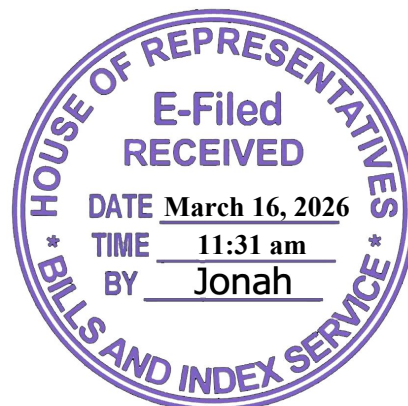




Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 8512



Introduced by **REPRESENTATIVE CHEENO MIGUEL D. ALMARIO**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is defined as a complex developmental condition, which involves persistent challenges with social communication, restricted interests and repetitive behavior.¹

Globally, in 2021, there is an estimated 61.8 million individuals with ASD, 4.78 million of whom resides from Southeast Asia.² In the Philippines, the Autism Society Philippines estimated that there are approximately 1.2 million Filipinos affected by ASD, or one in every 100 individuals. As the prevalence of ASD continues to rise, there is a call for government to provide a holistic plan approach and handle the needs of Filipinos with ASD and their respective families.

The intervention needs of individuals with ASD vary and evolve since this lifelong condition rooted from a wide range of social and behavioral challenges. Consequently, a prevailing problem among the parents of children with ASD is that they have few or no options for providing assured, continuing support for their children. Most of the programs for support usually ends when individuals reaches legal age; this leaves the adults with ASD in a limbo.³

Under Republic Act No. 7277 or the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, the State is committed to adopt policies ensuring rehabilitation, self-development and self-reliance of disabled persons. It is further stated that the services and benefits shall be expanded beyond

¹ American Psychiatric Association, "What Is Autism Spectrum Disorder?," Psychiatry.org, accessed March 10, 2026, <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/autism/what-is-autism-spectrum-disorder>.

² Xiaohui Liu et al., "Burden and Inequality of Autism Spectrum Disorders in Global, East Asian, and Southeast Asian Regions, 1990–2021: Result from the Global Burden of Disease Study 2021," *BMC Public Health* 25, no. 1 (2025): 2810, accessed March 9, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-025-23904-9>.

³ Mona Magno-Veluz, "Support Gap for Adults with Autism," Philippine News Agency, January 28, 2024, accessed March 10, 2026, <https://www.pna.gov.ph/opinion/pieces/629-support-gap-for-adults-with-autism>.

the traditional urban-based centers to community based programs to ensure the participation of different sectors by national and local government agencies.

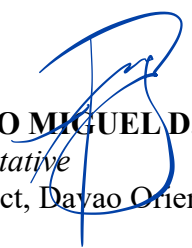
While the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons lays down a solid framework for the basic support, rehabilitation and integration of PWDs in the society, there are still significant gaps that need further action from the government, particularly persons with ASD (PWAs) and the complex and lifelong nature of their condition.

Consistent with the State's declared commitment to the rights of disabled persons, this bill seeks to institutionalize a National Plan of Action for PWAs. By creating a holistic and comprehensive National Plan of Action, the bill ensures that there will be specific programs and services for PWAs and their families on several critical areas, such as but not limited to the following: early detection and screening, research initiatives, health care and insurance coverage, inclusive education, employment and livelihood opportunities, social and community support, and information and awareness campaigns.

Further, this bill seeks the establishment of a sub-committee which shall serve as inter-agency and multi-sectoral policy-making body tasked to develop and implement a holistic and sustainable. The said sub-committee will be created under the National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA). Through a dedicated sub-committee, the State can guarantee that the evolving needs of the PWAs will be adequately and effectively addressed with the help of continuous and relevant research and consultation from experts and advocates.

With a concrete national plan of care, support and inclusivity designed to uplift the lives of PWAs and their respective families, our policies moving forward will become truly all-encompassing, ensuring that PWDs of all types kinds of disability will be properly supported and integrated in the society.

In view of the foregoing, the passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



CHEENO MIGUEL D. ALMARIO
Representative
2nd District, Davao Oriental



Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 8512

Introduced by **REPRESENTATIVE CHEENO MIGUEL D. ALMARIO**

AN ACT
INSTITUTING A NATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CARE, SUPPORT AND
INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER,
ESTABLISHING A SUB-COMMITTEE ON AUTISM UNDER THE NATIONAL
COUNCIL ON DISABILITY AFFAIRS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR

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

Section 1. Short Title. - Section 1. Short Title. - This Act shall be known as the "*National Autism Care, Support, and Inclusion Act*".

Section 2. Declaration of Policy - It is the policy of the State to value the dignity of every human person and guarantees full respect for human rights, which includes the recognition of the rights of persons with autism spectrum disorder (PWAs), and the promotion of their full inclusion, participation, and well-being in society.

To this end, the State shall establish and undertake responsive, inclusive and effective policies, programs and services for PWAs and their families, to ensure the improvement of their well-being and integration in the society. Moreover, the State shall promote an environment that is supportive to enable PWAs to achieve a holistic development, independence, self-reliance, and productive participation in community life.

Section 3. Definition of Terms. – As used in this Act, the following terms shall mean:

- a. *Autism or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)* refers to a neurodevelopmental condition characterized by deficits in social skills, and presence of restrictive interests and repetitive behaviors, as defined in the latest edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM);
- b. *Persons with ASD (PWA)* refer to individuals clinically diagnosed with ASD;
- c. *Early Detection and Screening* refer to community-based or facility-based activities undertaken by trained health personnel to identify early signs of ASD, and facilitate the timely referral for appropriate assessment and treatment;
- d. *Diagnosis* refers to necessary assessments, including but not limited to neuropsychological evaluations, genetic testing, MRIs, hearing tests, psychometric tests, to determine, diagnose or discount autism spectrum disorder and/or developmental disabilities in individuals;
- e. *Intervention Services* refer to evidence-based medical, therapeutic, educational, habilitative, and other support services intended to improve functioning, development, and quality of life of PWAs;
- f. *Rehabilitation* refers to a set of interventions designed to optimize functioning and reduce disability in individuals with health conditions in interaction with their environment;

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

Section 5. Inter-Agency and Multi-Sectoral Coordination for Planning and Implementation. – A Sub-Committee on Autism Spectrum Disorder, herein after referred to as Sub-Committee, is hereby created under the National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA).

The Sub-Committee shall serve as an inter-agency and multi-sectoral policy-making body to develop and implement a holistic and sustainable National Autism Care, Support and Inclusive Plan.

Section 6. Powers and Functions of the Sub-Committee – The Sub-Committee shall have the following powers and functions:

- a. Develop a comprehensive plan, a roadmap in addressing the holistic needs of PWAs and their families, such as health, education, employment among others, for the

guidance of stakeholders in the private and public sectors, calibrated to meet the changing needs of society and development in technology;

- b. Coordinate, monitor, and evaluate the implementation of the plan and the protection of rights of PWAs, with the concerned government and non-governmental agencies;
- c. Design campaigns that promote public awareness, acceptance, accommodation, and appreciation of PWAs;
- d. Undertake research, in collaboration with public and private entities on Autism Spectrum in the Philippines;
- e. Enhance the programs and capabilities of the government to provide inclusive services that effectively support PWAs and their families in several areas, such as screening, diagnostic tests, early intervention, education, training, employment, and livelihood, among others;
- f. Assist the private and public sector in the design and delivery of support programs for PWAs and their families;
- g. Develop capacity-building programs, incentives, and awards for PWAs, to empower and enhance their potentials as independent, self-reliant, and productive members of society;
- h. Establish networks and collaboration with other organizations, institutions, and professionals working and advocating for the rights of PWAs, including support groups for families of PWAs;
- i. Receive donations and grants from international donor institutions, foundations, and other multilateral and bilateral foreign donors, involved or connected in the direct services for PWAs;
- j. Enter into memoranda of agreement with government and non-governmental entities for the implementation of various programs for PWAs; and
- k. Perform other acts as may be necessary, proper, or incidental to the attainment of purposes and objectives of this Acts.

Section 7. Composition of the Sub-Committee – The Sub-Committee shall be composed of the heads of office of the following agencies:

- a. The NCDA as Chairperson;
- b. The Department of Health (DOH) as Vice Chairperson;

- c. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD);
- d. The Department of Education (DepEd);
- e. The Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG);
- f. The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE);
- g. The Department of Science and Technology-Philippine Council for Health and Research Development (DOST-PCHRD);
- h. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED);
- i. The Civil Service Commission (CSC);
- j. The Technical Skills and Development Authority (TESDA);
- k. The Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC);
- l. Philippine Council for Mental Health (PCMH);
- m. The National Institutes for Health (NIH);
- n. Three (3) representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with active service programs and advocacy for PWAs;
- o. Two (2) representatives from duly accredited associations of PWAs families; and
- p. Two (2) representatives from NGOs, composed of autism spectrum self-advocate.

Except for members from government agencies, the members of the Sub-Committee shall be appointed by the Chairperson of the Sub-Committee.

The heads of office of agencies may designate official permanent representatives to the Sub-Committee, whose rank shall not lower than an Assistant Secretary or its equivalent, Provide, That the designated representative has no vote, unless authorized in writing.

The NGOs designated to the Sub-Committee must be duly registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Bureau of Internal Revenue, and the local government in which they operate. They must also furnish the Sub-Committee with copies of their annual requirements to these government agencies, reflecting their organizational capacity and commitment to good governance.

The members of the Sub-committee shall be appointed not later than thirty (30) days after the enactment of this Act. Members representing non-government agencies shall serve for three (3) years, renewable upon the Sub-committee's recommendation and the NCDA Board's approval for a maximum of two (2) consecutive terms. In case of vacancy, the successor appointed to fill the same shall serve only the unexpired portion of the member's term to whom he/she succeeds.

All members of the Sub-Committee shall receive a per diem as determined by the Sub-Committee, in accordance with the existing budget and accounting rules and regulations. The Subcommittee shall meet at least quarterly or as often as necessary. A quorum is formed when a majority of the members are present. The Sub-Committee shall have a Secretariat to coordinate the functions and organize the programs, plans, and activities under this Act. The NCDA shall determine the necessary staffing requirements of the Subcommittee, subject to

evaluation and approval by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), and in compliance with civil service and other pertinent laws, rules, and regulations.

Section 8. National Plan of Action for Autism Spectrum Disorder. – The Sub-Committee on Autism shall spearhead and coordinate with government agencies and other stakeholders in the implementation National Plan of Action for Autism Spectrum Disorder.

The National Plan shall include holistic and coordinated policies, programs, projects, services and activities for PWAs and their families, such as, but not limited to:

- a. Early detection and screening;
- b. Research;
- c. Health care and insurance coverage;
- d. Inclusive education;
- e. Employment and livelihood opportunities;
- f. Social and community support; and
- g. Information and awareness campaigns.

The Plan shall be subject to regular review and updates to address emerging needs and developments, and the actions shall be progressively mainstreamed and integrated into the plans, programs, and budgets of relevant implementing agencies and concerned sectors.

Section 9. Panel of Technical Experts – The Sub-Committee shall constitute a national panel of technical experts consisting of practitioners related to autism, such as, but not limited to:

- a) One (1) representative from the national association of speech-language pathologists, duly recognized by the Professional Regulation Commission;
- b) One (1) representative from the national association of developmental and behavioral physicians, duly recognized by the Professional Regulation Commission;
- c) One (1) representative from the national association of occupational therapists, duly recognized by the Professional Regulation Commission;
- d) One (1) representative from the national organization of psychologists, duly recognized by the Professional Regulation Commission;
- e) One (1) representative from the national association of social workers, duly recognized by the Professional Regulation Commission;
- f) One (1) representative from the national association of inclusive education specialists, duly recognized by the Professional Regulation Commission.

The Panel shall provide the Sub-Committee with professional and technical advice on science, technologies, and best practices for autism.

The Sub-Committee shall set the qualifications and per diems for the technical experts and, through the collaborative programs and plans of its member agencies and organizations, provide resources for the Panel's operations and activities.

Section 10. Local Government Support – Local government units (LGUs) shall promote the National Plan in their territorial jurisdictions. LGUs may join joint ventures with national agencies, organizations, or associations that offer programs and advocacy for persons on the autism spectrum to explore livelihood opportunities and other undertakings that enhance the health, physical fitness, and economic and social wellbeing of persons on the autism spectrum.

The Sub-Committee and the DILG shall coordinate with LGUs in integrating the National Plan.

Section 11. Consultation with Stakeholders Clause – The Sub-Committee shall conduct and facilitate consultations, in collaboration with government and non-governmental stakeholders, as to various programs and campaigns involving PWAs, their families and professionals.

Section 12. PhilHealth Coverage – The Sub-Committee shall facilitate the necessary Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) coverage for PWAs.

Section 13. Protection Against Discrimination in Insurance and Other Financial Instruments – Within 180 days from the effectivity of this Act, the Department of Finance shall formulate policies and protocols to ensure that all financial service providers, such as banks, insurance companies, and health maintenance organizations (HMOs), shall provide PWAs with equitable access to their coverage, services, and products.

Section 14. Implementing Rules and Regulations – No later than 180 days upon the effectivity of this Act, the Sub-Committee shall, in consultation with the appropriate government agencies, NGOs, and other stakeholders, promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

Section 15. Appropriations – The amount necessary for implementing this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

Section 16. Separability Clause – If any section or provision of this Act is held unconstitutional or invalid, the other sections or provisions not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

Section 17. Repealing Clause – All laws, executive orders, presidential decrees, presidential proclamations, letters of instructions, rules and regulations, or any part thereof inconsistent with the provision of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Section 18. Effectivity – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation or in the Official Gazette.

Approved,