

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 7878



Introduced by **REP. JEFFERSON F. KHONGHUN**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental condition characterized by persistent challenges in social communication and interaction, alongside restricted or repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities.

This measure seeks to establish a comprehensive national framework for the care, support, and inclusion of persons with ASD. Entitled the *National Autism Care, Support, and Inclusion Act*, the bill declares as State policy the recognition of persons with ASD as persons with disability, with full protection of their rights, dignity, and inherent worth. It mandates the formulation of a National Plan of Action for Autism Spectrum Disorder, to be led by the National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA), in coordination with relevant government agencies, local government units, civil society organizations, and autism self-advocates.

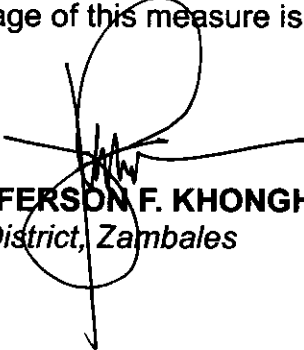
Key provisions include:

- Early Detection and Screening (Sec. 6): Integration of ASD detection and referral protocols into primary health care and maternal-child health programs, with standardized clinical guidelines and training for health professionals.
- Health and Intervention Services (Sec. 7): Progressive availability of evidence-based therapies in public health facilities, supported by PhilHealth coverage and referral networks.
- Inclusive Education (Sec. 8): Strengthening of inclusive education programs by DepEd, CHED, and TESDA, with reasonable accommodation, learning support, and pathways to employment or independent living.
- Employment and Livelihood (Sec. 9): Promotion of equal employment opportunities and supported employment programs through DOLE, CSC, and private sector collaboration.
- Social Protection (Sec. 10): Integration of persons with ASD into social welfare programs, family education, and counseling services by DSWD and LGUs.
- Information and Advocacy (Sec. 11): Sustained campaigns to promote public awareness, acceptance, and inclusion.
- Prohibited Acts (Sec. 12): Explicit prohibition of discrimination or denial of rights in health care, education, employment, and social participation.
- Appropriations (Sec. 13): Funding to be drawn from concerned agencies' budgets, with annual allocations included in the General Appropriations Act.

By institutionalizing the said measures, the proposal seeks to foster a supportive environment free from stigma and discrimination, enabling persons with ASD to achieve holistic development, independence, and meaningful participation in community life.

As the counterpart measure in the House of Representatives of the Senate bill that has already been sponsored and is under deliberation in the upper chamber, the House bill mirrors the intent and substance of the Senate version, ensuring that both chambers of Congress advance a coordinated legislative response to the urgent needs of the autism community. It underscores the commitment of the Philippine legislature to uphold disability rights and promote inclusive development nationwide.

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



JEFFERSON F. KHONGHUN
1st District, Zambales

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HOUSE BILL NO. 7878

Introduced by **REP. JEFFERSON F. KHONGHUN**

AN ACT
INSTITUTING A NATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CARE, SUPPORT AND
INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER AND
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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 "National Autism Care, Support, and Inclusion Act".

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy* - It is hereby declared the policy of the State to recognize persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) as persons with disability, to protect and uphold their rights, dignity, and inherent worth, and to promote their full inclusion, participation, and well-being in society.

Towards this end, the State shall pursue responsive, inclusive, and coordinated policies, programs, and services that ensure access to early detection and screening, timely intervention, quality health care, inclusive education, employment opportunities, and appropriate social support for persons with ASD and their families.

The State shall foster an environment that is supportive and free from stigma and discrimination, enabling persons with ASD to achieve holistic development, independence, self-reliance, and productive participation in community life, consistent with their individual capacities and aspirations.

The State shall strengthen institutional and community-based mechanisms, promote multi-sectoral collaboration, and encourage civil society and private sector participation to complement government efforts, in accordance with this Act and existing laws.

SEC. 3. Definition of Terms. - As used in this Act:

Autism or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) refers to a neurodevelopmental condition characterized by persistent challenges in social communication and interaction, and restricted or repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities, as defined in the latest edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM);

a. *Persons with ASD* refer to individuals clinically diagnosed with ASD;

b. *Early Detection and Screening* refer to community-based or facility-based activities undertaken by trained health personnel to identify early signs of ASD and facilitate timely referral for appropriate assessment;

c. *Intervention Services* refer to evidence-based medical, therapeutic, educational, habilitative, and other support services intended to improve functioning, development, and quality of life of persons with ASD; and

d. *Inclusive Education* refers to the process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners by ensuring full participation, presence, and achievement in learning environments, consistent with Republic Act No. 11650, including the provision of reasonable accommodation and learning support.

SEC. 4. National Plan of Action for Autism Spectrum Disorder. – There is hereby mandated the formulation of a National Plan of Action for Autism Spectrum Disorder, which shall consist of coordinated policies, programs, projects, services, and activities to ensure access to early detection and screening, timely intervention, quality health care, inclusive education, employment opportunities, and appropriate social support for persons with ASD and their families. The Plan shall be subject to regular review and updating to address emerging needs and developments, and its actions shall be progressively mainstreamed and integrated into the plans, programs, and budgets of relevant government agencies and sectors.

SEC. 5. Inter-Agency and Multi-Sectoral Coordination for Planning and Implementation. - The NCDA shall lead in the formulation of the National Plan of Action for Autism Spectrum Disorder, in coordination with concerned national government agencies, local government units (LGUs), civil society organizations, autism self-advocates, parents' groups, and other stakeholders.

It shall also advocate, coordinate, oversee, and assess the implementation of this Act and the National Plan of Action for Autism Spectrum Disorder, through existing inter-agency mechanisms.

The NCDA shall, through its Executive Director, provide secretariat support and assistance to the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the National Plan of Action for Autism Spectrum Disorder.

SEC. 6. *Early Detection, Screening, and Diagnosis.* - The Department of Health (DOH) shall integrate ASD detection and screening, referral, and diagnostic protocols into primary health care, maternal and child health programs, and other appropriate health services, and shall develop standard clinical guidelines and training programs for healthcare professionals and workers.

SEC. 7. *Health and Intervention Services.* - The DOH, the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth), and in coordination with concerned agencies, shall ensure the progressive availability of evidence-based ASD-related interventions and therapies in public health facilities and shall establish functional referral networks across levels of care.

SEC. 8. *Inclusive and Appropriate Education.* - The Department of Education (DepEd), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), in coordination with education institutions, shall strengthen inclusive education and training programs for learners with ASD, provide reasonable accommodation and learning support, and promote transition pathways to employment or independent living.

SEC. 9. *Employment and Livelihood.* - The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Civil Service Commission (CSC), and other relevant government agencies, in coordination with the private sector, shall promote equal employment opportunities, skills development, and supported employment programs for persons with ASD, consistent with existing labor and disability laws.

SEC. 10. *Social Protection and Community-Based Support.* - The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and LGUs shall integrate persons with ASD into existing social protection, assistance, and community-based support programs, and family education and counselling services: *Provided*, That the DSWD and the LGUs shall develop social welfare programs and services responsive to the emerging needs of persons with ASD, their families, and carers.

SEC. 11. *Information, Education, and Advocacy.* - The NCDA, in coordination with relevant national government agencies, civil society organizations, and the private sector, shall take the lead in undertaking sustained information and education campaigns to promote public awareness, understanding, and acceptance of persons with ASD.

SEC 12. *Prohibited Acts.* - It shall be unlawful for any person, entity, or government agency to discriminate against, deny, or impede the rights of persons with ASD, including, but not limited to, their rights to dignity, health care, inclusive education, employment, livelihood, social protection, and participation in decisions affecting their welfare.

SEC. 13. Appropriations. - The amount needed for the implementation of this Act shall be charged against the appropriations of the concerned agencies.

Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the continued implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act: *Provided*, That the Department of Budget and Management, in coordination with the NCDA and DOH, and other relevant government agencies, shall determine the annual appropriations for the implementation of this Act and the National Plan of Action for Autism Spectrum Disorder.

SEC. 14. Implementing Rules and Regulations. - Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the NCDA, in consultation with the DOH, PhilHealth, DepEd, CHED, TESDA, DOLE, CSC, DSWD, LGUs, other concerned government agencies, civil society organizations, autism self-advocates, parents' groups, and other stakeholders, shall promulgate the implementing rules and regulations.

SEC. 15. Separability Clause. - If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 16. Repealing Clause. - All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules, and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 17. Effectivity. - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,