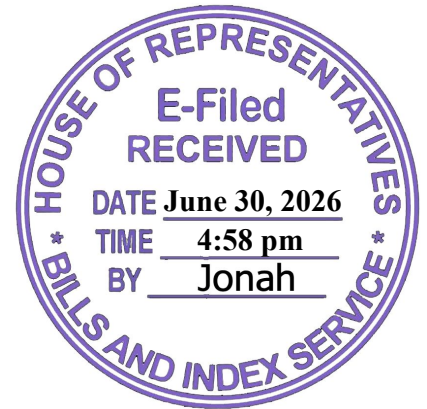


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 9976



Introduced by Representative Jan “Atty. JP” D. Padiernos

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a lifelong developmental condition that profoundly impacts a person’s communication, social interaction, and behavior. Raising a child with autism presents extraordinary emotional, psychological, and financial challenges for Filipino families.

The cost of managing ASD is prohibitive, with individual therapy sessions costing up to ₱3,500.00. For a child needing weekly interventions, these costs quickly become unaffordable for the average family. As a result, many families cannot afford early treatment, leaving these children without the tools to become independent.

While Republic Act No. 7277 (the Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities), as amended, provides discounts, these reliefs are insufficient to cover the heavy monthly financial burdens on these households.

This legislative measure establishes the Autism Support Allowance Program under the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and institutionalizes a direct monthly financial subsidy of Five Thousand Pesos (₱5,000.00) per child diagnosed with ASD. Furthermore, the bill democratizes early intervention by mandating free developmental screenings under PhilHealth and establishing a specialized therapy voucher system. Furthermore, this measure aims to relieve the disproportionate financial burdens on these families, as well as to allow the State to actively fulfill its constitutional mandate to protect vulnerable sectors and ensure that neurodivergent children receive the dignity, care, and tools necessary to achieve their full potential.

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


Rep. Jan “Atty. JP” D. Padiernos
GP (GALING SA PUSO) Partylist

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House Bill No. **9976**

Introduced by Representative Jan “Atty. JP” D. Padiernos

**AN ACT INSTITUTING A COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL SUBSIDY AND
SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN DIAGNOSED WITH
AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR,
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

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

SECTION 1. Short Title. — This Act shall be known as the "*Autism Family Subsidy and
Support Act.*"

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. — It is the declared policy of the State to promote a
just and dynamic social order that ensures the prosperity of the nation and frees the
people from poverty through policies that provide adequate social services, improve the
quality of life, and protect the most vulnerable sectors. Recognizing that the family is the
foundation of the nation, the State shall provide proactive, material social protection to
parents and legal guardians of children with neurodevelopmental disabilities, specifically
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), to mitigate the disproportionate economic burden of
their care and lifelong intervention.

SECTION 3. Definition of Terms. — As used in this Act, the following terms shall be
defined as follows:

- (a) Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) refers to a complex, lifelong neurodevelopmental condition characterized by varying degrees of difficulty in social interaction, verbal and non-verbal communication, and restricted or repetitive patterns of behavior or interests, clinically diagnosed by a licensed developmental pediatrician, child psychiatrist, or qualified medical specialist.
- (b) Child with Autism refers to an individual diagnosed with ASD who is twenty-one (21) years of age or younger.
- (c) Primary Caregiver refers to the biological parents, adoptive parents, or legal guardians duly appointed by law or validated by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), who have actual custody and bear the primary financial and operational responsibility of rearing the child with autism.
- (d) Indigent Family refers to households whose income falls below the poverty threshold as established by the National Economic and Development Authority

(NEDA), or those verified as poor under the *National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction* (Listahanan) of the DSWD.

SECTION 4. The Autism Support Allowance Program. — There is hereby established an Autism Support Allowance Program to be administered by the DSWD. Under this program, the qualified primary caregiver of every child with autism shall receive a regular monthly financial stipend of Five Thousand Pesos (₱5,000.00) per child.

The stipend shall be used exclusively for the child's welfare, including but not limited to medical expenses, specialized nutrition, therapeutic interventions, assistive devices, and instructional materials.

The financial stipend shall be indexed to inflation every three (3) years by the DSWD, in coordination with NEDA, to preserve its economic value and impact on the standard of living of the beneficiary families.

SECTION 5. Eligibility and Registration. — To qualify for the monthly financial subsidy, the primary caregiver must present the following to the local Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO/MSWDO) or the Persons with Disabilities Affairs Office (PDAO):

- a. A valid Persons with Disability (PWD) Identification Card issued to the child pursuant to Republic Act No. 7277, as amended;
- b. A formal, verified clinical diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) issued by a licensed developmental pediatrician, psychiatrist, or accredited public hospital specialist within the last three (3) years, or a certified medical abstract indicating a permanent condition; and
- c. Proof of relationship or legal guardianship, such as the child's Birth Certificate or a valid court order.

SECTION 6. Mandatory Early Screening and PhilHealth Coverage. — All Filipino children shall be entitled to one (1) free developmental screening assessment before reaching the age of five (5) to ensure early detection of ASD or other developmental delays.

Children clinically diagnosed with ASD shall automatically be enrolled as sponsored members under the National Health Insurance Program of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth). PhilHealth shall expand its benefit packages to fully cover at least one (1) comprehensive developmental reassessment per year for diagnosed children.

SECTION 7. Specialized Therapy Voucher System. — The Department of Health (DOH), in coordination with the DSWD and PhilHealth, shall establish an Autism Therapy Voucher System. This system shall provide subsidized vouchers directly to eligible families to cover up to seventy percent (70%) of the costs of occupational therapy, speech-language therapy, and physical therapy sessions conducted by accredited private and public practitioners. Indigent families shall be entitled to one hundred percent (100%) cost coverage through the voucher system, subject to availability of service providers.

SECTION 8. Database and Privacy Safeguards. — The National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA), in cooperation with the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and local government units (LGUs), shall maintain a centralized, secure National Registry of Persons with Autism. The collection, storage, and processing of all personal and medical data under this registry shall comply strictly with Republic Act No. 10173, otherwise known as the "Data Privacy Act of 2012."

SECTION 9. Penal Provisions. —

(a) Any person who counterfeits, falsifies, or fraudulently secures medical certificates or PWD IDs for the purpose of claiming the subsidy under this Act shall face a fine of not less than One Hundred Thousand Pesos (₱100,000.00) nor more than Five Hundred Thousand Pesos (₱500,000.00), or imprisonment of not less than one (1) year, or both, at the discretion of the court.

In addition to the foregoing penalties, the offender shall be ordered to make full restitution to the DSWD of the total amount of subsidies or voucher values fraudulently obtained, plus legal interest computed from the date of the wrongful receipt until fully paid.

(b) Any public official or employee who delays, withholds, or misappropriates funds intended for the beneficiaries of this Act shall be subject to administrative, civil, and criminal penalties under existing anti-graft laws.

SECTION 10. Appropriations. — The amount necessary to cover the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriations of the DSWD and the DOH. Thereafter, the funds needed for its continued operation and institutionalization shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA).

SECTION 11. Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR). — Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Secretary of the DSWD, in consultation with the Secretary of the DOH, the President of PhilHealth, the Executive Director of the NCDA, and prominent autism advocacy civil society organizations (such as the Autism Society Philippines), shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for its effective implementation.

SECTION 12. Separability Clause. — If any provision or part of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining parts or provisions not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 13. Repealing Clause. — All laws, executive orders, presidential decrees, administrative orders, rules, and regulations contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SECTION 14. 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,