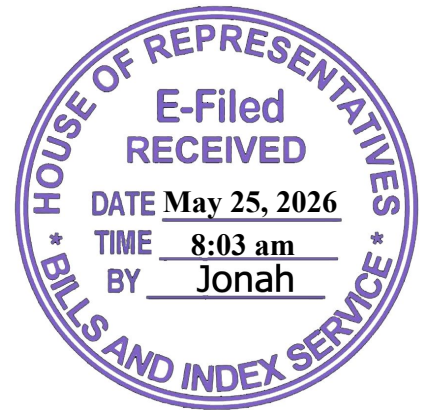


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Constitution Hills, Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 9394



Introduced by: **REPRESENTATIVE ERIC L. OLIVAREZ**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The State recognizes the vital role of children in nation-building and affirms its duty to protect and promote the rights and welfare of every child, especially those who require specialized care, intervention, and support. Children with special needs (CSN) often face barriers in accessing quality healthcare, therapy, education, and social services, while their families bear significant financial, emotional, and social burdens.

Despite existing laws protecting persons with disabilities and promoting inclusive education, many Filipino children with special needs continue to experience inadequate access to early intervention programs, therapeutic services, assistive devices, and inclusive learning opportunities, particularly in underserved communities. Families likewise encounter high costs of treatment and limited institutional support.

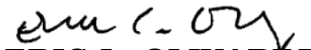
This measure seeks to establish a comprehensive and inclusive framework that will ensure accessible therapy and education, strengthen support systems for families and caregivers, expand financial assistance and health coverage, promote public awareness and acceptance, and reinforce inter-agency coordination for the welfare of children with special needs.

The bill likewise strengthens the participation of Local Government Units (LGUs) in implementing community-based intervention programs and establishes a national registry and data collection system, subject to the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012, to support evidence-based policymaking and effective service delivery.

Furthermore, this proposed measure is aligned with the principles and policies embodied in existing laws such as the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, the Inclusive Education Act, and the Universal Health Care Act, ensuring a harmonized and rights-based approach to inclusive development.

Through this proposed legislation, the State endeavors to uphold the dignity, inclusion, and full development of children with special needs and empower their families toward a more compassionate, equitable, and inclusive society.

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


ERIC L. OLIVAREZ

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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TWENTIETH CONGRESS
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House Bill No. 9394

Introduced by: **REPRESENTATIVE ERIC L. OLIVAREZ**

**“AN ACT
PROMOTING THE INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING
OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS, PROVIDING FOR
COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT SYSTEMS, AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES”**

*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 “*Inclusive Development and Well-Being of Children with Special Needs Act.*”

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. - It is hereby declared the policy of the State to protect and promote the rights of children with special needs, ensuring their full and inclusive development. The State recognizes that children with special needs possess inherent dignity and the right to a quality of life that enables them to achieve their fullest potential.

To this end, the State shall:

- a.) Prioritize and integrate the needs of children with special needs into all relevant legislative efforts, policies, programs, and services;
- b.) Ensure access to quality, comprehensive, and appropriate intervention, therapeutic, and educational services;
- c.) Alleviate the financial and emotional burdens on families of children with special needs through various mechanisms;
- d.) Foster a society that embraces inclusivity, free from stigma and discrimination against children with special needs and their families;
and

- e.) Strengthen inter-agency collaboration and establish a comprehensive support system for children with special needs and their families.

This Act shall be implemented in a manner consistent with the policies and principles embodied in the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons,¹ the Inclusive Education Act,² and the Universal Health Care Act.³

SECTION 3. *Definition of Terms.* - As used in this Act:

- a.) *Children with Special Needs (CSN)* refer to **persons** below eighteen (18) years of age who have developmental delays, disabilities, or conditions that require specialized interventions, including but not limited to Autism Spectrum Disorder, Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Down Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, intellectual disability, specific learning disabilities, sensory impairments (visual or hearing), and speech and language disorders.
- b.) *Early Intervention Services* refer to a range of services provided to infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities and their families to promote development and minimize the effects of disability.
- c.) *Therapeutic Services* refer to professional interventions such as occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language therapy, behavioral therapy, and other related services.
- d.) *Special Education (SPED)* refers to educational programs designed to meet the unique needs of CSN, including SPED centers, inclusive classrooms, and home-based programs.
- e.) *Underserved Areas* refer to geographical regions where access to specialized services is limited or non-existent.
- f.) *Assistive Tools and Medical Care* refer to devices, equipment, technologies, medications, and healthcare services that assist CSN in their daily living, communication, mobility, and overall health management.

SECTION 4. *Accessible Therapy and Education.* - The State shall ensure that all CSN have equitable access to therapy and education. To this end, the following shall be implemented:

¹ Republic Act No. 7277.

² Republic Act No. 11650.

³ Republic Act No. 11223.

- a.) Expansion of SPED Schools and Centers. – The Department of Education (DepEd), in coordination with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the Department of Health (DOH), shall establish and expand SPED schools and centers in underserved areas, ensuring adequate facilities and qualified SPED teachers and therapists.
- b.) Subsidies for Therapy Services. – The DOH and DSWD, in coordination with the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth), shall develop and implement a subsidy program for therapeutic services covering a significant portion of rehabilitation costs, prioritizing indigent and low-income families.
- c.) Inclusion in Regular Schools. – The DepEd shall strengthen its inclusion program, providing training for teachers and learning resources to integrate CSN into mainstream classrooms wherever appropriate.

SECTION 5. *Financial Relief for Families.* - To mitigate financial burdens on families of CSN, the following measures shall be undertaken:

- a.) Vouchers and Grants. – The DSWD shall establish vouchers and grants to support costs of therapy, assistive tools, and specialized education, prioritizing indigent families.
- b.) Tax Incentives. – The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) shall recommend tax incentives for parents or guardians of CSN, including deductions for therapy, medical care, and specialized educational fees.
- c.) PhilHealth Coverage Expansion. – PhilHealth shall expand coverage to include therapeutic services, diagnostic procedures, and assistive devices for CSN, with higher benefit limits and streamlined claims procedures.

SECTION 6. *Public Awareness and Acceptance Campaigns.* - The State shall promote public awareness and acceptance of CSN to combat stigma through:

- a.) National Awareness Campaigns. – Led by DepEd, DOH, DSWD, and the Philippine Information Agency (PIA), focusing on early identification, empathy, **acceptance**, and inclusion.
- b.) Educational Curriculum Integration. – The DepEd shall integrate modules on inclusivity and disability rights in curricula.

SECTION 7. *Support Systems for Families and Caregivers.* - The State shall establish support systems for families and caregivers of CSN, including:

- a.) Community Centers for CSN. - The DSWD and Local Government Units (LGUs) shall establish or support community centers offering subsidized therapy, parent training, and emotional support groups.
- b.) Parental Training and Empowerment Programs. - The DSWD and DOH, in cooperation with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), shall develop training for parents to equip them with skills to support child development.
- c.) National Registry and Data Collection System. - The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), in coordination with the Department of Health (DOH), Department of Education (DepEd), National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA), Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), and Local Government Units (LGUs), shall establish and maintain a centralized database and registry of Children with Special Needs (CSN) for purposes of policy planning, service delivery, monitoring, and program development, subject to the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012.
- d.) Local Government Participation. -Local Government Units (LGUs) shall formulate and implement local programs and services for CSN and their families, including the establishment of community-based early intervention programs, therapy centers, inclusive recreational activities, and referral systems, subject to the availability of local funds and in coordination with relevant national government agencies.

SECTION 8. *Stronger Policies for Inclusion.* - The State shall ensure full inclusion of CSN in all aspects of society by:

- a.) Inclusion in Schools. - The DepEd shall mandate inclusive education guidelines and anti-discrimination practices.
- b.) Accessibility in Public Spaces. - All government and private establishments must comply with the accessibility laws.

SECTION 9. *Inter-Agency Coordinating Council.* - There is hereby created an Inter-Agency Coordinating Council for Children with Special Needs (IACCSN), composed of representatives from the DSWD, DOH, DepEd, National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA), PhilHealth, and two (2) private sector representatives. The Council shall:

- a.) Formulate and oversee a comprehensive national plan for CSN welfare;
- b.) Coordinate programs of government and non-government organizations;
- c.) Evaluate program effectiveness and recommend improvements; and
- d.) Recommend legislative and policy reforms.

SECTION 10. Appropriations. - The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act. The implementing agencies may likewise utilize available funds from existing programs and appropriations related to health, education, social welfare, and disability support, subject to existing budgeting, accounting, and auditing laws, rules, and regulations.

SECTION 11. Implementing Rules and Regulations. - Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DSWD, in coordination with the DOH, DepEd, NCDA, PhilHealth and in consultation with other relevant agencies, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SECTION 12. Separability Clause. - If any part of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the remaining provisions shall remain valid.

SECTION 13. Repealing Clause. - All laws, decrees, orders, rules and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 14. Effectivity. - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved.