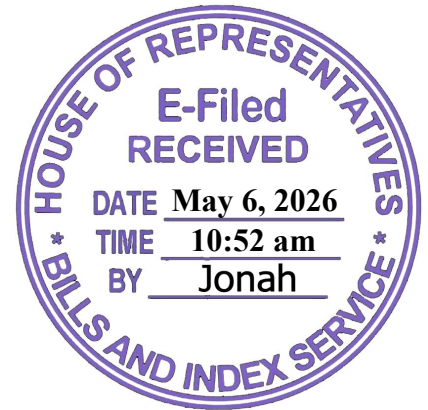




Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 9124



Introduced by Representatives Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez, Yedda Marie K. Romualdez, Andrew Julian K. Romualdez, and Jude A. Acidre

AN ACT
CREATING IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION THE
PLANTILLA POSITIONS OF GUIDANCE COUNSELORS IN EVERY
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AND ADDITIONAL PLANTILLA
POSITIONS OF GUIDANCE COUNSELORS FOR HIGH SCHOOL,
INCREASING THE SALARIES OF GUIDANCE COUNSELORS AND
GUIDANCE-RELATED POSITIONS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Section 1, Article XIV of the 1987 Constitution mandates the State to protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education and to take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all. Central to "quality education" is the holistic development of the learner - a process that is currently under threat due to a systemic crisis in our mental health support infrastructure.

The Department of Education (DepEd) acknowledges that guidance and counseling are indispensable in fostering student resilience and self-discipline. However, the country is currently grappling with a staggering counselor-to-student ratio of 1:14,000, based on 2022 figures. This is a far cry from the internationally recognized standard of 1:250, and even falls short of DepEd's modest target of 1:500.

While the recently enacted Republic Act No. 12080, otherwise known as the Basic Education Mental Health and Well-Being Promotion Act, is a laudable step in institutionalizing mental health services, it fails to address the root cause of the professional exodus: the gap between the qualification and the compensation.

Under Republic Act No. 9258, otherwise known as the Guidance and Counseling Act of 2004, a licensed Guidance Counselor must possess a master's degree. Despite this rigorous requirement, which involves years of post-graduate study and a professional board exam, the entry-level position (Guidance Counselor I) remains pegged at Salary Grade 11.

This discrepancy creates a "brain drain" where licensed professionals either opt for private practice, high-paying BPO wellness roles, or migration. Data from the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) consistently show high vacancy rates for these positions, not because of a lack of graduates, but because the public sector's offer is economically unviable.

This bill seeks to bridge this gap by: 1) mandating *plantilla* positions to ensure every elementary school has a dedicated counselor, moving away from the "designated teacher" stop-gap measure; and, 2) upgrading the salary grades of guidance counselors and increasing the minimum entry level to Salary Grade 16 to acknowledge the Master's Degree requirement and aligns the position with other specialized technical roles in the government.

By offering competitive compensation, the State incentivizes Psychology and Guidance and Counseling graduates to remain in the country and serve in the public school system. Addressing the "mental health pandemic" among the youth, manifested in rising rates of bullying and self-harm as reported by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), requires more than just policy; it requires people. We cannot protect our students with empty offices.

Filed since the 17th Congress, this bill is a critical step towards strengthening the Philippine educational system by ensuring that every student has access to professional guidance and counseling services.

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



FERDINAND MARTIN G. ROMUALDEZ



YEDDA MARIE K. ROMUALDEZ



ANDREW JULIAN K. ROMUALDEZ



JUDE A. ACIDRE



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THEREFOR

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

Section 1. *Creation of Plantilla Positions.* – The Department of Education (DepEd), in consultation with the Department of Budget and Management, shall ensure that there is a sufficient number of *plantilla* positions for guidance counselors in every public elementary and high school.

For purposes of this Act, the DepEd shall endeavor to meet the recommended ratios of one guidance counselor for every 200 students in the public elementary and high schools.

Section 2. *Increase in Salary Grades of Guidance Coordinators, Guidance Counselors, Guidance Services Associates, and Guidance Services Specialists.* – The present minimum salary grade levels of guidance coordinators, guidance counselors, guidance services associates, and guidance services specialists shall be increased in the following manner:

Current Position Classification	Current Salary Grade	Proposed Salary Grade
Guidance Counselor I	11	16
Guidance Counselor II	12	17
Guidance Counselor III	13	18
Guidance Coordinator I	14	19
Guidance Coordinator II	15	20
Guidance Coordinator III	16	21
Guidance Services Associate I	12	17
Guidance Services Associate II	14	19
Guidance Services Specialist I	16	20
Guidance Services Specialist II	18	21
Guidance Services Specialist III	20	22
Guidance Services Specialist IV	22	23

Section 3. *Appropriations.* – The amounts necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the savings of the Department of Education. Thereafter, the funds shall be provided in the annual General Appropriations Act.

Section 4. *Separability Clause.* – If, for any reason, any part or provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining parts or provisions not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 5. *Repealing Clause.* – All other laws, decrees, orders, issuances, rules, and regulations, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

Section 6. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days from the publication in the *Official Gazette* or in any newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,