



Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City



TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 8439

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

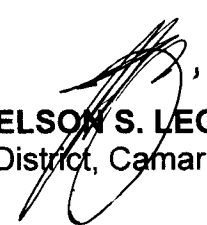
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a lifelong condition requiring consistent, multidisciplinary intervention. With an estimated 1.2 million Filipinos living with autism, national action is urgent. Currently, essential services like occupational, speech, and physical therapy are concentrated in major urban centers, forcing rural families to endure heavy travel expenses and logistical hurdles that disrupt effective treatment.

To address this disparity, this bill filed by the same representation as the "National Autism Center Act", mandates the establishment of an Autism Center in every province and highly-urbanized city (HUC). While the National Autism Center (NAC) provides central oversight and standardized policy, these local hubs will serve as the decentralized frontline for direct service delivery. They will offer comprehensive therapy, vocational training, and parent support programs, ensuring high-quality care is accessible regardless of geography

This bill represents an enhanced version of similar measures filed during the 19th Congress by Representative Zia Alonto Adiong and Senators Joseph Victor G. Ejercito, Jinggoy E. Estrada, and Juan Miguel F. Zubiri.

By institutionalizing this two-tiered system, a national body for policy and a local network for implementation, we provide an integrated national solution for the autism community.

In view of the compelling need and the integrated national solution provided herein, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.


NELSON S. LEGACION
Representative, Third District, Camarines Sur



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**AN ACT ESTABLISHING A CENTER FOR AUTISM IN EVERY PROVINCE AND
HIGHLY URBANIZED CITY, PROVIDING FOR ITS FUNCTIONS, GOVERNING
STRUCTURE, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AS PART OF THE
NATIONAL AUTISM CENTER NETWORK**

*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 "*Autism Centers
Act of the Philippines.*"

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. - It is the policy of the State to promote and protect the rights of all individuals, including those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), to live a full, healthy, and dignified life. The State shall ensure access to appropriate, specialized, and decentralized healthcare, education, therapy, and support services for persons with autism to eliminate barriers to their inclusion and participation, as guided by the National Autism Center.

SECTION 3. Establishment of a Center for Autism. There shall be established a Center for Autism in every province and highly urbanized city of the Philippines, under the supervision of the National Autism Center (NAC) and the Department of Health (DOH).

SECTION 4. Functions. Each Center shall be tasked to:

- a. Provide comprehensive diagnostic, therapeutic, and rehabilitation services, including:
 - Occupational Therapy to help individuals develop fine motor skills and sensory processing abilities;
 - Speech Therapy to improve communication skills;

- Counseling, orientation, and referral services for individuals with autism and their families to relevant support systems and government programs; and
 - Physical Therapy to enhance gross motor skills and coordination. (All services and programs shall be consistent with the national standards and curricula set by the NAC.)
- b. Conduct regular seminars, workshops, and support groups for parents, families, and relatives of individuals with autism, with a special focus on providing guidance to those new to the autism community.
 - c. Offer vocational training and job placement assistance for adults with autism, in coordination with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and local businesses. The vocational training programs shall be designed and implemented in consultation with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) to ensure alignment with national skills standards and certification.
 - d. Establish and facilitate partnerships with public and private employers to create and promote sheltered, inclusive, and supported employment opportunities for individuals with autism.
 - e. Provide free services to all individuals with autism who are indigent.
 - f. Formulate and implement localized autism response plans consistent with national standards.
 - g. Conduct regular training programs for teachers, medical professionals, and caregivers, using the curriculum provided by the NAC. Training for higher education personnel and the development of specialized course curricula shall be coordinated with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED).
 - h. Promote awareness and advocacy programs about autism and inclusive development.

SECTION 5. *Early Detection and Intervention Program.* The provincial and highly-urbanized city Autism Centers shall be responsible for implementing Early Detection and Intervention Programs (EDIP) for children under five (5) years old within their jurisdictions. This shall be done in close coordination with the respective barangays and the Local Government Units (LGUs) for:

- a. Community-Based Screening by conducting regular, standardized screening and assessment activities in coordination with barangay health centers and day-care facilities;
- b. Parent Education and Support by providing parent-focused education on early childhood development, signs of autism, and evidence-based strategies for in-home early intervention; and
- c. Early Therapy and Referral by providing immediate, needs-based early therapy services and timely referral to specialized services for children identified with or at risk of ASD.

SECTION 6. *Governing Structure.* - Local Autism Coordinating Committee (LACC).

Each Center shall be managed by a Local Autism Coordinating Committee (LACC) chaired by the Provincial or City Health Officer, with the Provincial or City Social Welfare and Development Officer serving as Vice Chairperson. The committee shall further be composed of representatives from the Department of Education (DepEd) Schools Division Office, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) Provincial or City Office, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Regional or Provincial Office, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), and one (1) parent-representative of a person with autism.

To ensure vertical integration and strict alignment with national standards, one (1) representative from the National Autism Center (NAC) shall also sit as a permanent member of the Committee.

SECTION 7. *Appropriations.* The amount necessary for the establishment and initial implementation of the Centers shall be sourced from the national budget and administered by the National Autism Center (NAC). Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the continued operation of the Centers shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA) as part of the unified national autism network funding administered through the NAC to ensure a unified and sustainable funding stream.

SECTION 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).* Within ninety (90) days from its effectivity, the DOH, in coordination with DepEd, CHED, TESDA, DSWD, DOLE, and NCDA, and with technical guidance from the NAC, shall issue the necessary rules and regulations for the implementation of this Act.

SECTION 9. *Separability Clause.* - If any part of this Act is held unconstitutional, the remaining provisions shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 10. *Repealing Clause.* - All laws, executive orders, or parts thereof inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SECTION 11. *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,