

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

House Bill No. **10103**



Introduced by **Representative JEFFREY SORIANO**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to institutionalize a comprehensive national framework for the inclusive development, protection, and well-being of children with special needs. This is employed with the end in view of strengthening early intervention services, expanding access to inclusive education and healthcare, enhancing support systems for caregivers, and promoting public awareness.

Children with special needs continue to face significant barriers in accessing timely diagnosis, therapy, quality education, and essential health services. Many families shoulder overwhelming financial costs for rehabilitation, specialized learning materials, assistive devices, and continuous medical care, often forcing parents to reduce working hours or leave employment altogether to provide full-time care. Despite existing laws protecting persons with disabilities, access to intervention services remains uneven, particularly in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas where specialized professionals and facilities are scarce.¹

The urgency of strengthening support for children with special needs is underscored by both global and local evidence. According to the United Nations Children's Fund, nearly 240 million children worldwide are living with disabilities, many of whom experience poorer educational, health, and social outcomes than their peers.² In the Philippines, the Department of Social Welfare and Development emphasizes that children with disabilities remain among the country's most vulnerable sectors, requiring strengthened early intervention, inclusive education, rehabilitation services, and community-based support to achieve meaningful inclusion.³

¹ World Health Organization. *Disability*. World Health Organization. Accessed via www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health. Accessed on 30 June 2026.

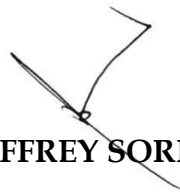
² United National Children's Fund (March 2024). *The State of the World's Children 2024: The Future of Childhood in a Changing World*. UNICEF. Accessed via <https://www.unicef.org/reports/state-worlds-children-2024>. Accessed on 30 June 2026.

³ Department of Social Welfare and Development. Study: In the Philippines, raising a child with a disability is 80% more expensive. Department of Social Welfare and Development. Accessed via <https://fo3.dswd.gov.ph/2022/12/study-in-the-philippines-raising-a-child-with-a-disability-is-80-more-expensive/>. Accessed on 13 July 2026.

This measure mandates the establishment of accessible early intervention programs. It likewise strengthens inclusive education through teacher training and individualized learning support. In recognition of the medical and financial requirements of children with special needs, this bill covers for the expansion of PhilHealth coverage for therapies and assistive devices and provides vouchers and financial assistance to qualified families. At the community and national levels, the bill develops community-based support centers and caregiver training programs, as well as institutionalizes nationwide awareness campaigns.

Every child deserves the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential regardless of disability or circumstance.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeffrey Soriano', is written over the printed name. The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping 'J' and 'S'.

HON. JEFFREY SORIANO

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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*”.

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

SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act:

a. Children with Special Needs (CSN) refers to individuals 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. This also includes those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis.

b. Early Intervention Services refers to a range of services provided to infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities and their families to promote the child's development and minimize the effects of the disability.

c. Therapeutic Services refers to professional interventions such as, but not limited to, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language therapy, behavioral therapy, and other related services designed to improve the functional abilities and well-being of CSN.

d. Special Education (SPED) refers to the educational program designed to meet the unique needs of CSN, including SPED centers, inclusive classrooms, and home-based programs.

e. Underserved Areas refers to geographical regions, localities, or communities where access to specialized services for CSN is limited or non-existent.

f. Assistive Tools and Medical Care refers to devices, equipment, technologies, medications, and healthcare services that assist CSN in their daily living, communication, mobility, and overall health management.

SEC. 4. *Accessible Therapy and Education.* – The State shall ensure that all CSN have equitable access to quality therapy and education. To this end:

a. 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. The DOH and DSWD, in coordination with the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth), shall develop and implement a subsidy program for therapeutic services for CSN, covering a significant portion of therapy and rehabilitation costs. The subsidy program shall prioritize indigent and low-income families.

c. The DepEd shall strengthen its education program, providing necessary and inclusive training for teachers, learning resources, and education plans to facilitate the successful integration of CSN into mainstream classrooms wherever appropriate.

SEC. 5. *Financial Relief for Families.* – To mitigate the financial burden on families of CSN, the following measures shall be undertaken:

a. The DSWD, in coordination with relevant agencies, shall establish a system of vouchers and grants for eligible families of CSN to support the costs of therapy, medical care, assistive tools, and specialized education. Priority shall be given to families categorized as indigent or vulnerable.

b. The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) shall explore and recommend to Congress appropriate tax incentives for parents or legal guardians of CSN, including deductions for medical expenses, therapy costs, and specialized educational fees.

c. PhilHealth shall expand its coverage to include a range of therapeutic services, diagnostic procedures, and assistive devices for CSN, with higher benefit limits and streamlined claims processes.

SEC. 6. *Public Awareness and Acceptance Campaigns.* – The Department of Education (DepEd), the Department of Social Welfare Development (DSWD), and the Philippine Information Agency (PIA) shall develop and implement national public awareness and acceptance campaigns on various special needs, which shall promote understanding, empathy, and early identification. The DepEd shall integrate modules on special needs awareness, inclusion, and disability rights into relevant educational curricula at all levels.

SEC. 7. *Support Systems for Families and Caregivers.* – The DSWD, in coordination with the Local Government Units (LGUs), shall endeavor to establish or support existing community centers in their jurisdiction. The support may include any of the following: i) free or subsidized therapy services, ii) parental training, and/or, iii) emotional support group for families of CSN.

The DSWD and DOH shall, in coordination and cooperation with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), develop and implement comprehensive training programs for parents and caregivers of CSN. These training programs shall focus on equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary to support their child's development and manage challenging behaviors.

SEC. 8. *Stronger Policies for Inclusion.* – The DepEd shall formulate and implement guidelines for inclusive education, mandating reasonable accommodations, and non-discriminatory practices for CSN in both public and private schools. All government agencies and private establishments shall ensure

that public spaces, facilities, and services are accessible to CSN, in compliance with existing accessibility laws and regulations.

SEC. 9. *Inter-Agency Coordinating Council.* – There is hereby created an Inter-Agency Coordinating Council for Children with Special Needs (IACCSN), hereinafter referred to as the “Council”, to ensure the effective implementation of this Act. The Council shall be composed of representatives from the DSWD, DOH, DepEd, National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA), PhilHealth, and at least two representatives from the private sector, which directly implement programs relevant and related to the needs of the CSNs. The Council shall:

- a. Formulate and oversee the implementation of a comprehensive national plan for the welfare of CSN;
- b. Coordinate the programs and activities of various government agencies and non-government organizations pertaining to CSN;
- c. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of policies and programs addressing the needs of CSN; and
- d. Recommend legislative and policy reforms to further enhance the rights and well-being of CSN.

SEC. 10. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 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 and stakeholders, shall formulate and promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SEC. 12. *Separability Clause.* – If any portion or provision of this Act is subsequently declared invalid or unconstitutional, other provisions hereof which are not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 13. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, orders, rules and regulations, or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 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,