer a  
196 Mental Health Services Support Fund to assist resource-constrained SUCs in  
197 complying with this Act.

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199       Sec. 11. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within sixty (60) days from  
200 the effectivity of this Act, the CHED shall, in coordination with the DOH the Philippine  
201 Association of State Universities and Colleges, and other concerned stakeholders, issue  
202 rules and regulations to govern the hiring, training and deployment of guidance  
203 counselors, psychologists and other mental health service personnel in SUCs, and for  
204 the implementation of this Act.

205  
206       Sec. 12. *Separability Clause.* – If, for any reason, any provision of this Act is  
207 declared unconstitutional or invalid, such parts or portions not affected thereby shall  
208 remain in full force and effect.

210           Sec. 13. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, executive orders, presidential decrees,  
211 issuances, rules and regulations or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of  
212 this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

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214           Sec. 14. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its  
215 publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation or in the Official  
216 Gazette.

217  
218           *Approved,*