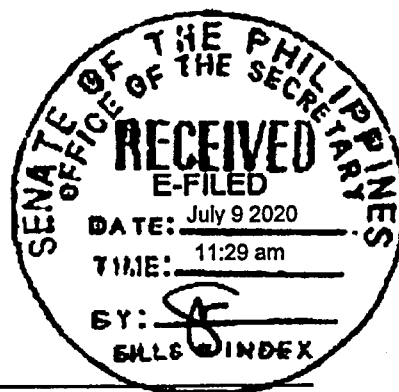


EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE )  
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES )  
*Second Regular Session* )

SENATE

S.B. No. 1681



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INTRODUCED BY SENATOR RISA HONTIVEROS

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**AN ACT  
TO PROVIDE UNIVERSAL HEALTH GRANT TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES  
DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS**

**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

At present, the novel coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) has already affected more than 11.8 million individuals worldwide. To address the growing number of COVID-19 cases in the Philippines and enhance the capacity of the government to respond to the health crisis, Republic Act (R.A.) 11469 or the *Bayanihan to Heal as One Act* was signed into law. Under the said law, around 18 million low-income households will be provided with a minimum of P5,000 to a maximum of P8,000 in emergency subsidy, computed based on the prevailing regional minimum wage rates.

Guidelines on the provision of social amelioration measures by the Department of Social Welfare and Development identified persons with disabilities (PWDs) as one of its target beneficiaries<sup>1</sup>. While the pandemic threatens all members of society, many PWDs have pre-existing health conditions that make them more susceptible to contracting the virus<sup>2</sup>. PWDs are also disproportionately impacted due to the environmental and institutional barriers that are reproduced in the COVID-19 response<sup>3</sup>. There is a need to further enhance the emergency support for PWDs as many of them are marginalized and underprivileged, unemployed, or underemployed even before the imposition of community quarantine<sup>4</sup>.

This bill seeks to provide Universal Disability Health Grants (UDH Grants) to PWDs to help in the extra costs and expenditures brought upon by the pandemic, such as accessible equipment, assistive devices, and other logistical measures related to their disability. Filipinos with disabilities should not be left behind in our country's efforts to recover against the current health crisis.

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

*Risa Hontiveros*  
**RISA HONTIVEROS**  
Senator

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.dswd.gov.ph/issuances/MCs/MC\\_2020-004.pdf](https://www.dswd.gov.ph/issuances/MCs/MC_2020-004.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Disability/COVID19\\_and\\_The\\_Rights\\_of\\_Persons\\_with\\_Disabilities.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Disability/COVID19_and_The_Rights_of_Persons_with_Disabilities.pdf)

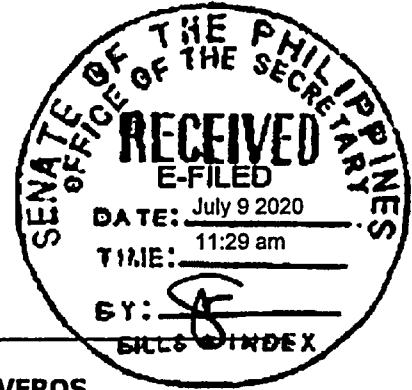
<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Agbon, Adrian D., and Christian D. Mina. 2017. *School Participation of Children with Disability: The Case of San Remigio and Mandaue City, Cebu, Philippines*. Discussion Paper, Quezon City: Philippine Institute for Development Studies

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**INTRODUCED BY SENATOR RISA HONTIVEROS**

**AN ACT  
TO PROVIDE UNIVERSAL HEALTH GRANT TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES  
DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS**

*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 "COVID-19 Universal  
2 Disability Health Grant."
- 3           Sec. 2. Declaration of Policy. - The implementation of the COVID-19 emergency  
4 universal health grant for persons with disabilities shall be guided by the following  
5 principles:
- 6           a. Persons with disabilities are constrained by their physical, mental, and/or  
7           psychosocial impairments; inaccessible living spaces and communities;  
8           and the social stigma of having disabilities;
  - 9           b. The 1987 Constitution recognizes the role of social minorities including  
10           persons with disabilities in nation building and it is further declared that  
11           the State shall provide social justice in all phases of national  
12           development and value the dignity of every human person;
  - 13           c. Persons with disabilities have inalienable rights as other persons without  
14           disabilities as enshrined in the Magna Carta of Persons with Disabilities  
15           Act, Accessibility Law, Accessible Polling Places Law, other local policies,  
16           and international conventions such as the United Nations Conventions  
17           on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
  - 18           d. It shall be the responsibility of the State to ensure that persons with  
19           disabilities are afforded the same opportunities and privileges available  
20           to all Filipinos, especially in terms of equal access to public services and  
21           social protection measures;
  - 22           e. The Bayanihan to Heal As One Act established the basis for the creation  
23           of a social amelioration program for people severely affected by COVID-  
24           19 related community quarantines and lockdowns in the whole country.

- 1 f. The universal health grant for persons with disabilities is intended to  
2 supplement earlier social protection measures implemented by the  
3 government in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic.

4 **Sec. 3. Definition of Terms. –**

- 5 a. Social Amelioration Program (SAP) - social protection measure intended  
6 to help low income families for two months in response to the COVID-  
7 19 pandemic as reflected in the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act. Sectors  
8 vulnerable to the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 related  
9 quarantines and lockdowns such as persons with disabilities are qualified  
10 for the SAP as long as they are poor.
- 11 b. Universal Disability Health Grant - cash assistance given to persons with  
12 disabilities to assist with disability related costs.
- 13 c. Persons with Disabilities - persons with physical, learning, visual,  
14 hearing, movement, and/or mental impairments. Apart from bodily  
15 impairments, they can be made disabled by inaccessible built  
16 environments and social stigma on disability.
- 17 d. Persons with Disability Affairs Offices (PDAOs) - offices in provincial, city,  
18 and municipal governments charged with all tasks connected with  
19 promoting the welfare and rights of persons with disabilities
- 20 e. Persons with Disability Affairs Focal Persons - In lieu of PDAOs, persons  
21 in-charge of all concerns related with the welfare and rights of persons  
22 with disabilities in 4th, 5th, and 6th class municipalities
- 23 f. Department of Social Welfare and Development - the agency mandated  
24 to plan and undertake all social welfare programs of the government
- 25 g. National Household Targeting Office - the unit within DSWD tasked with  
26 building a database of poor households in the country
- 27 h. National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) Sectoral Council on Persons  
28 with Disabilities - the special unit in NAPC that ensures that concern of  
29 persons with disabilities will be part of the government's poverty  
30 reduction agenda
- 31 i. Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) - the agency  
32 mandated to strengthen the capacity of local government units to  
33 improve public service delivery.
- 34 j. Department of Health - the agency mandated to provide accessible and  
35 quality health care services to all Filipinos
- 36 k. Local Government Units (LGUs) - provincial, city, and/or municipal levels  
37 of government
- 38 l. City/Municipal Social Welfare Office (C/MSWO) - social welfare arms of  
39 LGUs focused on social protection and poverty reduction

- 1 m. Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) - the agency mandated to supervise
- 2 the overall collection, processing, and analysis of statistical data for the
- 3 government,
- 4 n. National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA) - the agency in-charge of
- 5 policy formulation connected with the promotion of the rights of persons
- 6 with disabilities
- 7 o. Department of Education (DepEd) - the agency tasked with overseeing
- 8 the basic education system in the country
- 9 p. Commission on Elections (COMELEC) - the constitutional body mandated
- 10 with the exclusive charge of all election matters except the right to vote
- 11 q. Department of Labor and Employment - the policy arm of the
- 12 government focused on all matters connected to labor and employment
- 13 r. Department of Health - the agency mandated to provide accessible and
- 14 quality health care services to all Filipinos
- 15 s. Barangays - smallest unit of government responsible for public service
- 16 delivery in villages
- 17 t. Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPWD) - non-government
- 18 organizations and/or civil society groups made up of a majority of
- 19 persons with disabilities and representing the interests of the sector of
- 20 persons with disabilities
- 21 u. Universal Disability Health (UDH) Grant - the universal disability health
- 22 grant provided through this Act
- 23 v. UDH Grant Beneficiary Database - a comprehensive database that will
- 24 be created for the purpose of this act. The list of beneficiaries will initially
- 25 be based on the pre-existing databases from the LGU and the national
- 26 government.

27 **Sec. 4. Universal Health Grant for Persons with Disabilities.** – This Act aims to  
28 provide targeted financial assistance called “universal disability health grants” (UDH  
29 grant) to persons with disabilities to help cover disability related costs exacerbated by the  
30 COVID-19 pandemic crisis and under the “new normal”.

31 The universal disability health grant will be given to all Filipinos with disabilities registered  
32 with the Philippine Statistics Authority, National Council for Disability Affairs, Department  
33 of Social Welfare and Development, and the PDAOs/PDAFP, and C/MSWO regardless of  
34 age and socio-economic status. The “grant” is equivalent to PHP 750<sup>5</sup> to be given as an  
35 annual lump sum beginning August 2020 and until August 2021.

36 **Sec. 5. Agencies and Responsibilities.** - The following agencies and offices will  
37 undertake the tasks below in relation to this act:

- 38 a. DSWD shall:

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<sup>5</sup> The grant amount is based on the annual health grant given to 4Ps/Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program beneficiaries per Republic Act 11310.

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- i. Create a program support office for the UDH grant program and its local counterparts in the DSWD field offices.
- ii. Provide overall management of the UDH grant program.
- iii. Coordinate with NCDA and LGUs in building the UDH grant beneficiary database based on existing databases from key agencies like the PSA.
- iv. Identify the appropriate delivery mechanism for the UDH grant
- v. Be responsible for disbursing the funds to beneficiaries.
- vi. Ensure that the DSWD-NH shall continue updating the database of persons with disabilities even after the expiration of this program, for future social protection protection measures intended for persons with disabilities
- vii. Institute an accessible grievance mechanism and process that beneficiaries and others may access to provide feedback and complaints regarding the implementation of the program.

b. NCDA shall:

- i. Be the primary custodian of the database of persons with disabilities.
- ii. Coordinate with DSWD for the regular updating of the database of persons with disabilities
- iii. Conduct verification of the PWD beneficiaries that will be covered by the UDH grant and subsequently issue a certification of veracity of the beneficiaries list to the DSWD, for purposes of the latter's program implementations;
- iv. Create an independent monitoring and evaluation team to review the implementation of the program made up of OPWDs and representatives of PDAOs;
- v. Identify and design a social protection program for persons with disabilities, incorporating lessons from the UDH grant program.

c. Department of Interior and Local Government shall:

- i. Issue supporting policies that will create the institutional support (PDAO/ PDAFP) needed for local government units to effectively implement this program;
- ii. Issue a policy requiring the LGUs through the PDAO/PDAFP to submit reports pertaining to the implementation of the program;
- iii. Issue a policy requiring barangays and C/MSWOs to provide assistance to the DSWD in the implementation of the program;

d. Department of Health shall:

- i. Provide assistance, through the BHERTS/BHWs, in the creation and validation of the list of persons with disabilities in the

1                                barangays, in coordination with the C/MSWO and the PDAO/  
2                                PDAFP; and

3                                ii. Conduct related studies to inform future social protection and  
4                                health programs for persons with disabilities.

5                                Sec. 6. Monitoring and Evaluation. - The DSWD Central Office through its UDH  
6 grant program support office will undertake monitoring and evaluation. The monitoring  
7 and evaluation report shall be published on the DSWD website, including the names of  
8 the beneficiaries of the program. It shall include feedback and complaints coursed  
9 through the grievance mechanism. The NCDA independent monitoring and evaluation  
10 report will also be published on the DSWD website. A third-party assessment may also  
11 be carried out.

12                                Sec. 7. Appropriations. - The government will treat the universal disability health  
13 grant as part of its COVID-19 response. The Department of Budget and Management  
14 (DBM) shall draw funds for this project from the unprogrammed appropriations for fiscal  
15 year 2020-2021 and release the money directly to DSWD.

16                                Sec. 8. Separability Clause. - If any provision of this Act is held invalid or  
17 unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall  
18 remain valid and in effect.

19                                Sec. 9. Repealing Clause. - Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive  
20 order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary to or  
21 inconsistent with the provision of this Act is hereby repealed, modified, or amended  
22 accordingly.

23                                Sec. 10. Effectivity Clause. - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its  
24 publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,