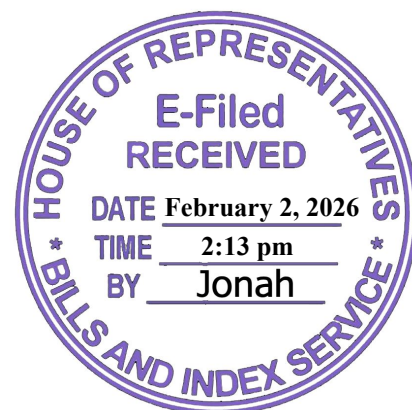


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 7543



Introduced by Honorable Ma. Alana Samanta Taliño Santos

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A GRANT PROGRAM FOR THE PROVISION OF THERAPEUTIC AND REHABILITATION SERVICES FOR VICTIMS OF HEINOUS CRIMES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Victims of heinous crimes suffer not only physical harm but also profound psychological, emotional, and social trauma. Survivors of rape, child sexual abuse, torture, trafficking, and other heinous offenses frequently experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and long-term functional impairment. Without timely and sustained therapeutic intervention, these effects may persist for years, severely affecting the victims' ability to study, work, maintain relationships, and reintegrate into society.

While the Philippine criminal justice system provides various forms of rehabilitation, counseling, and psychological services for the accused and convicted offenders through detention facilities and correctional programs, there is no comprehensive, institutionalized, and adequately funded national program that ensures continuous therapeutic and rehabilitation services for victims themselves. Existing assistance for victims is often limited to short-term crisis intervention, medico-legal services, or legal aid, with psychosocial care largely dependent on non-government organizations, donor-funded projects, or the uneven capacity of local government units (LGUs).

The 1987 Constitution mandates the State to value the dignity of every human person, guarantee full respect for human rights, and provide special protection to victims of abuse, violence, and exploitation. The State also recognizes its obligation to promote mental health, social justice, and the welfare of marginalized and vulnerable sectors. Justice cannot be fully realized when the focus of rehabilitation ends with the offender while the victim is left to endure lifelong trauma without adequate support.

This bill seeks to address this long-standing gap by establishing a grant program for LGUs to provide accessible, sustained, and trauma-informed therapeutic and rehabilitation services for victims of heinous crimes. Through targeted funding, professional mental health services, and coordinated referral systems, this measure aims to ensure that victims receive the care necessary for recovery, dignity, and meaningful reintegration into society.

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



HON. MA. ALANA SAMANTHA TALIÑO SANTOS
Representative, 3rd District of Cotabato

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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 "*Victims of Heinous Crimes Therapeutic and Rehabilitation Services Act.*"

SEC. 2. **Declaration of Policy.** – It is the policy of the State to protect and promote the mental health, dignity, safety, and well-being of victims of heinous crimes; ensure access to timely, adequate, and continuous therapeutic and rehabilitation services consistent with Republic Act No. 11036; institutionalize community-based, recovery-oriented, and trauma-informed mental health care for victims; and strengthen coordination, standards, and accountability among government agencies, local government units (LGUs), and service providers in the delivery of such services.

SEC. 3. **Definition of Terms.** – As used in this Act, the following terms shall mean:

(a) Victim — a person who has suffered physical, psychological, emotional, or mental harm as a result of a heinous crime.

(b) Heinous Crime — for purposes of this Act, refers to crimes which, by their nature and impact, result in severe trauma and warrant priority victim rehabilitation, as may be defined and enumerated in the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) in consultation with the Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and other stakeholders.

(c) Therapeutic and Rehabilitation Services — evidence-based, trauma-informed mental health and psychosocial interventions for victims, which may include psychological first aid, crisis counseling, psychotherapy, psychiatric services and medically-necessary treatment, psychosocial support, safety planning, case management, referral and follow-through, and social reintegration programs, consistent with Republic Act No. 11036.

(d) Mental Health Services — shall have the same meaning as defined under Republic Act No. 11036.

(e) Secretary — the Secretary of Health.

SEC. 4. *Grant Program for Victims of Heinous Crimes.* – The Secretary shall establish and implement a grant program to award grants to qualified LGUs to complement existing government efforts for:

- a. the provision of free, accessible, victim-centered, and continuous therapeutic and rehabilitation services to victims of heinous crimes, including long-term care when clinically indicated;
- b. the integration of trauma-informed mental health services into public hospitals, primary care facilities, and community-based mental health programs, consistent with Republic Act No. 11036;
- c. the establishment or strengthening of referral pathways among hospitals, LGUs, law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and social welfare offices to ensure continuity of care;
- d. capacity-building and training of mental health professionals, social workers, healthcare providers, and first responders in trauma-informed and victim-centered care; and
- e. the development and dissemination of information materials on victims' mental health rights and available services.

Provided, That administrative expenses of the LGU directly chargeable to the grant, including information, education, and communication (IEC) activities and training-related administrative costs, shall not exceed twenty percent (20%) of the grant amount, subject to the IRR and applicable government accounting and auditing rules.

SEC 5. *Minimum Service Package and Safeguards.* — The IRR shall prescribe a minimum service package that LGUs shall make available through public facilities or accredited providers, which may include:

- a. immediate crisis response services, including psychological first aid and crisis counseling;
- b. scheduled counseling/psychotherapy and psychiatric consultation, and medically-necessary treatment when indicated;
- c. case management, referral and follow-through mechanisms, and coordination with social welfare services;
- d. victim safety and privacy measures; and

- e. psychosocial support and reintegration services, including family support when appropriate.

SEC. 6. ***Rights-Based and Trauma-Informed Care.*** — All services under this Act shall uphold the rights of persons with mental health needs as guaranteed under Republic Act No. 11036, including access to adequate information on available services, confidentiality, informed consent, non-discrimination, and participation in treatment planning.

Confidentiality of all information, communications, and records regarding the victim and the services received shall be protected, and shall not be disclosed without written consent of the victim or the victim's legal representative, except as may be allowed under Republic Act No. 11036 and other applicable laws.

SEC. 7. ***Inter-Agency Coordination.*** — The Secretary, in consultation with the DSWD, DILG, DOJ, National Center for Mental Health, LGUs, and relevant professional and civil society organizations, shall develop the criteria governing eligibility, allowable costs, minimum service package, data standards, accreditation/referral arrangements, and program safeguards.

In developing these criteria, the Department of Health may adopt a multi-agency coordination approach to ensure integrated services and privacy and safety of victims, consistent with the integrated victim-assistance model in existing laws.

SEC. 8. ***Application Requirements.*** — To be eligible for a grant, an LGU shall submit an application that includes:

- a. an inventory of existing victim assistance and mental health programs and service gaps;
 - b. a program plan aligned with Republic Act No. 11036, including a referral map and continuity-of-care workflow;
 - c. partnerships or service agreements with public hospitals and licensed/accredited service providers; and
 - d. specific measures to ensure confidentiality, victim safety, trauma-informed practice, and continuity of care.
- e. SEC. 9. ***Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting.*** — Each LGU receiving a grant shall submit annual reports to the Secretary detailing:
- 1. the number of victims served, disaggregated as may be allowed by law and confidentiality safeguards, and the types of services provided;
 - 2. service utilization and outcome indicators, consistent with Republic Act No. 11036 monitoring frameworks; and
 - 3. challenges and recommendations for program improvement.

The Secretary shall submit an annual consolidated report to Congress, including funding utilization, service coverage, and outcomes, subject to confidentiality and data privacy requirements.

SEC. 10. ***Non-Impairment and Complementarity Clause.*** — Nothing in this Act shall be interpreted or applied in a manner that diminishes, impairs, or adversely affects existing rehabilitation and mental health programs established by law for other populations. This Act provides additional mechanisms to ensure victim recovery and access to care as part of public health and justice objectives.

SEC. 11. ***Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** — Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Department of Health shall promulgate the IRR in consultation with the DSWD, DILG, DOJ, LGUs, relevant professional associations, and civil society stakeholders.

SEC. 12. ***Appropriations.*** — Funds necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current appropriations of the Department of Health. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the continued implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 13. ***Separability Clause.*** — If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 14. ***Repealing Clause.*** — All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations, or parts thereof inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

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

Approved,