



Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives

20th CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 11489



Introduced by Hon. Charisse Anne C. Hernandez

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The mental health and psychosocial well-being of students are essential to their ability to learn, develop, and participate meaningfully in school and community life. Schools are often among the first places where behavioral, emotional, social, and psychological difficulties among children and young people may be identified.

This measure seeks to provide public elementary and secondary schools with additional personnel who can provide counseling, psychosocial support, early intervention, referral, and other appropriate services to students. It likewise recognizes the important role of teachers, school personnel, and parents in identifying concerns and supporting the overall well-being of students.

By strengthening the availability of qualified professionals within schools, the proposed Act aims to address mental, emotional, behavioral, and psychosocial concerns at an earlier stage and help create a more supportive learning environment.

The measure therefore provides for the recruitment and training of appropriate school-based personnel, establishes supervision and service guidelines, and provides the necessary funding through the annual General Appropriations Act.

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


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Lone District, Calamba City

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

House Bill No. 11489

Introduced by Honorable Charisse Anne C. Hernandez

AN ACT
MANDATING THE RECRUITMENT, HIRING, AND TRAINING OF SCHOOL-BASED
LICENSED GUIDANCE COUNSELORS, PSYCHOLOGISTS, SCHOOL SOCIAL
WORKERS AND MENTAL HEALTH PERSONNEL

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 “**Students Guidance Counseling Act.**”

SEC. 2. Purposes. The purposes of this Act are to:

- (a) Facilitate the recruitment, training, and employment of additional mental health personnel, counselors, social workers, psychologists, and other qualified school-based mental health professionals within elementary and secondary educational institutions;
- (b) Effectively address the mental, emotional, psychological, and developmental needs of elementary and secondary school students;
- (c) Remove emotional, behavioral, and psychosocial barriers to learning in order to enhance the readiness, well-being, and capacity of students to learn;
- (d) Provide assistance to school staff and teachers in improving classroom management, implementing appropriate behavioral interventions, promoting school discipline, and developing the capacity to identify early warning signs of violence and the need for mental health services; and
- (e) Assist parents in promoting positive school behavior, mental well-being, and academic success among their children.

SEC. 3. Definitions. For purposes of this Act:

- (a) **Mental Health and Student Service Provider** refers to a qualified counselor, associate counselor, school psychologist, school social worker, or other qualified mental health personnel authorized to provide services under existing laws and regulations.
- (b) **Mental Health and Student Services** refer to direct, individual, and group services provided to students, parents, and school personnel by mental health and student service providers, including

counseling, psychosocial support, referral, consultation, and coordination of prevention strategies in schools or community-based programs.

(c) **Qualified Counselor** refers to an individual who has documented competence in counseling children and adolescents in a school setting and who:

(1) Possesses a license or certification granted by the appropriate professional regulatory authority;

(2) In the absence of such licensure or certification, possesses national certification in school counseling or a specialty of counseling granted by an independent professional organization; or

(3) Holds at least a master's degree in school counseling or a related field, subject to the standards prescribed by the Department of Education (DepEd) and other applicable laws.

(d) **Associate Counselor** refers to a psychology graduate who is not a licensed counselor but possesses relevant qualifications and training to provide supportive counseling services to students, subject to the standards and supervision prescribed by the DepEd.

(e) **School Social Worker** refers to an individual who holds a degree in social work and possesses the qualifications required under existing laws and regulations to provide school-based social work services.

SEC. 4. Guidelines. Subject to the existing guidelines of the Department of Education, Civil Service Commission, and Department of Budget and Management, the Secretary of Education shall facilitate the recruitment and appointment of at least one (1) Associate Counselor or one (1) School Social Worker in each public elementary and secondary school, as may be determined based on the needs and available resources of the school.

The appointed Associate Counselor or School Social Worker shall perform their functions under the guidance and supervision of a Qualified Counselor.

The Secretary of Education shall likewise cause the appointment of a Qualified Counselor for each school district, subject to existing laws, rules, regulations, and availability of funds.

The DepEd shall ensure that the personnel covered under this Act are provided with appropriate training and continuing professional development necessary for the effective delivery of mental health and student services.

SEC. 5. Selection, Hiring and Recruitment. The Secretary of Education shall, within one hundred twenty (120) days from the effectivity of this Act, issue the necessary guidelines governing the selection, recruitment, hiring, deployment, supervision, and training of personnel covered by this Act.

The guidelines shall likewise prescribe the nature, scope, standards, referral mechanisms, and appropriate delivery of mental health and student services to be provided to students.

The recruitment and hiring of personnel under this Act shall be undertaken in accordance with existing civil service, professional licensing, qualification, compensation, and budgeting laws, rules, and regulations.

SEC. 6. Appropriations. The amount necessary for the implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

The DepEd shall ensure that sufficient funds are allocated for the recruitment, hiring, training, compensation, continuing professional development, and delivery of mental health and student services under this Act, subject to existing budgeting, accounting, and auditing laws, rules, and regulations.

SEC. 7. Separability Clause. If any provision or part of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions or parts thereof not affected thereby shall remain valid and subsisting.

SEC. 8. Repealing Clause. Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule, or regulation contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act is hereby modified, amended, or repealed accordingly.

SEC. 9. Effectivity. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation or in the Official Gazette, whichever is applicable under existing law.

Approved.