

THIRTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC)
OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)

'04 JUN 30 P10:11

SENATE

S. No. 1096

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by Senator Madrigal

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The General Assembly of the United Nations adopted in 1959 the *Declaration of the Rights of the Child* which affirmed that mankind owes the child the best it has to give. On December 9, 1975, the same body passed *Resolution 3447 (Resolution Concerning the Rights of the Disabled)* which provides that the child who is physically, mentally or visually handicapped shall be given special treatment, education and care required of his particular condition.

In 1981, the U.N. General Assembly proclaimed that same year as the *International Year of Disabled Persons* to focus attention on the enjoyment of disabled persons of rights and opportunities in order to ensure their full participation and integration into society. In 1989, the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* was adopted by the U.N. and later ratified by many member countries including the Philippines. This document upheld the rights of the child to education and detailed the obligations of participating countries to fulfill such rights of the child. It also obliged countries to undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resource.

The following year, the *World Declaration on Education for All (EFA)* renewed the world's commitment of providing basic education to all children. Along with 159 other countries during the *1990 World Summit for Children*, the Philippines committed to achieve targets for children by the year 2000. Thus, the national government came up with a document entitled "*Philippine Plan of Action for Children: The Filipino Children 2000 and Beyond*" to translate the world summit goals for children into national goals.

Two years later, or in 1992, *RA 7277*, otherwise known as the *Magna Carta for Disabled Persons*, was passed to ensure the full participation and total integration of persons with disabilities into the mainstream of society. Section 12 thereof obliges the State to provide disabled persons with "*adequate access to quality education and ample opportunities to develop their skills.*"

Said law also provides that, "*the State shall take into consideration the special requirements of disabled persons in the formulation of educational policies and programs*" and "*shall encourage learning institutions to take into account the special needs of disabled persons with respect to the use of school facilities, class schedules, physical education requirements and other pertinent consideration.*" It provides further that, "*the State shall establish, maintain and support a complete, adequate and integrated system of special education for the visually impaired, mentally retarded persons and other types of exceptional children in all regions of the country.*"

On the matter of funding, *RA 7277* mandates the national government to allocate funds necessary for the effective implementation of the special programs nationwide and for local government units (LGUs) to likewise appropriate counterpart funds to supplement national funds.

On its part, the *Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG)* came up with the *Integrated Approach to Local Development Management (IALDM)* which focuses on developing the

capabilities of LGUs to effectively address child survival, protection and development efforts and eventually strengthen their lead role in a multi-sectoral endeavor to meet the goals of the *Philippine Plan of Action for Children*.

However, prior to the enactment of the *Magna Carta for Disabled Persons* and even before the Philippine Congress ratified the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, the government had already approved in 1974 the *Child and Youth Welfare Code* (P.D. 603) which defines the rights and responsibilities of children. For children with special needs, it guarantees that they shall be treated with sympathy and understanding, be entitled to treatment and competent care as well as the education and care required by his particular condition, and opportunities to develop their special talents.

Of equal importance are RA 3562 and RA 5250 approved on June 21, 1963 and June 13, 1968, respectively, which provided that teachers, administrators and supervisors of special education should be trained by the Department of Education.

Both the 1973 and 1987 Constitutions upheld the principles of social justice in education and the universality of educational opportunity and recognized that the education of every citizen is the concern of the nation. Article XIV, Sec. 1 of the latter Charter, clearly states that the State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.

Sadly, the adequacy of international covenants and declarations as well as national legislations concerning the rights of the child, there remains a dearth of clear mechanisms and policies to translate these measures into positive and concrete actions.

As of 1997, although special education have begun as early as 1907 with the establishment of the School for the Deaf and the Blind, and which have continued through the years with the formation of private schools including the present SPED centers administered by the Department of Education, only 2.4% or 99,721 children with special needs are provided with the appropriate educational services as from a combined population of 4.2 million children representing those with disabilities (3.5 million) and gifted children (700,000).

For the school year 1997-1998, there are only 61 special education (SPED) centers with 557 teachers and 597 regular school with SPED classes with 2,588 teachers. It is in this light that this bill is proposed not only to respond to the special educational needs of both the gifted child and the child with disabilities but also to make it accessible to all, majority of which are indigents or marginalized.

Aside from the need to increase allocations for children with special needs, there must also be an agency empowered to institutionalize and govern special education in the country. The present *Special Education Division* (SED) under the *Bureau of Elementary Education* (BEE) of the DepEd does not have the wherewithal and personnel to fully carry out the required policy framework and components of the special education program. Thus, the need to introduce administrative reforms particularly in the structural framework of the DECS and the formulation of appropriate programs to strengthen existing policies and concerns for the children with special needs.

It, thus, becomes an imperative to transform the existing SED to a regular bureau of the DepEd, upgrade the existing salary classification of its personnel and further provide it with competent and dynamic personnel to effectively implement the special education program of the government.


Researches show that opportunities for the early improvement of a handicapped child are greater if the child's disability is detected at an earlier time and appropriate educational intervention is started. As the parents are at the heart of the educational process of the child, this bill ensures that their involvement will become an essential component of special

education. Thus, parents will not only be taught of the best way of handling exceptional children but also the skills to identify possible disabilities or special developmental needs of the child even at the early stage of the child's life.

As the comprehensive educational program for the child also entails complementary support like services for physical health, psychiatry, social welfare and rehabilitation, this proposed measure have also considered the strengthening of partnerships with local government units and of private sector participation.

This bill was strongly indorsed by the DepEd, the academe and the various groups and institutions concerned with the basic education of children. Notable was the zealous response of the United Nations office based in Manila which intimated to DepEd officials that the features of the bill can be adopted and used as a model in other Third World settings to immensely uplift and support the CSNs.

In light of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly urged.


MA. ANA CONSUELO A.S. MADRIGAL
Senator

THIRTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC)
OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)

'04 JUN 30 PIO:11

SENATE
S. No. 1096

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by Senator Madrigal

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING AT LEAST ONE (1) SPECIAL EDUCATION (SPED) CENTER FOR EACH SCHOOL DIVISION AND AT LEAST THREE (3) SPED CENTERS IN BIG SCHOOL DIVISIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS (CSNs), CREATING THE IMPLEMENTING MACHINERY THEREOF, PROVIDING GUIDELINES FOR GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND OTHER INCENTIVES AND SUPPORT, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

SECTION 1. Title. - This Act shall be known as the "*Special Education Act of 2004.*"

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 (CSNs) to quality education and to take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to them. The State recognizes their vital role in national development and that finding solutions to their problems forms an integral part of national development strategies.

It is also the policy of the State to give full support for their welfare and development to ensure their full integration to society as well as to facilitate their active participation in the affairs of the State. Towards this end and also pursuant to the mandate stated in Section 13 of Article II, Sec. 13 of Article XIII of the 1987 Constitution, Sec. 1-2, pars. 1 and 3 of Article XIV, Art. 3 of P.D. 603 and Sections 12-14 of R.A. 7277, the State shall institutionalize an adequate and relevant educational program for every child with special needs through the establishment of SPED Centers and of their vital support mechanisms. Thus, all CSNs, irrespective of the degree of sensory, physical or intellectual disability or needs, will have the opportunity to be educated in the most educationally enhancing environment consistent with the provision of a quality education that best meets their needs.

SEC. 3. Objectives. - The objectives of this Act are the following:

- (a) To provide access to basic education among CSNs, namely, the gifted/talented, the mentally retarded, the visually impaired, the hearing impaired, the orthopedically/physically handicapped, the learning disabled, the speech defectives, the children with behavior

problems, the autistic children and those with health problems through the formal system and other alternative delivery services in education;

- (b) To ensure that CSNs fully develop their abilities, talents, interests and all aspect of their development to become more responsible for their lives and more effective partners in all of the affairs and concerns of the country.
- (c) To ensure the CSNs understand, appreciate and respect differences amongst groups and members in society and also to understand the nature of society in which they live;
- (d) To inform the parents about the full continuum of services, possible placement options during discussions about their children's education and other relevant information to enable them to make informed decisions and choices;
- (e) To equip the parents and other caregivers and the teachers with the capabilities to identify, prevent, refer and intervene with the developmental disorders and disabilities of children as well as in the relevant individual programming planning for the student where such program differs significantly from the standard curriculum and other matters that enhance the role of parents and other caregivers as the primary educators and caregivers of their children from birth onwards;
- (f) To involve private groups, local government units and national agencies other than the DepEd in the education of children with special needs, and;
- (g) To effectuate significant and positive changes in community attitudes towards disability and the need to provide special education, care and other needs of children with special needs.

SEC. 4. Definition of Terms. – For purposes of this Act, these terms are defined as follows:

- a. **Disability** refers to 1) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more psychological, physiological or anatomical function of an individual or activities of such individual; 2) a record of such an impairment; 3) being regarded as having such an impairment;
- b. **Impairment** refers to any loss, diminution or aberration of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function;
- c. **Handicap** refers to a disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from an impairment or a disability, that limits or prevents the function or activity that is considered normal given the age and sex of the individual;
- d. **Disabled Persons** refer to those suffering from restriction or different abilities, as a result of a mental, physical, sensory or neurological impairment, to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being;

- e. *Marginalized/Disadvantaged Disabled Persons* refer to disabled persons who lack access to rehabilitative services and educational opportunities due to poverty, abandonment, illness and other forms of neglect. For purposes of this Act, the word "poor" are those who either have no means of livelihood or have incomes below the poverty threshold;
- f. *Children and Youth with Special Needs* are the gifted and fast learners and those who are disabled, impaired and handicapped persons in need of special education as well as services for rehabilitation. He/she differs from the average child in (1) mental characteristics; (2) sensory abilities; (3) neuromuscular or physical characteristics; (4) social; (5) multiple handicaps; and/or (6) has a developmental lag to such an extent that he requires modified school practices or special education services to develop to his maximum capability. They include ages 0-21 years old and may be as follows:
1. *Gifted Children and Fast Learners* are those capable of superior performance and these include those with demonstrated achievement or potential ability in one or more of the following areas: general intellectual ability, specific academic aptitude, creative or productive thinking ability, leadership ability, ability in the visual or performing arts and psychomotor ability, or those individuals who consistently manifest the following cluster of traits: above average ability (including intelligence), high creativity (implies the developmental appreciation of innovative ideas) and high task commitment (related to a high degree of motivation) and those who by reason thereof, require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school.
 2. *Mentally Handicapped/Mentally Retarded* are those who have substantial limitation in present functioning characterized by significant sub-average intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with related limitations in two or more of the applicable adaptive skill areas: communication, self-care, home living, social skills, community use, self-direction, health and safety, functional academics, leisure and work.
 3. *Visually Impaired* are those who are blind or having a low vision. A person is blind if he has a visual capacity of 20/200 or less in a better eye after maximum correction. The low vision person retains a relatively low degree of vision and can read only enlarged print or regular or regular print under special conditions.
 4. *Hearing Impaired* those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing. The deaf person is one whose hearing is non-functional for ordinary purposes in life. The hard-of-hearing has a sense of hearing which although defective is functional with or without a hearing aid.
 5. Students/children with *Behavior Problems* are those who cannot adjust to the socially accepted norms of behavior and, consequently disrupt their academic progress, the learning efforts of their classmates and interpersonal relations.

6. *Orthopedically Handicapped* are those whose impairment permanently or temporarily interferes with the normal functions of the joints, muscles or limbs.
 7. Students/children with *Special Health Problems* are those who have health conditions that tend to keep children out-of-school or those with chronic and/or debilitating illness like cardiac (heart) diseases, asthma, diabetes, tuberculosis and other respiratory ailments, carcenonza, epilepsy, malnutrition and others.
 8. Students/children with *Learning Disabilities* are those who although normal in sensory, emotional and intellectual abilities exhibit disorders in perception, listening, thinking, reading, writing, spelling or arithmetic. They have such conditions as perceptual handicap, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia.
 9. *Speech Impaired* are those whose speech differs from the average so far as to draw unfavorable attention to the manner of speaking rather than to the thought conveyed.
 10. Persons with *Autism* are those with developmental disabilities, having onset before 30 months of age which is marked by disturbance in development, language and relationship with persons, activities and objects and which may coexist with intellectual disability and epilepsy. Children afflicted with this disorder have perceptual, cognitive, communication and social difficulties which change over time.
- g. *Auxiliary Aids and Services* are services that are basically non-education, but impinge on the education process of the child with special needs. These include:
1. therapy;
 2. qualified interpreters or other effective methods of delivering materials to individuals with hearing impairments;
 3. qualified readers, taped tests or other effective methods of delivering materials to individuals with visual impairments;
 4. acquisition or modification of equipment or devices;
 5. other similar services and actions or all types of aids and services that facilitate the learning process of people with mental disability.
- h. *Special Instructional Materials* mean a textbook in Braille, large type or any other medium or any apparatus that conveys information to a student or otherwise contributes to the learning process.
- i. *Private Sector Participation* encompasses all forms of indispensable, substantial and meaningful participation of private individuals, partnerships, groups or entities, community-based organizations or non-governmental organizations in the delivery of educational and rehabilitative services for students and children with special needs.

- j. *Basic Education* consist of at least six (6) years of elementary education and at least four (4) of secondary education including pre-school education.
- k. *Special Education* is basic education that takes into account the special needs of both disabled children and gifted children that requires a systematic and deliberate process for them to achieve functional literacy and which will bring the individual to the highest level of his potential and capacity. It is also defined as that type of education tailored to meet the needs of children who cannot profit because of disabilities or exceptional abilities.
- l. *Functional Literacy* is the level of literacy necessary for the student or child to become a useful citizen and effective member of the society.

SEC. 5. Coverage. - This Act shall cover all students and children with special needs nationwide.

SEC. 6. Creation of the Bureau of Special Education. - To attain the objectives of this Act, the Bureau of Special Education (BSE), hereinafter referred to as the Bureau, is hereby created to institutionalize and govern special education in the Philippines. The Bureau is primarily tasked to formulate and administer an appropriate curriculum and developmentally-suited programs to primarily achieve functional literacy, of the students/children with special needs and ensure their integration to society. The full continuum of educational services shall also be made available by the Bureau to those CSNs below school age through regular home visits, consultations, day care activities and any proper medium or program.

BSE shall function as a regular bureau of the Department of Education under the direct supervision of the department secretary and to be headed by a director and assistant director.

Three division chiefs shall serve as heads for the (1) Gifted Children Division (GCD); (2) Children with Disabilities Division (CDD) and (3) Special Services and Auxiliary Aids Division (SSAAD), with the staffing needs to be equitably distributed in accordance to the current needs and concerns of their respective divisions. They shall assist the director in the formulation, implementation and improvement of the framework and components of the special education program.

The Philippine Printing House for the Blind under existing organizational structure of DECS shall become part of the SSAAD.

SEC. 7. SPED Centers in Regular Schools. - At least one (1) special education (SPED) center for each school division and at least three (3) SPED centers in big school divisions shall be established in regular schools, where there are no existing SPED centers. These SPED centers shall be administered by the principal of the regular school.

The SPED Center shall function as the Resource Center for the implementation of inclusive education that will accept all kinds of children on regular schools. It shall a) support children with special needs integrated/included in regular schools and b) assist in the conduct of school-based training; c) produce appropriate teaching materials, and d) conduct assessment of children with special needs.

Each SPED Center shall have the following staff:

- a) 1 SPED teacher for the Mentally Gifted;
- b) 1 SPED teacher for the Mentally Retarded/Handicapped;
- c) 1 SPED teacher for the Visually Impaired;
- d) 1 SPED teacher for the Hearing Impaired;
- e) 1 SPED teacher for Autistic Children;
- f) 1 SPED teacher for the Learning Disabled;
- g) 1 SPED teacher for the children with behavior problems;
- h) 1 SPED teacher for children with multiple disabilities.

Regular teachers currently handling special education of children with special needs shall henceforth be classified as SPED teachers.

There shall be an assistant principal for each SPED Center. He/she shall administer and supervise the alternative educational programs, early intervention programs, monitoring, supervision and technical assistance and human resource training/SPED personnel enhancement programs, referral and placement procedures, advisory services and other components of the special education program in his/her jurisdiction. He/she shall also be responsible for the formation and supervision of placement committee under his/her jurisdiction as well as in the resolution of disagreements on placement and services.

SEC. 8. *Other Personnel of SPED Centers.* - One educational psychologist or psychometrician, one social worker, one education supervisor and one medical health officer for each city and province shall be appointed who, among other responsibilities, shall comprise the administrative core and placement committee of the SPED unit in the area. They shall also be jointly tasked to develop and maintain a data bank in special education in their respective jurisdictions. The placement committee shall, among others, ensure that students with disabilities are educated as close as possible to their homes and alongside their age-appropriate peer groups, and that these students attend their local schools or travel the shortest distance possible in the availment of educational services, in consultation with, and active participation of, parents.

SEC. 9. *Itinerant SPED Teachers.* - Itinerant SPED teachers shall also be appointed whenever necessary and on a need basis. He/she shall assist isolated or remote schools with specialized equipment, individual programs, curriculum adjustment, teaching aids and building modifications.

SEC. 10. *Authority of the Secretary of Education to Give Grants to, or Enter into Cooperative Arrangements for the Creation of SPED Centers.* - The Secretary of Education is hereby authorized to give grants to, or enter into cooperative arrangements or contracts with public or private non-profit agencies, institutions or organizations for the establishment or creation of SPED centers for children with special needs: *Provided*, That a grant made pursuant to this Section may be made only for the following or similar programs:

- (a.) technical assistance of SPED centers providing educational assistance for children with special needs CSNs;
- (b.) pre-service or in-service training of professionals or related services personnel preparing to serve or serving CSNs;
- (c.) replication of successful innovative approaches to providing educational or related services to CSNs;

- (d.) facilitation of parental involvement in the education of their CSNs;
- (e.) diagnosis and educational evaluation of CSNs at risk of being certified CSNs;
- (f.) consultative, counseling and training services for the families of CSNs;
- (g.) familiarization of the municipality or city to be served by a SPED center with the problems and potentialities of such children;

SEC. 11. *Provision for Continuing Research to Identify Special Needs of CSNs.* – The Bureau of Special Education (BSE), by itself or in association with such organizations or institutions as determined by the DepEd Secretary to be appropriate, shall undertake continuing research to identify and design programs that meet the full range of children with special needs: *Provided*, That such continuing research shall also be used to develop instructional techniques for use by the SPED Centers that will improve the CSNs acquisition of the skills necessary for transition to independent living, vocational training or competitive development: *Provided, finally*, That such continuing research shall further be used to design physical education and therapeutic recreation program for use by the Centers to increase the potential of CSNs for community participation.

SEC. 12. *Student Assistance.* – The Bureau shall provide financial assistance to economically marginalized but deserving students with special needs at the elementary and secondary levels including any post-secondary or tertiary education which may come in the form of scholarship grants, transportation allowance, food allowance, board and lodging allowance, book allowance, student loan programs, artistic and cultural tours, training and programs, subsidies and other incentives. Marginalized disabled persons and those coming from indigenous communities shall be the priority in the grant of the aforesaid assistance.

Special equipment like wheelchair, crutches, special toilet and hygiene requirements, hearing aids, eyeglasses, and the like required by the students to optimize education and participation in the educational process shall also be provided for free and at discounted rates to deserving students and at very affordable rates in general through a reasonable funding scheme that shall be designed by the Bureau.

SEC. 13. *Medical Assistance.* – The Bureau shall prepare a scheme that will ensure adequate and free medical assistance and intervention programs, including those essential to the student or child's rehabilitation like therapy, psychometric assessments, medical examinations and the like with government clinics, hospitals and other health facilities. In case the medical needs are not offered by the nearest or accessible government clinics, hospitals and other health facilities, or cannot be obtained by reason of critical immediacy or the need to obtain a more specialized or advanced treatment, they can avail of the services of private clinics, hospitals and other specialized agencies through tax incentives. For this purpose, as far as practicable or on a case-to-case basis, as may be determined by the Bureau, health care insurance programs may be instituted.

SEC. 14. *Nutritional Programs.* – The nutritional programs for CSN's shall be supervised by the National Nutrition Council and the Department of Health in coordination with the local government unit health officer.

SEC. 15. *Establishment of Specialized Day Care Centers.* – Day care centers specially designed for pre-school children and their parents, where early identification of

disabilities and special needs and introductory educational and intervention programs will be administered, shall also be established near or within existing SPED centers or those that will be created by the bureau with the support of the Department of Social Welfare and Development and local government unit in the area. As far as practicable, existing day care centers and facilities shall be maximized.

SEC. 16. *Recreational and Artistic Opportunities.* - The Bureau shall institute a program for students or children with special needs to afford them full opportunities for safe and wholesome recreation and activities, individual as well as social, for the wholesome use of his leisure hours and for the advancement of their physical, mental, social and cultural development.

SEC. 17. *Continuing Education and Assistance to Teachers/Instructors of Students with Special Needs.* - The Bureau shall enhance the right of the teachers/instructors to professional advancement and ensure that the teaching staff will attract the best available talents through adequate remuneration, scholarship and training grants, teacher exchange programs, incentives and allowances and other means of securing job satisfaction and fulfillment as well as their long and stable tenure in their respective posts. A similar program shall be designed for support personnel like interpreters, psychologists, social workers and others also involved in the education and rehabilitation of the child.

The Bureau shall identify at least one (1) leading institution or university in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao whose faculty is considered or regarded as highly competent in the area of special education where a uniform or standardized curriculum in any masters education program shall be designed to benefit SPED teachers and other personnel of SPED centers. The manner of selection of such institution shall be provided under the implementing Rules and Regulations of this Act.

SEC. 18. *Parent, Sibling and Caregiver Education.* - There shall be a formal training and counseling program for parents, siblings and caregivers for them to acquire a working knowledge of special education, gain an understanding of the psychology of children with special needs, be aware of their crucial role as educators and gain knowledge and skills on how each parent, sibling or caregiver could maximize his/her services for the optimum development of the potentials of the child.

SEC. 19. *Special Instructional Materials.* - Publishers shall grant to the DepEd through the Special Services and Auxiliary Aids Division (SSAAD) the authority to transcribe adopted instructional materials into braille, large type and audio-tape without penalty or royalty. Furthermore, on or before the second working day after the adoption of textbook titles by the DepEd, each publisher of newly adopted instructional materials shall provide computerized files as specified by the DepEd which may be copied and distributed to a school division, upon request, for instructional purposes.

Copies of these instructional materials shall be furnished without cost to either the student or teacher who is blind or visually impaired. The materials are to be loaned to the public school district as long as needed and are to be returned to SSAAD when no longer needed.

SEC. 20. *Incentives to Private Sector Participation.* - Partnership between the government and private institutions catering to the needs of students/children with special needs shall be encouraged. In this regard, the Department of Education in coordination with the Department of Finance, Department of Interior and Local

Government, Department of Science and Technology and Department of Trade and Industry shall draw up a scheme to provide incentives that will include tax deductions, loan assistance, and technological or scientific assistance, to encourage private participation in the education and rehabilitation of CSNs.

SEC. 21. *Local Government Unit Participation.* - The local government units shall be responsible for the:

- A. Provision of buildings or centers and sites where there are no existing school facilities that will house the special education of children/students with special needs, as well as the establishment of day care centers as mentioned in Sec. 15;
- B. Organization of one (1) parent-teacher association in every school in their respective jurisdictions offering special education to students/children with special needs;
- C. Identification, coordination and the tapping of public or private volunteers and private organizations, national or international, for information dissemination campaigns, funding programs and other projects to augment the funding of and equipment for SPED programs and equipment, among others;
- D. Provision of counterpart funds for the training and seminars of parents and teachers and nutritional programs for the students/children with special needs in their respective localities to be determined by the Bureau, in coordination with the Department of Budget and Management and the Department of Finance.

SEC. 22. *Public Information, Education and Communication.* - A nationwide information dissemination campaign on the prevention, early identification and intervention programs for children with special needs shall be intensified. This shall be the joint responsibility of the Philippine Information Agency (PIA), Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) and the Department of Education (DepEd). The DepEd, in collaboration with the Department of Health (DOH) and Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), shall also disseminate materials and information concerning effective practices in working with, training and educating CSNs.

SEC. 23. *Appropriations.* - The Secretary of the Department of Education shall immediately include in the DepEd program the implementation of this Act, the funding of which shall be included in the Annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 24. *Implementation.* - The Department of Education through the Bureau of Special Education in coordination with the Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of Health, Department of Finance, Council for the Welfare of Children and National Council for the Welfare of Disabled Persons, shall promulgate and issue the necessary guidelines for the creation and operation of SPED Centers within sixty (60) days after the effectivity of this Act.

SEC. 25. *Separability Clause.* - If for any reason, a provision or part hereof is declared invalid, other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 26. *Repealing Clause.* - All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations contrary or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 27. *Effectivity Clause.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its publication in two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,