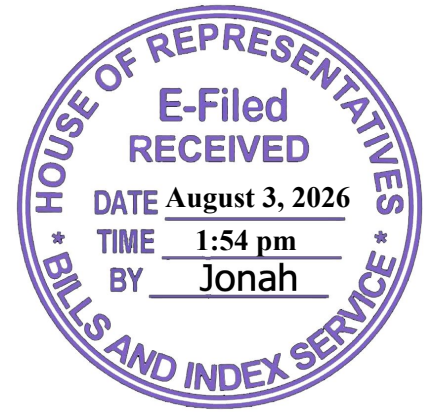


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City
20TH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

House Bill No. 10500



Introduced by: **REP. JOEL R. CHUA**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

College should be a time for learning, growth, and pursuing one's dreams. Yet for many students in our State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), it is also a time of overwhelming academic pressure, financial hardship, personal struggles, and uncertainty about the future. These challenges can take a serious toll on their mental health, affecting not only their academic performance but also their overall well-being.

While Republic Act No. 11036, or the Mental Health Act, recognizes the right of every Filipino to accessible mental health services, many SUCs still lack adequate mental health personnel, dedicated offices, and comprehensive programs to meet the growing needs of their students. Too often, those who seek help are met with limited resources or have nowhere to turn.

This bill seeks to strengthen mental health services in all State Universities and Colleges by establishing Mental Health Offices in every campus, ensuring the availability of qualified mental health professionals, institutionalizing mental health programs and crisis intervention services, and providing adequate funding for their implementation. By investing in the mental well-being of our students, we also invest in the future of our nation.

A similar measure was approved on Third Reading by the House of Representatives during the Nineteenth Congress but was not enacted into law before the close of Congress. Considering the continuing mental health challenges faced by our students, the passage of this measure remains both timely and necessary.

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


JOEL R. CHUA

Representative, 3rd District, Manila

Republic of the Philippines
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House Bill No. 10500

Introduced by: **REP. JOEL R. CHUA**

AN ACT STRENGTHENING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES, ESTABLISHING MENTAL HEALTH OFFICES IN ALL CAMPUSES, PROVIDING FOR ADEQUATE MENTAL HEALTH PERSONNEL, PROGRAMS, AND SERVICES, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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 "State Universities and Colleges Mental Health Services Act."

Section 2. *Declaration of Policy* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to protect and promote the right of every Filipino to mental health and psychological well-being. Recognizing that higher education institutions play a vital role in the intellectual, emotional, and social development of students, the State shall ensure that students, faculty, and non-teaching personnel in all State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) have access to quality, responsive, and accessible mental health services.

Toward this end, the State shall strengthen mental health programs in all SUCs by institutionalizing Mental Health Offices, ensuring the availability of qualified mental health professionals, promoting mental health awareness and prevention, establishing crisis intervention mechanisms, and providing adequate funding for comprehensive mental health services.

Section 3. *Definition of Terms* For purposes of this Act:

(a) **Commission** refers to the Commission on Higher Education (CHED);

(b) **Mental Health Office (MHO)** refers to the office established under this Act responsible for planning, implementing, coordinating, and monitoring mental health services within an SUC;

(c) **Mental Health Professional** refers to a psychiatrist, psychologist, guidance counselor, psychiatric nurse, social worker, or other duly licensed professional authorized under existing laws to provide mental health services;

(d) **Psychosocial Services** refer to counseling, psychotherapy, psychological assessment, crisis intervention, peer support, referral, and related services;

(e) **State Universities and Colleges (SUCs)** refer to public higher education institutions established by law.

Section 4. Coverage – This Act shall apply to all State Universities and Colleges, including all constituent universities, campuses, satellite campuses, extension campuses, and similar academic units.

Section 5. Establishment of Mental Health Offices – Every SUC shall establish and maintain a permanent Mental Health Office (MHO) in each campus.

The MHO shall serve as the primary office responsible for planning, implementing, coordinating, and evaluating all mental health programs and services within the campus.

The MHO shall coordinate with existing Guidance and Counseling Offices, Health Services Offices, local government units, hospitals, and other public and private mental health service providers.

Section 6. Minimum Mental Health Personnel – Each campus shall employ or designate qualified mental health professionals sufficient to meet the needs of its population.

At a minimum, every campus shall have:

- (a) at least one (1) licensed Guidance Counselor;
- (b) at least one (1) licensed Psychologist, either full-time or through shared services;
- (c) access to the services of a licensed Psychiatrist through direct employment, contractual engagement, telemedicine, or referral arrangements; and
- (d) such additional personnel as may be determined by CHED based on student population and campus needs.

CHED shall, in consultation with the National Center for Mental Health (NCMH), the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), and relevant professional organizations, prescribe staffing standards based on enrollment and risk assessment.

Section 7. Mental Health Programs and Services – Every SUC shall implement comprehensive mental health programs which shall include, but not be limited to:

- (a) individual and group counseling;
- (b) psychological assessment;
- (c) crisis intervention and suicide prevention;
- (d) peer support programs;

- (e) stress management and resilience-building activities;
- (f) orientation programs on mental health for incoming students;
- (g) mental health education and awareness campaigns;
- (h) referral services to hospitals and specialized mental health facilities;
- (i) tele-mental health services where appropriate;
- (j) wellness programs for faculty and non-teaching personnel; and
- (k) post-crisis recovery and reintegration services.

Section 8. *Mental Health Education* – Mental health promotion shall form part of student orientation programs and appropriate student development activities.

SUCs shall regularly conduct seminars, workshops, campaigns, and other educational activities to promote mental health awareness, reduce stigma, encourage help-seeking behavior, and foster a supportive campus environment.

Section 9. *Early Identification and Intervention* – The MHO shall develop mechanisms for the early identification of students, faculty, and personnel who may require mental health support, while ensuring respect for privacy, dignity, autonomy, and informed consent.

Participation in mental health screening programs shall be voluntary, except where otherwise authorized by law or necessary during emergencies involving imminent risk of harm.

Section 10. *Crisis Response and Emergency Intervention* – Every SUC shall adopt a Campus Mental Health Crisis Response Protocol, which shall include procedures for:

- (a) suicide prevention and intervention;
- (b) emergency psychological first aid;
- (c) management of mental health emergencies;
- (d) referral to hospitals and appropriate health facilities;
- (e) coordination with families, when appropriate and consistent with applicable laws; and
- (f) post-crisis support and follow-up.

Section 11. *Confidentiality* – All records, communications, consultations, and information obtained in the course of providing mental health services shall be kept strictly confidential in accordance with Republic Act No. 11036 or the Mental Health Act, Republic Act No. 10173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012, and other applicable laws.

No person shall be discriminated against or subjected to disciplinary action solely on the basis of seeking mental health services.

Section 12. *Training and Capacity Building* – SUCs shall ensure regular training of faculty members, administrators, guidance personnel, campus security personnel, and student leaders on:

- (a) mental health awareness;
- (b) psychological first aid;
- (c) suicide prevention;
- (d) crisis intervention;
- (e) referral procedures; and
- (f) trauma-informed approaches.

Section 13. *Partnerships* – SUCs may enter into partnerships with the Department of Health, local government units, government hospitals, accredited private hospitals, professional organizations, non-government organizations, and other stakeholders to strengthen mental health services and referral systems.

Section 14. *Student Participation* – Student governments, accredited student organizations, and peer support groups shall be encouraged to participate in the planning and implementation of campus mental health promotion programs, subject to the supervision of the MHO.

Section 15. *Annual Mental Health Plan* – Every SUC shall prepare an Annual Campus Mental Health Plan, which shall include:

- (a) objectives and strategies;
- (b) staffing requirements;
- (c) annual budget;
- (d) mental health promotion activities;
- (e) utilization reports; and
- (f) performance indicators.

The Plan shall be submitted annually to CHED.

Section 16. *Monitoring and Evaluation* – CHED, in coordination with the NCMH, shall monitor compliance with this Act and shall issue standards, guidelines, and performance indicators for the delivery of campus mental health services.

CHED shall submit an annual report to Congress on the implementation of this Act.

Section 17. *Appropriations* – The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current appropriations of the Commission on Higher Education and the concerned State Universities and Colleges. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

Section 18. *Implementing Rules and Regulations* – Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, CHED, in coordination with the Department of Health, the Department of Budget and Management, the National Center for Mental Health, representatives from State Universities and Colleges, and relevant stakeholders, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

Section 19. *Separability Clause* – If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 20. *Repealing Clause* – All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations, or parts thereof inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Section 21. *Effectivity* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.