

**SENATE**  
**S. No. 791**

'19 JUL 25 P 4:53

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**INTRODUCED BY SENATOR RISA HONTIVEROS**

**AN ACT  
INSTITUTING A PHILIPPINE NATIONAL AUTISM CARE PLAN FOR THE  
SUPPORT OF PERSONS WITH AUTISM AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurological and developmental disorder with an unknown etiology that affects an individual to communicate and interact with others. It is a lifelong development condition that affects how a person communicates and relates to other people.

The World Health Organization estimates that 1 in every 160 children has an ASD worldwide. In the Philippines, experts and advocates have estimated that there are close to 1,000,000 people with autism.<sup>1</sup> The Autism Society of the Philippines estimates that only 10% of Filipinos with autism are diagnosed and only 5% are receiving appropriate interventions. Studies have also shown that the average annual cost of the interventions designed for a school-aged child is around P180,000.<sup>2</sup>

The 67<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly adopted resolution calling for the strengthening of capacities of national governments to address ASD and other developmental disorders within the context of a broader framework of mental health and disabilities.

This measure proposes actions to strengthen government capacities towards addressing the needs of individuals with ASD and their families. Interventions that focus on protecting the rights and ensuring the well-being of people with ASD, raising public awareness, training and capacity building of public service providers will be undertaken by different government agencies through the Philippine Council for Mental Health established by the Mental Health Law.

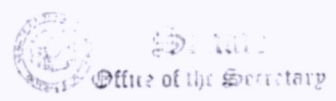
<sup>1</sup> <https://www.phijstar.com/headlines/2014/04/0/1310840/number-people-autism-increasing#6rsOBIEJr7eMAPYv.99>

<sup>2</sup> Magno Veluz, M et al. Primer on Autism in the Philippines, Autism Society of the Philippines

Thus, the passage of this bill is earnestly sought

*Risa Hontiveros*  
**RISA HONTIVEROS**

**Senator**



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**AN ACT**  
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**THE SUPPORT OF PERSONS WITH AUTISM AND FOR OTHER**  
**PURPOSES**

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

1 Section 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the "National  
2 Autism Care Plan Act".

3 Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the  
4 State to protect and promote the rights of all persons to full, healthy, and  
5 holistic development. As such, the State shall promote an environment  
6 conducive to the development of persons with autism (PWAs) to become  
7 independent, self-reliant, productive and socially-accepted members of an  
8 inclusive society. Towards this end, the State commits itself to the  
9 establishment of institutional and social mechanisms to support PWAs  
10 throughout their lifetime, responsive to their needs, empowering and  
11 providing them quality of life.

12 Sec. 3. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act, the following terms  
13 shall mean:

- 14 a) "Autism" or Autism Spectrum Disorder refers to a neurological  
15 condition characterized by challenges with social skills,  
16 repetitive behaviors, communication, as well as by unique  
17 strengths, as defined in the latest version of the Diagnostic  
18 and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.
- 19 b) "Diagnosis" refers to necessary assessments, including but not  
20 limited to neuro-psychological evaluations, genetic testing,  
21 MRIs, hearing tests, psychometric tests to diagnose or

1 discount autism and/or developmental disabilities in  
2 individuals.

3 c) "Intervention" refers to interceding action undertaken to help  
4 improve the autism prognosis. Intervention in autism may take  
5 the form of medical, pharmacologic, therapeutic, educational,  
6 and non-traditional habilitative care.

7 d) "Epidemiology" refers to the study and analysis of the  
8 distribution and determinants of health conditions, like autism,  
9 in define populations.

10 Sec. 4. *Treatment as Persons with Disability* — All PWAs shall be treated  
11 as persons with disability, as defined under Republic Act No. 7277, as  
12 amended. They shall be entitled to all the rights, privileges, and benefits  
13 provided for persons with disabilities under existing laws.

14 Sec. 5. *Continuing Education and Training on Autism for Public Service*  
15 *Providers*. — All officers and staff in charge of providing services to the public,  
16 including but not limited to the Department of Health (DOH), Department of  
17 Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Education (DepEd),  
18 Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Justice (DOJ),  
19 Department of Transportation (DOTr), Department of Interior and Local  
20 Government (DILG), the Department of National Defense (DND), Department  
21 of Science and Technology (DOS T), Commission on Higher Education (CHED),  
22 Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), National  
23 Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA), Persons with Disabilities Affairs offices  
24 (PDAOs) at the Local Government Units (LGUs), Public Safety Units (military,  
25 police, firemen and other first responders), shall undergo mandatory  
26 continuing education to sensitize and empower service providers to become  
27 effective front liners in the delivery of services to PWAs and their families

28 Sec. 6. *Epidemiological Surveillance Programs*. — The Department of  
29 Health, in coordination with different academic institutions and non-  
30 governmental organizations is hereby mandated to conduct an epidemiological  
31 survey to determine the prevalence of autism in the country annually to  
32 provide data to government agencies and the private sector, to make  
33 necessary services available to PWAs and their families.

34 Sec. 7. *Evidence-based Research*. — The DOH, the Philippine Council  
35 for Health Research and Development (PCHRD), and the National Institute of  
36 Health (NIH) are mandated, in coordination with local and international

1           Sec. 8. *Early Detection and Intervention of Autism.* — The DOH, in  
2 coordination with the DepEd, is hereby mandated to establish a program for early  
3 screening and detection of autism, to provide the appropriate services to children  
4 and toddlers with developmental delays associated with autism, and to ensure the  
5 central PWD registry are updated accordingly.

6           Sec. 9. *Mandatory PhilHealth Coverage.* — All persons with autism shall be  
7 covered by the National Health Insurance Program of the Philippine Health Insurance  
8 Corporation (PHIC). Funds necessary to ensure the enrolment of PWAs, who are  
9 currently covered under any existing category, shall be sourced from the National  
10 Health Insurance Fund of PHIC, earmarked from the proceeds of sin tax collections,  
11 as provided for in Republic Act No. 10351. It shall likewise include the cost of early  
12 screening and detection programs, as one of the available benefits of its members.

13           Sec. 10. *Protection Against Discrimination in Schools, Colleges, Universities*  
14 *and Training Institutions.* — The DepEd, CHED and TESDA shall formulate or update  
15 policies and protocols to ensure that all educational institutions shall be inclusive to  
16 learners with autism, in matters including, but not limited to, acceptance to academic  
17 or training programs, instructional supports, and behavior management.

18           Sec. 11. *Provision for Equal Opportunities for Employment* — The DOLE and  
19 the Civil Service Commission shall formulate policies and programs to ensure that  
20 adult PWAs are provided equal opportunities for gainful employment in the private  
21 and public sector.

22           Sec. 12. *Protection against Discrimination in Insurance Coverage.* — The  
23 Department of Finance shall formulate or update policies and protocols to ensure  
24 that all insurance providers shall provide PWAs access to life insurance instruments  
25 and shall include allied medical procedures (like occupational and speech therapies)  
26 in health insurance benefits of policy holders.

27           Sec. 13. *Protection in cases of Disasters and Emergencies.* — The DILG and  
28 the DND shall formulate the necessary policies and protocols to ensure the military,  
29 public safety professionals, local government units, and first responders shall provide  
30 the necessary life-saving support to PWAs with behavioral and communication  
31 challenges.

32           Sec. 14. *Access to Transportation.* — The DOTr shall formulate the necessary  
33 policies and protocols to ensure PWAs with behavioral and communication challenges  
34 and their families are given reasonable accommodation in accessing all forms of  
35 transportation by service providers over land, sea and air.

1           Sec. 15. *Reasonable Accommodation in cases of Legal Action.* — The DOJ shall  
2 formulate the necessary policies and protocols to ensure criminal justice agencies  
3 and professionals shall provide the necessary accommodations and protections to  
4 PWAs in behavioral and communication challenges, who may be the accused of,  
5 victims of or witnesses to crimes.

6           Sec. 16. *The Philippine Council for Mental Health* — The Philippine Council for  
7 Mental Health (PCMH), a multi-sector body established by the Mental Health Act to  
8 provide for a coherent, rational and unified response to mental health in the country,  
9 shall spearhead and coordinate the government actions to address the need of  
10 Filipinos with autism and their families.

11           Sec. 17. *The National Autism Care Plan* — The PCMH, in coordination with  
12 other government agencies and stakeholders, shall develop, regularly update, and  
13 monitor the implementation of the National Autism Care Plan (NACP), a holistic  
14 medium-term plan to respond to the needs of PWAs and their families for the  
15 guidance of the stakeholders in public and private sector. The PCMH shall likewise  
16 coordinate the development and implementation of necessary policies and programs  
17 to operationalize the NACP and to ensure the needs of PWAs are served.

18           Sec. 18. *Appropriation.* — The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of  
19 this Act shall be included and incorporated in the annual general appropriations of  
20 the DOH

21           Sec. 19. *Separability Clause.* — If any provision of this Act is declared invalid  
22 or unconstitutional, the provisions not affected thereby shall continue to be in full  
23 force and effect.

24           Sec. 20. *Repealing Clause.* — All laws, executive orders, presidential decrees,  
25 presidential proclamations, letter of instruction, rules and regulations or parts thereof  
26 inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified  
27 accordingly.

28           Sec. 6. *Effectivity.* — This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its  
29 publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,