



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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 8097



Introduced by **Representative KATRINA REIKO CHUA - TAI**
1st District, Zamboanga City

AN ACT
STRENGTHENING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS BY MANDATING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SCHOOL-LINKED MENTAL WELLNESS FACILITIES IN BARANGAY HEALTH UNITS AND DOH-ACCREDITED PRIVATE HOSPITALS, IN COORDINATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, PROVIDING FISCAL INCENTIVES, AND INSTITUTING PERIODIC REVIEW MECHANISMS

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Global and local evidence shows rising mental health challenges among children, adolescents, and students, making this an urgent public health and education priority.

A nationally representative study of Filipino youth aged 15 to 24 years found that moderate to severe depressive symptoms more than doubled, from 9.6% in 2013 to 20.9% in 2021. These findings show a troubling trend of worsening mental health, especially among females and economically disadvantaged groups. This signals the need for stronger, accessible support mechanisms.

Local reporting notes rising depression, suicidal ideation, and anxiety among students, with calls for more mental health professionals in schools for early intervention.

Broader surveys reveal that today's youth, including Filipinos, experience greater anxiety and stress than previous generations, often turning to digital tools for relief.

Despite these alarming trends, timely mental health care in schools remains out of reach for many, especially in public institutions. Without psychiatric professionals and structured support systems, countless at-risk students miss early diagnosis and help. This leaves them vulnerable to falling behind academically, withdrawing socially, and suffering lasting psychological harm.

The State acknowledges that schools are where children and adolescents spend much of their formative years. This makes schools ideal for early detection, counseling, and treatment that can transform lives. By building psychiatric facilities staffed by trained professionals and forging partnerships with GOCCs and private-sector allies, we can strengthen both preventive and remedial mental health care nationwide.

This bill seeks to ensure that psychiatric care is consistently available in schools. It specifically aims to: (1) establish and maintain psychiatric facilities with trained professionals within educational institutions; (2) facilitate collaborative resource-sharing among the public sector, GOCCs, and private partners; (3) provide fiscal incentives to encourage private sector participation; and (4) mandate regular evaluation and updates to sustain accessible and effective mental health services in schools.

IN VIEW OF THE FOREGOING, immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



KATRINA REIKO CHUA - TAI



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House Bill No. 8037

Introduced by **Representative KATRINA REIKO CHUA - TAI**
1st District, Zamboanga City

AN ACT
STRENGTHENING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS BY MANDATING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SCHOOL-LINKED MENTAL WELLNESS FACILITIES IN BARANGAY HEALTH UNITS AND DOH-ACCREDITED PRIVATE HOSPITALS, IN COORDINATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, PROVIDING FISCAL INCENTIVES, AND INSTITUTING PERIODIC REVIEW MECHANISMS

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 “Comprehensive School Mental Wellness Care and Services Act.”

SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.* - It is the policy of the State to promote the mental health and psychosocial well-being of all learners, thereby supporting their academic success, social functioning, and holistic development. The State recognizes the critical role of schools as access points for early mental health interventions and care.

SECTION 3. *Establishment of School-Linked Mental Wellness Facilities.* - The Department of Education (DepEd), in coordination with the Department of Health (DOH), shall ensure the establishment and operationalization of accessible mental wellness facilities through designated Barangay Health Units (BHUs) and DOH-accredited private hospitals.

(a) Designation and Coverage

1. At least one (1) BHU or DOH-accredited private hospital in every city and municipality shall be designated as a primary mental wellness service provider for public school students.
2. The designated facility shall serve public elementary and secondary schools located within a two hundred fifty (250)-meter radius of the BHU or hospital compound, where practicable.

(b) **Staffing Requirements** - Designated facilities shall be staffed with qualified and duly licensed mental health professionals, including but not limited to:

- Psychiatrists
- Psychologists
- Registered guidance counselors
- Social workers
- Other trained mental health personnel as determined by DOH

(c) **Scope of Services** - The facilities shall provide:

1. Routine mental health screening and psychological assessment;
2. Counseling and brief intervention services;
3. Referral pathways for specialized psychiatric treatment and continuing care;
4. Tele-mental health services, where appropriate and feasible; and
5. Crisis response and management protocols for students at risk of self-harm, abuse, violence, or other mental health emergencies.

(d) **Service Hours Limitation** - Mental wellness facilities designated under this Act shall cater exclusively to enrolled public school students during official office hours from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday to Friday, except during declared holidays. Nothing herein shall prevent the facility from providing regular health services to the general public outside the specified hours or through separate operational arrangements.

(e) **School Coordination** - Each public school shall designate a Mental Health Focal Person responsible for:

- Coordinating referrals and follow-ups;
- Ensuring confidentiality in compliance with applicable data privacy and child protection laws;
- Monitoring continuity of care; and
- Liaising with parents or guardians when necessary.

SECTION 4. *Collaboration with Government and Private Sector.* - The Department of Education, in coordination with the Department of Health, shall engage Government-Owned and Controlled Corporations (GOCCs) to contribute funding, infrastructure, staffing support, and technological resources for the establishment and operation of school-linked mental wellness services through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs and other lawful mechanisms.

The Department of Education shall likewise partner with private corporations, foundations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to provide technical assistance, professional training for mental health personnel, mental health care technologies, and other service enhancement initiatives necessary to strengthen the delivery of mental wellness services for public school students.

Furthermore, Local Government Units (LGUs) are hereby encouraged to co-fund, support, and assist in the implementation, operation, and long-term sustainability of school-linked mental wellness services within their respective jurisdictions, in coordination with the Department of Education and the Department of Health.

SECTION 5. *Fiscal Incentives.* - The Secretaries of DepEd and the DOH will formulate a mechanism to incentivize the participation of private sector entities in enhancing school mental health services, the following shall be provided:

1. Eligible contributions to school psychiatric care programs may be recognized for enhanced tax deductions under existing laws;
2. Entities that provide sustained, measurable contributions to mental health provision may receive priority eligibility in government social development programs; and
3. Other incentives as may be provided under existing fiscal incentive legislation.

SECTION 6. *Oversight and Periodic Review.* - DepEd, in partnership with DOH, shall conduct a comprehensive review every three (3) years to:

1. Assess the demand and utilization of school-linked mental wellness services;
2. Evaluate cost-effectiveness and sustainability;
3. Explore alternative or complementary service delivery methods, including:
 - a. Online or web-based counseling;
 - b. Teletherapy and mobile consultations;
 - c. Shared services with community mental health centers; and
4. Recommend policy adjustments, service consolidation, or technology-enabled improvements while maintaining accessibility and quality.

SECTION 7. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* - Within ninety (90) days from the enactment of this Act, DepEd, in consultation with DOH and relevant stakeholders, shall issue the necessary rules and regulations.

SECTION 8. *Separability Clause.* - If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the remainder shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SECTION 9. *Repealing Clause.* - All laws inconsistent with this Act are hereby amended or repealed accordingly.

SECTION 10. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,