



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

House Bill No. 7884

Introduced by Representative FRANZ FERNANDEZ LEGAZPI

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The 1987 Constitution declares the policy of the State to protect and promote the right to health of the people, and affirms its duty to give priority to the needs of vulnerable sectors, ensuring social justice for all. These constitutional principles compel the government to pursue policies of inclusion, where no individual is excluded from essential services, protection, and opportunities because of disability, condition, or circumstance.

Persons with Autism (PWAs) are among the most underserved and misunderstood sectors of society. Despite existing laws on disability rights and mental health, many Filipinos with autism and their families continue to face barriers to early diagnosis, health care, education, employment, transportation, justice, and emergency services. These gaps result in lifelong exclusion, lost human potential, and undue burdens on families who are often left to navigate complex situations without adequate government support.

This proposed measure seeks to institutionalize a National Autism Care Plan that ensures a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to autism care. The bill affirms that persons with autism are persons with disabilities under Republic Act No. 7277 or the *Magna Carta for Disabled Persons*, as amended, and are therefore entitled to the full range of rights, benefits, protections, and reasonable accommodations provided by law.

The measure mandates inclusive and coordinated action across key government agencies to ensure lifelong support for PWAs. These include early detection and intervention, access to health insurance coverage through PhilHealth, inclusive education and skills training, protection from discrimination, access to transportation, reasonable accommodation within the justice system, and added protection during disasters and emergencies. It likewise emphasizes the importance of training and continuing education for public service providers, ensuring that frontline personnel are equipped to respond to the unique needs of PWAs with dignity, sensitivity, and competence. Recognizing the need for evidence-based policymaking, the bill also establishes the Autism Council of the Philippines as an inter-agency, multi-sectoral body tasked to develop, implement, and regularly update the comprehensive National Autism Care Plan.

We acknowledge that persons with autism are not burdens to society, but individuals with unique abilities, aspirations, and contributions. With the passage of this Act, we aim to alleviate the hardships of our fellow Filipinos with autism and their families to live their lives with dignity and hope for the future.

For the foregoing reasons, the approval of this bill is earnestly sought.

FRANZ FERNANDEZ LEGAZPI
Representative, PINOY WORKERS PARTYLIST

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
House Bill No. 7884

Introduced by Representative FRANZ FERNANDEZ LEGAZPI

AN ACT
INSTITUTING THE NATIONAL AUTISM CARE PLAN FOR THE SUPPORT OF
PERSONS WITH AUTISM AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

1 **SECTION 1. Short Title.** - This Act shall be known as the "National Autism Care Plan
2 Act".

3
4 **Sec. 2. Declaration of Policy.** - It is hereby declared the policy of the State to protect and
5 promote the rights of all persons to full, healthy and holistic development. As such, the State
6 shall promote an environment conducive to the development of persons with autism (PWAs) to
7 become the best of their potentials - independent, self-reliant, productive and socially-accepted
8 members of an inclusive society. Towards this end, the State commits itself to the establishment
9 of institutional and social mechanisms to support PWAs throughout their lifetime, responsive to
10 their needs, empowering and providing them quality of life.

11
12 **Sec. 3. Definition of Terms.** — As used in this Act, the following terms shall mean:

13 (a) "Autism" or Autism Spectrum Disorder refers to a neurological condition
14 characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, communication, as well as
15 by unique strengths, as defined in the latest version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of
16 Mental Disorders.

17 (b) "Diagnosis" refers to necessary assessments, including but not limited to neuro-
18 psychological evaluations, genetic testing, MRIs, hearing tests, psychometric tests to diagnose or
19 discount autism and/or developmental disabilities in individuals.

20 (c) "Intervention" refers to interceding action undertaken to help improve the autism
21 prognosis. Intervention in autism may take the form of medical, pharmacological, therapeutic,
22 educational, and non-traditional habilitative care.

23 (d) "Epidemiology" refers to the study and analysis of the distribution and determinants
24 of health conditions, like autism, in defined populations.

25
26 **Sec. 4. Treatment as Persons with Disability.** - All PWAs shall be treated as persons with
27 disability, as defined under Republic Act No. 7277, as amended. They shall be entitled to all the
28 rights, privileges and benefits provided for persons with disabilities under existing laws.

1 **Sec. 5. Continuing Education and Training on Autism for Public Service Providers.** – All
2 officers and staff in charge of providing services to the public, including but not limited to the
3 Department of Health (DOH), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD),
4 Department of Education (DepEd), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department
5 of Justice (DOJ), Department of Transportation (DOTr), Department of Interior and Local
6 Government (DILG), the Department of National Defense (DND), Commission on Higher
7 Education (CHED), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), National
8 Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA), Persons with Disabilities Affairs Offices (PDAOs) at the
9 Local Government Units (LGUs), Public Safety Units (military, police, firemen, and other first
10 responders), shall undergo mandatory continuing education to sensitize and empower service
11 providers to become effective front liners in the delivery of services to PWAs and their families.

12
13 **Sec. 6. Epidemiological Surveillance Programs.** – The National Institute of Health (NIH)
14 is hereby mandated to conduct a bi-annual epidemiological survey to determine the prevalence of
15 autism in the country, for the purpose of providing data to government agencies and the private
16 sector, to make necessary services available to WAs and their families.

17
18 **Sec. 7. Evidence-based Research.** – The NIH is further mandated, in coordination with
19 the DOH and local and international educational institutions, to strengthen its research focus on
20 autism; to invest in clinical and molecular studies and grants, for the purpose of supporting
21 development of best practices in autism intervention in the Philippines.

22
23 **Sec. 8. Early Detection and Intervention of Autism.** — The DOH, in coordination with
24 the DepEd, is hereby mandated to establish a program for early screening and detection of
25 autism, to provide the appropriate services to children and toddlers with developmental delays
26 associated with autism, and to ensure the central PWD registry are updated accordingly.

27
28 **Sec. 9. Mandatory PhilHealth Coverage.** — All persons with autism shall be covered by
29 the National Health Insurance Program of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PHIC).
30 Funds necessary to ensure the enrollment of all PWAs, who are not currently covered under any
31 existing category, shall be sourced from the National Health Insurance Fund of PHIC, earmarked
32 from the proceeds of sin tax collections, as provided for in Republic Act No. 10351. It shall
33 likewise include the cost of early screening and detection programs, as one of the available
34 benefits of its members.

35
36 **Sec. 10. Protection against Discrimination in Schools, Colleges, Universities and**
37 **Training Institutions.** – The DepEd, CHED and TESDA shall formulate or update policies and
38 protocols to ensure that all educational institutions shall be inclusive to learners with autism, in
39 matters including, but not limited to, acceptance to academic or training programs, instructional
40 supports, and behavior management.

41
42 **Sec. 11. Protection against Discrimination in Insurance Coverage.** — The Department of
43 Finance shall formulate or update policies and protocols to ensure that all insurance providers
44 shall provide PWAs access to life insurance instruments, and shall include allied medical
45 procedures (like occupational and speech therapies) in health insurance benefits of policy
46 holders.

47
48 **Sec. 12. Protection in cases of Disasters and Emergencies.** – The DILG and the DND
49 shall formulate the necessary policies and protocols to ensure the military, public safety

1 professionals, local government units, and first responders shall provide the necessary life-
2 saving support to PWAs with behavioral and communication challenges.

3

4 **Sec. 13. Access to Transportation.** - The DOTr shall formulate the necessary policies and
5 protocols to ensure PWAs with behavioral and communication challenges and their families are
6 given reasonable accommodation in accessing all forms of transportation by service providers
7 over land, sea and air.

8

9 **Sec. 14. Reasonable Accommodation in cases of Legal Action.** - The DOJ shall formulate
10 the necessary policies and protocols to ensure criminal justice agencies and professionals shall
11 provide the necessary accommodations and protections to PWAs with behavioral and
12 communication challenges, who may be the accused of, victims of or witnesses to crimes.

13

14 **Sec. 15. The Autism Council of the Philippines.** — There is hereby created the Autism
15 Council of the Philippines (Council), under the Department of Health (DOH), which shall serve
16 as an inter-agency and multi-sectoral mechanism to develop and implement a sustainable, long-
17 term Philippine National Autism Plan.

18 The Council shall be responsible for:

19 (a) developing and updating the Philippine National Autism Plan - a holistic
20 roadmap in addressing the needs of Filipinos with autism and their families for
21 the guidance of stakeholders in the private and public sectors; calibrated to meet
22 changing needs of society and developments in technology;

23 (b) designing campaigns that promote awareness of autism, and acceptance,
24 accommodation and appreciation of PWAs;

25 (c) undertaking research and/or collaborating with private and public entities on
26 research activities regarding autism in the Philippines;

27 (d) improving capabilities of government to provide nationally-available services
28 that support PWAs and their families, in areas including, but not limited to
29 screening, diagnoses, early intervention, education, training, employment,
30 livelihood;

31 (e) assisting the private and public sector in the design and delivery of appropriate
32 programs for PWAs and their families; developing capacity-building programs,
33 incentives and awards, for PWAs in leadership, science, culture, arts and sports;

34 (h) networking with other organizations, institutions and professionals working
35 for the promotion of legislation and public programs for PWAs; and

36 (h) receiving donations and grants from international donor institutions,
37 foundations, and multilateral and bilateral foreign donor agencies, involved in the
38 transfer of knowledge or direct services for PWAs;

39 (i) provide grants to duly accredited non-government organizations involved in
40 providing direct services to PWAs;

41

42 **Sec. 16. Composition of the Autism Council of the Philippines.** — The Council shall be
43 composed of the following:

44 (a) The DOH Secretary as Chairperson;

45 (b) The DSWD Secretary as Vice-Chairperson;

46 (c) The DepEd Secretary as Member;

- 1 (d) The DILG Secretary as Member;
- 2 (e) The DOLE Secretary as Member;
- 3 (f) The NCDa Executive Director as Member;
- 4 (g) The NIH Head as Member;
- 5 (h) The Philippine Information Agency (PIA) Head as Member;
- 6 (i) Three (3) representatives from the Philippine Society of Behavioral and
- 7 Developmental Pediatrics; the Philippine Association of Speech Pathologists, and
- 8 the Philippine Association of Occupational Therapists, as Members;
- 9 (j) Two (2) representatives from the Autism Society of the Philippines, as
- 10 Members; and
- 11 (k) One (1) individual with autism, as Member.

12

13 The members of the Council from the government agencies and institutions may designate their
14 permanent representatives who shall have a rank not lower than an assistant secretary as their
15 official representatives in the meetings of the Council.

16

17 The six (6) appointive members of the Council shall be appointed by the President of the
18 Philippines, from a list of five (5) nominees from each sector, who shall serve for a term of three
19 (3) years, and renewable for another term; provided: the person appointed shall be of good moral
20 character, of unquestionable integrity; with expertise and experience of a least six (6) years in the
21 field of autism, service delivery and other related fields; and that in the event of a vacancy, the
22 successor appointed to fill the same shall serve only the unexpired portion of the term of the
23 member he/she succeeds to.

24

25 The Council shall have a Secretariat which will coordinate the functions and organize the
26 services as may be required by the Council in the exercise of its functions. It shall be headed by
27 an Executive Director to be appointed by the Council.

28

29 All members of the Council shall receive emoluments as may be determined by the Council, in
30 accordance with existing budget and accounting rules and regulations.

31

32 **Sec. 17. Programs and Services of the Autism Council of the Philippines.** — The Council
33 shall design, implement and deliver programs and services, relevant to children and adults with
34 autism and their families, under the following areas:

- 35 (a) Information campaigns;
- 36 (b) Research;
- 37 (c) Assessment, diagnosis and intervention;
- 38 (d) Education, sports and arts;
- 39 (e) PWA and family support;
- 40 (f) Employment and livelihood; and
- 41 (g) Residential and hospice care.

42

43 **Sec. 18. Meetings.** - The Council shall meet at least once a month upon a three-day notice
44 signed by the Chairperson, or as often as necessary upon the written request signed by two-thirds

1 (2/3) of its members. The presence of a majority of the members of the Council shall constitute a
2 quorum in order for it to conduct its business.

3

4 **Sec. 19. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** - Within six (6) months from the date of
5 effectivity of this Act, the Council shall promulgate the necessary implementing rules and
6 regulations to ensure that abovementioned government agencies can develop and implement
7 necessary policies and protocols for service delivery to WAs and their families.

8

9 The Council shall ensure the timely publication and dissemination of information of these
10 guidelines and regulations in order to ensure that the various stakeholders in the welfare of
11 PWAs are adequately informed.

12

13 **Sec. 20. *Appropriation.*** — The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act
14 shall be included and incorporated in the annual general appropriations of the DOH.

15

16 **Sec. 21. *Separability Clause.*** - If any provision of this Act is declared invalid or
17 unconstitutional, the provisions not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

18

19 **Sec. 22. *Repealing Clause.*** - All laws, executive orders, presidential decrees, presidential
20 proclamations, letters of instruction, rules and regulations or parts thereof inconsistent with the
21 provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

22

23 **Sec. 23. *Effectivity.*** - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its publication in
24 the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation in the Philippines.

25

26 *Approved,*