

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 6971



Introduced by: **REPRESENTATIVE ERIC L. OLIVAREZ**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Republic Act No. 11223, or the Universal Health Care (UHC) Act, and Republic Act No. 11959, or the Regional Specialty Centers Act, established the framework for an integrated, decentralized, and people-centered health system. While these laws have expanded access to healthcare services, gaps remain in addressing the developmental and educational needs of children with disabilities—particularly during early childhood and school age, when timely intervention is most critical.

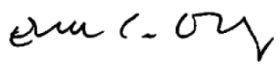
Public schools are the most accessible institutions for Filipino families, yet the establishment of Special Education (SPED) Centers remains uneven and largely discretionary. There is no institutionalized nationwide mandate or sustainable funding mechanism to ensure that every child with a disability has access to properly resourced SPED services. Persistent challenges—including the shortage of trained SPED teachers, limited specialization programs, inadequate compensation, and weak coordination between health and education systems—continue to undermine the State’s commitment to inclusive education.

This bill seeks to institutionalize the establishment of Special Education (SPED) Centers in public elementary and secondary schools nationwide, with priority given to underserved and marginalized areas. It provides for sustained funding for SPED teacher training, specialization, scholarships, and professional development, as well as additional compensation and incentives for SPED personnel and allied professionals.

Further, the measure integrates developmental and therapeutic services into the mandates of the UHC Act and the Regional Specialty Centers Act by strengthening collaboration among the Department of Education, Department of Health, local government units, and barangays. This integrated approach ensures early diagnosis, therapy, and individualized educational interventions within the school and community setting.

By harmonizing health and education systems and institutionalizing inclusive education support, this bill affirms the State’s obligation to protect the rights and promote the holistic development of children with disabilities.

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


ERIC L. OLIVAREZ

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**“AN ACT
INSTITUTIONALIZING SPECIAL EDUCATION (SPED) CENTERS IN
PUBLIC SCHOOLS, PROVIDING FUNDS FOR SPED TEACHER
TRAINING, SPECIALIZATION, AND SUPPORT, AND EXPANDING
REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11223 (UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE ACT) AND
REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11959 (REGIONAL SPECIALTY CENTERS ACT) TO
INCLUDE COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENTAL AND SPECIALIZED
EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES”**

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

SECTION 1. Title. - This Act shall be known as the "Inclusive Education and Development Act."

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. - It is hereby declared the policy of the State to protect and promote the right of every child to quality and inclusive education, health, and holistic development. In recognition of the interdependence of health and education, and in fulfillment of its obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the State shall institutionalize Special Education (SPED) Centers in public schools and integrate developmental and therapeutic services into the public education and healthcare systems.

SECTION 3. Definition of Terms. - For purposes of this Act, the following terms are defined as:

"Child" shall refer to a person below eighteen (18) years of age, or those over eighteen (18) who are unable to fully take care of themselves or protect themselves from abuse, neglect, cruelty, exploitation, or discrimination because of a physical or mental disability or condition, in accordance with Republic Act No. 7610 and other relevant laws.

"Children with Disabilities" shall refer to children who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, developmental, or sensory impairments that may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

"Private Entities" Includes corporations, partnerships, cooperatives, and sole proprietors engaged in business or non-profit operations in the Philippines.

"SPED Center" shall refer to a facility within a public school that provides special education services, individualized instruction, developmental assessments, therapeutic interventions, and other related services for children with disabilities.

"Allied Professionals" shall refer to but is not limited to speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, developmental pediatricians, behavioral therapists, psychologists, and guidance counselors.

"Inclusive Education" shall refer to a system of education that accommodates all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions.

SECTION 4. Establishment of SPED Centers in Public Schools. - DepEd, in coordination with LGUs and barangays, shall establish at least one (1) SPED Center in every public elementary and secondary school, prioritizing schools in underserved and marginalized areas. SPED Centers shall have infrastructure design appropriate for SPED students, adequate facilities, learning materials, diagnostic tools, and assistive technologies. Each SPED Center shall be staffed with at least one qualified SPED teacher per ten (10) children with disabilities, and supported by a pool of allied professionals. Schools may also serve as satellite hubs for therapy and diagnostic services in partnership with DOH Regional Specialty Centers and local health offices.

SECTION 5. Integration into UHC and Regional Specialty Centers. - The Department of Health (DOH) shall ensure that developmental and therapeutic services for children with disabilities are included in the service packages under the UHC Act and the Regional Specialty Centers Act. The Regional Specialty Centers shall establish partnerships with DepEd SPED Centers to deliver early diagnosis, medical referrals, therapy, and developmental monitoring within the school setting. It shall integrate health and educational services at the community level through coordination between school health units and barangay health centers.

SECTION 6. Training, Specialization, and Professional Development. - The DepEd, in collaboration with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and accredited academic institutions, shall develop and implement SPED training and specialization programs for teachers and allied professionals. Scholarships, grants, and continuing education incentives shall be provided to individuals pursuing SPED-related courses or professional certifications. The Department of Education (DepEd) shall establish Centers for SPED Excellence to serve as national and regional hubs for research, innovation, training, and technical assistance.

SECTION 7. Compensation and Incentives for SPED Personnel. - Qualified SPED teachers and allied professionals shall receive additional compensation equivalent to at least fifteen percent (15%) of their basic salary. SPED personnel shall be entitled to hazard pay, continuing education allowances, and access to mental health support services. Importantly, career advancement pathways specific to SPED teachers shall be established under the DepEd Human Resource framework.

SECTION 8. Role of Barangays and Local Government Units (LGUs). - Each barangay shall designate a SPED Focal Person to coordinate with the school and local health center for the identification, monitoring, and support of children with disabilities. LGUs shall allocate local funds to support SPED Centers, including infrastructure improvements, transportation for learners, and honoraria for allied professionals. Barangay Development Councils shall include SPED and inclusive education as key components of their annual investment plans.

SECTION 9. Inter-Agency Council on Inclusive Education and Development (IACIED). - An Inter-Agency Council on Inclusive Education and Development (IACIED) shall be created to oversee the implementation of this Act, composed of the following:

- Secretary of Education (Chair)
- Secretary of Health (Co-Chair)
- Secretary of Social Welfare and Development (Member)
- Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights (Member) Representative from the National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA)
- Representative from the League of Provinces/Cities/Municipalities Provinces/Cities/Municipalities
- Three (3) representatives from SPED professional organizations and parent groups

The IACIED shall convene quarterly and report annually to Congress on the implementation and impact of this Act.

SECTION 10. Appropriations. - The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriations of the DepEd and DOH. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA).

SECTION 11. Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR). - Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DepEd, in coordination with the DOH, DSWD, and LGUS, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SECTION 12. Separability Clause. - If any of the sections or provisions of this Act is held invalid, all other provisions not affected thereby shall remain valid.

SECTION 13. Repealing Clause. - All laws, decrees, issuances, rules and regulations inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 14. Effectivity Clause. - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,