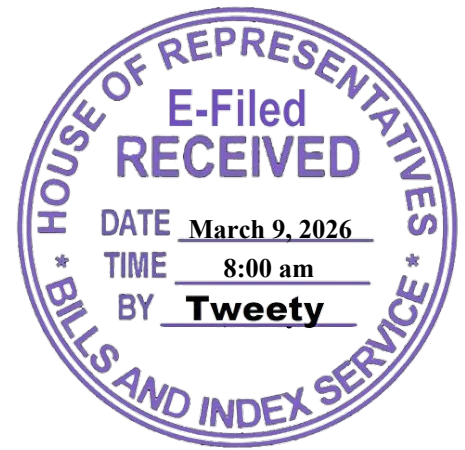


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City
20TH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 8343



Introduced by: **REP. JOEL R. CHUA**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

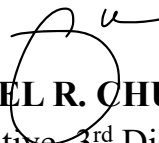
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) affects thousands of Filipino children and adults. Yet for many families, access to diagnosis, therapy, and education remains uncertain and limited. Too often, parents must navigate a fragmented system while struggling to secure the support their children need.

Early detection and timely intervention are critical for persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder but, the lack of accessible services continues to place many individuals with ASD at a disadvantage, especially those from underserved communities.

This measure seeks to institute a **National Care and Support Program for Autism** that will promote public awareness, strengthen early detection and screening, expand access to therapies and inclusive education, and even foster employment opportunities for persons with ASD. It also encourages stronger collaboration among government agencies, academic institutions, civil society, and the private sector to build a sustainable support system for individuals with autism and their families.

Ultimately, this bill affirms the State's commitment to dignity, inclusion, and equal opportunity for every Filipino on the autism spectrum.

In view of the foregoing, approval of this legislative measure is earnestly sought


JOEL R. CHUA
Representative, 3rd District, Manila

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Introduced by: **REP. JOEL R. CHUA**

AN ACT
INSTITUTING A NATIONAL CARE AND SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR
AUTISM, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Section 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Autism Care Act”.

Section 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – Consistent with Article II, Section 15 of the 1987 Constitution, it is hereby declared the policy of the State to protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them, including accessible and comprehensive care for persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). To this end, the State shall establish a comprehensive and accessible system of autism care that includes early detection, diagnosis, intervention, education, therapy, and lifelong support services. It shall promote public awareness, strengthen research and professional training, and encourage collaboration among government agencies, civil society, and the private sector.

Section 3. *Definition of Terms.* – For the purposes of this Act:

- a.) **Autism or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)** refers to a neurodevelopmental condition marked by persistent difficulties in social communication and interaction, together with restricted or repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities, as defined in the most recent edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM).
- b.) **Persons with ASD** refer to individuals clinically diagnosed with ASD;
- c.) **Early Detection and Screening** refer to the identification of early signs of ASD and the timely referral for appropriate assessment;

- d.) **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
- e.) **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.

Section 4. *National Care and Support Program for Autism Spectrum Disorder.* –

The government shall hereby implement a comprehensive and nationwide program on autism care and support which shall include:

- a.) Promotion and public awareness, education, and information on issues concerning ASD;
- b.) Mechanisms for early identification, screening, and diagnosis of persons with ASD;
- c.) Referral services for appropriate educational and medical expertise and to identify appropriate education or facilities suited to the needs of persons with ASD;
- d.) Research and collaboration with other institutions in activities pertaining to ASD;
- e.) An avenue for sharing best practices on issues relating to early detection, prevention, and education of persons with ASD;
- f.) Establishment of a network of organizations, institutions, and professionals working on programs for persons with ASD;
- g.) Program for discouraging bias against and stereotyping of persons with ASD;
- h.) A sustainable support network for families of persons with ASD; and
- i.) Regular review and updating of plans to address emerging needs and developments.

Section 5. *Inter-Agency and Multi-Sectoral Cooperation, Accountability and Research.* – The Department of Health (DOH), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA), Department of Education (DepEd), and the Philippine Council for Mental Health (PCMH), in coordination with other academic institutions and civil society organizations, are hereby mandated to lead in the formulation of the National Care and Support Program for Autism Spectrum Disorder.

The NCDA shall serve as secretariat to the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the Program.

Section 6. *Programs and Services for Autism Care and Support.* - The government shall implement the following programs and services, among others:

- a.) 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.
- b.) 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.
- c.) 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.
- d.) 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.

Section 7. *PhilHealth Coverage.* – Persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) shall be entitled to appropriate benefits under the National Health Insurance Program. The Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth), in coordination

with the Department of Health (DOH), and National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA), shall develop and implement benefit packages covering early screening, diagnostic services, and evidence-based interventions and therapies for persons with ASD.

Section 8. *Donations and Grants.* – The NCDA, DOH, DepEd, and other national government agencies concerned with the care and support of persons with ASD are hereby authorized to receive donations and grants from local and international donor institutions, foundations, and foreign donor agencies: *Provided*, That pertinent laws and rules on the receipt, accounting, and disbursement thereof shall be complied with.

Section 9. *Appropriations.* – The funding necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act is hereby authorized to be appropriated from the General Appropriations Act of the year following its enactment, and every year thereafter.

Section 10. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – The Department of Health (DOH), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA), Department of Education (DepEd), and the Philippine Council for Mental Health (PCMH), in coordination with other academic institutions and civil society organizations, shall, within three (3) months from the effectivity of this Act, promulgate the rules and regulations to effectively implement its provisions.

Section 11. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the remainder thereof not otherwise affected shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 12. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, issuances, and rules and regulations or parts thereof contrary or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

Section 13. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,