



Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 8438



Introduced by Representative Nelson S. Legacion
Third Congressional District, Camarines Sur

The Philippines is currently facing a significant public health challenge that remains largely underserved. According to the Autism Society of the Philippines (ASP), prevalence is estimated at 1 in every 100 individuals, meaning approximately 1.2 million Filipinos are living with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Addressing the comprehensive needs of this population requires more than just local initiatives; it demands unified national leadership.

This bill establishes the National Autism Center (NAC) under the Department of Health (DOH) to serve as the foundational legal framework for a nationwide strategy. The NAC is envisioned as the primary government authority for policy, research, and resource management. It will develop a standardized national framework for diagnosis and support, maintain a national registry, and provide specialized certification for professionals to ensure a high quality of care across the archipelago.

Crucially, this measure is filed by the same representation as the "Autism Centers Act of the Philippines," which mandates the creation of local centers in every province and highly-urbanized city (HUC). While the local centers act as decentralized hubs for service delivery, the NAC will serve as the central authority ensuring they operate under unified, high-quality standards. Together, these two bills provide a comprehensive, two-tiered solution to a long-standing disparity in Philippine healthcare.

This bill is an enhanced version of a similar measure filed by Representative Ma. Alana Samantha T. Santos during the 19th Congress.

In view of the alarming prevalence data and the urgent need for a centralized national authority, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.

NELSON S. LEGACION
Representative, Third District, Camarines Sur



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**AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE NATIONAL AUTISM CENTER OF THE
PHILIPPINES UNDER THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, DEFINING ITS
FUNCTIONS 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
Center Act.*"

SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.* It is the policy of the State to provide national-level leadership and coordination for all autism-related programs and services. The State shall establish a central institution to conduct research, standardize best practices, and provide technical assistance and direct supervision to local autism centers to ensure the highest quality of care for all persons with autism, regardless of their location.

SECTION 3. *Establishment of the National Autism Center.* There is hereby established the National Autism Center (NAC) of the Philippines, an attached agency of the Department of Health (DOH). The Center shall serve as the primary government institution for national autism policy, research, resource management, and the supervisory body for all provincial and city autism centers.

SECTION 4. *Functions of the Center.* The National Autism Center (NAC) shall serve as the primary government institution for national autism policy, research, and resource management, with the authority to develop and enforce a national framework and minimum operational standards for autism diagnosis, treatment, and support across all centers nationwide. Its functions shall include conducting and supporting research on ASD, maintaining a national registry of individuals with autism, and developing a unified national curriculum for the specialized training and certification of professionals. Furthermore, the NAC shall act as a central repository for autism resources and shall exercise direct supervision and monitoring of all provincial and city autism centers to ensure strict compliance with established national standards

SECTION 5. *Governing Board.* The Center shall be governed by a Board chaired by the Secretary of Health. Its members will include representatives from the Department of Education (DepEd), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA), recognized Persons with Disabilities (PWD) advocacy groups, and a representative from the Philippine Association of Licensed Therapists.

SECTION 6. *Appropriations.* The amount necessary for the establishment and initial operations of the NAC, as well as the initial funding for the provincial and city autism centers, is hereby estimated at Fifty Million Pesos (P50,000,000.00), to be sourced from the National Treasury and allocated to the Department of Health (DOH). Thereafter, the amount needed for the continued operation of the entire national autism network, including all decentralized local centers established under the "Autism Centers Act of the Philippines," shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA) and administered through the NAC to ensure a unified and sustainable funding stream.

SECTION 7. *Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).* The DOH, in coordination with the DSWD, DOLE, DepEd, CHED, TESDA, NCDA, and other relevant government agencies and recognized PWD advocacy groups, shall formulate and issue the necessary IRR within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act.

SECTION 8. *Separability Clause.* If any provision of this Act is held unconstitutional, the remaining provisions shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 9. *Repealing Clause.* All laws, executive orders, or parts thereof inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SECTION 10. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,