



Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session



HOUSE BILL NO. 7364

Introduced by Representative Ann Matibag

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a lifelong neurodevelopmental condition that affects an individual's communication, social interaction, behavior, and adaptive functioning. As a spectrum condition, autism presents with varying degrees of support needs, requiring individualized, timely, and sustained interventions across the life course. In the Philippines, current estimates indicate that approximately one in every one hundred individuals is on the autism spectrum, translating to more than one million Filipinos who require varying levels of support, protection, and accommodation.

Despite growing public awareness, persons with autism and their families continue to face significant barriers to early diagnosis, appropriate treatment, inclusive education, employment opportunities, and access to essential health and social services. Fragmented service delivery, lack of coordinated national policy, limited data on prevalence, and persistent stigma and discrimination have constrained the ability of government institutions to respond effectively to the needs of persons with autism. These gaps often result in delayed intervention, increased family burden, social exclusion, and reduced quality of life.

This bill seeks to address these challenges by instituting a National Comprehensive Program for the prevention, early detection, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation, and lifelong support of persons with autism. It establishes the Autism Council of the Philippines as an inter-agency and multi-sectoral coordinating body tasked with policy implementation, program integration, public awareness, research support, and service delivery coordination. The measure mandates epidemiological surveillance and research to generate reliable data necessary for evidence-based planning and resource allocation.

The bill further strengthens rights-based protections by recognizing persons with autism as persons with disabilities entitled to all benefits under existing laws, mandating PhilHealth coverage

for autism-related services, and requiring continuing education and training of health personnel, educators, public service providers, and first responders. It explicitly prohibits discrimination in education, employment, public transportation, insurance coverage, and access to justice, and provides safeguards for informed consent, confidentiality of medical information, and reasonable accommodation in legal proceedings.

By adopting a holistic, inclusive, and coordinated approach, this measure affirms the State's commitment to protecting the dignity, autonomy, and full participation of persons with autism in society. It aims to ensure that every Filipino on the autism spectrum is afforded equitable access to health care, education, employment, and social protection, enabling them to live with dignity and realize their full potential.

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


REP. ANN MATIBAG
First District of Laguna



Republic of the Philippines
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HOUSE BILL NO. **7364**

Introduced by Representative Ma. Rene Ann Lourdes G. Matibag

AN ACT INSTITUTING A NATIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM FOR THE PREVENTION, EARLY DETECTION, DIAGNOSIS, AND TREATMENT OF PERSONS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS, ESTABLISHING THE AUTISM COUNCIL OF THE PHILIPPINES, PROVIDING PROTECTIVE MEASURES AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH AUTISM, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSE

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 “**Autism Care Act of 2025**.”

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy. It is hereby declared the policy of the State to protect and promote the right to health, dignity, and full inclusion of Persons with Autism (PWAs). The State shall ensure their full, healthy, and holistic development and promote an environment that enables them to become independent, self-reliant, and productive members of society.

Towards this end, the State shall institutionalize a comprehensive, inclusive, and rights-based national program that addresses the prevention, early detection, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation, and lifelong support of persons with autism and their families.

SEC. 3. Definition of Terms.

As used in this Act, the following terms shall mean:

(a) **Autism or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)** – A range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech, and nonverbal communication, as well as unique strengths and differences. It includes autism disorder, Asperger syndrome, Rett’s syndrome, and pervasive developmental disorders not otherwise specified.

(b) **Diagnosis** – Medically necessary assessments and evaluations, including neuropsychological evaluations, genetic testing, or other diagnostic procedures to determine the presence of autism spectrum disorder.

(c) **Treatment** – Medically necessary, appropriate, effective, and efficient services, including evaluation and assessment; behavior training and management; applied behavior analysis; habilitative or rehabilitative care such as occupational, physical, and speech therapy; pharmaceutical care; psychiatric care; psychological care; and other therapeutic interventions.

(d) **Intervention** – Any medical, pharmacological, therapeutic, educational, or habilitative measure designed to support and enhance the developmental outcomes of persons with autism.

SEC. 4. Epidemiological Surveillance and Research Programs.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH), in coordination with the Department of Health (DOH), shall conduct annual epidemiological surveys to determine the incidence and prevalence of autism in the country.

The NIH shall further strengthen autism-related research, including investigations on causation, diagnosis, early detection, treatment, and the role of environmental, genetic, biological, and socio-demographic factors.

SEC. 5. Prevention of Conflict of Interest in Research.

Within six (6) months from the effectivity of this Act, the DOH shall issue standards, guidelines, and regulations to prevent conflicts of interest among researchers, pharmaceutical entities, and government agencies involved in autism-related research, and ensure transparency and public dissemination of such guidelines.

SEC. 6. Autism Council of the Philippines.

There is hereby created an Autism Council of the Philippines, under the DOH, which shall serve as an inter-agency and multi-sectoral body responsible for coordinating and implementing the National Autism Program.

The Council shall have the following functions:

- (a) Promote public awareness, education, and advocacy on autism;
- (b) Establish sustainable family and community support networks;
- (c) Provide referral and coordination of medical, educational, and social services;
- (d) Implement early screening, identification, and intervention programs;
- (e) Undertake and support research initiatives on autism;
- (f) Promote inclusive education and employment opportunities;
- (g) Develop anti-discrimination policies and programs;
- (h) Establish a national autism databank and monitoring system; and
- (i) Mobilize resources, donations, and grants for autism programs.

SEC. 7. Composition of the Autism Council.

The Council shall be chaired by the Secretary of Health and shall be composed of the following members:

- (a) Secretary of Social Welfare and Development;
- (b) Secretary of Education;
- (c) Secretary of Labor and Employment;
- (d) Secretary of Transportation;
- (e) Secretary of the Interior and Local Government;
- (f) Secretary of National Defense;
- (g) Secretary of Justice;
- (h) Chairperson of the Council for the Welfare of Children;
- (i) Chairperson of the National Council on Disability Affairs;
- (j) Head of the National Institutes of Health;
- (k) Head of the Philippine Information Agency;
- (l) One (1) representative from accredited caregivers' organizations;
- (m) One (1) representative from accredited medical professionals;
- (n) One (1) representative from accredited therapists' associations;
- (o) One (1) representative from autism advocacy NGOs;
- (p) One (1) representative from local government units; and
- (q) One (1) individual with autism.

Appointed members shall serve for a term of three (3) years, renewable once.

SEC. 8. Meetings.

The Council shall meet at least once a month or as often as necessary. A majority of its members shall constitute a quorum.

SEC. 9. Programs and Services.

The Council shall implement programs including, but not limited to:

- (a) Family orientation and counseling services;
- (b) National and regional referral systems;
- (c) Continuing education and training for families, teachers, caregivers, and professionals;
- (d) Publication of educational and informational materials;
- (e) Maintenance of a centralized autism registry and databank; and
- (f) Public information and advocacy campaigns.

SEC. 10. Early Identification and Intervention.

A nationwide program for early identification, screening, diagnosis, and intervention for children with autism shall be established, including the maintenance of a centralized registry.

SEC. 11. Recognition as Persons with Disabilities.

All persons with autism shall be recognized as Persons with Disabilities under Republic Act No. 7277, as amended, and shall be entitled to all rights, privileges, and benefits provided by law.

SEC. 12. Mandatory PhilHealth Coverage.

All persons with autism shall be covered under the National Health Insurance Program, including early detection, screening, therapeutic, rehabilitative, and allied medical services.

SEC. 13. Mandatory Continuing Education and Training.

Health personnel, educators, social workers, public service providers, law enforcement officers, first responders, and LGU personnel shall undergo mandatory autism-sensitivity and competency training.

SEC. 14. Protection Against Forcible Medical Interventions.

No person with autism shall be subjected to forced medical treatment, vaccines, or therapies without informed consent. The DOH shall issue safeguards to uphold autonomy and human rights.

SEC. 15. Protection Against Discrimination in Education.

All educational institutions shall adopt inclusive education policies, provide reasonable accommodations, and prohibit discrimination against learners with autism.

SEC. 16. Protection Against Discrimination in Employment.

Persons with autism shall be granted equal access to employment, workplace accommodations, skills development, and protection from discrimination.

SEC. 17. Accessibility in Public Transportation.

Public transportation systems shall adopt autism-sensitive accessibility standards and personnel training.

SEC. 18. Protection Against Discrimination in Insurance.

Insurance providers shall extend coverage to persons with autism, including allied medical services and access to life insurance.

SEC. 19. Protection During Disasters and Emergencies.

Government agencies and LGUs shall adopt autism-sensitive disaster response and emergency protocols.

SEC. 20. Reasonable Accommodation in Legal Proceedings.

Appropriate accommodations shall be provided to persons with autism involved in legal proceedings as accused persons, victims, or witnesses.

SEC. 21. Confidentiality of Medical Information.

The confidentiality of medical and personal information of persons with autism shall be strictly protected.

SEC. 22. Appropriations.

Funds necessary to implement this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 23. Implementing Rules and Regulations.

Within six (6) months from effectivity, the DOH shall promulgate the implementing rules and regulations in coordination with concerned agencies.

SEC. 24. Reportorial Requirement.

The DOH shall submit an annual implementation report to Congress.

SEC. 25. Separability Clause.

If any provision of this Act is declared invalid, the remaining provisions shall continue in full force and effect.

SEC. 26. Repealing Clause.

All laws, rules, and issuances inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 27. Effectivity.

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

Approved,