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SENATE
S. No. **3133**

REF BY: *CR*

Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Constitution, Article 2, Section 15 provides:

The State shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them.

Autism is a group of developmental brain disorders, collectively called autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The term "spectrum" refers to the wide range of symptoms, skills, and levels of impairment or disability that children with ASD can have. Some children are mildly impaired by their symptoms, but others are severely disabled.

Symptoms of ASD vary from one child to the next, but in general, they fall into three areas:

- Social impairment
- Communication difficulties
- Repetitive and stereotyped behaviours.

Children with ASD do not follow typical patterns when developing social and communication skills. Parents are usually the first to notice unusual behaviour in their child. Often, certain behaviour becomes more noticeable when comparing children of the same age. In some cases, babies with ASD may seem different very early in their development. Even before their first birthday, some babies become overly focused on certain objects, rarely make eye contact, and fail to engage in typical back-and-forth play and babbling with their parents.

This bill seeks to find ways to help students cope with the detrimental effects of autism spectrum disorder.

Miriam Defensor Santiago
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CR

1 professional evaluation to the extent that continued educational growth and stimulation could
2 best be served by an academic environment beyond that offered through a standard grade-level
3 curriculum;

4 (d) "Special educational services" are programs designed to meet the educational
5 needs of differently-abled children which include, but are not limited to, the provision of
6 diagnostic and evaluation services, student and parent counseling, itinerant, homebound and
7 referral assistance, organized instructional and therapeutic programs, transportation, and
8 corrective and supporting services.

9 SECTION 4. *Special Needs Identification and Education Program.* – The Special Needs
10 Identification and Education Program shall involve the special needs identification and education
11 training for selected public school teachers.

12 SECTION 5. *Autism Ombudsman.* – The Secretary of Education shall appoint an autism
13 ombudsman to develop best practice guidelines for the educational assessment and interventions
14 for differently-abled children from three years of age. Regional professional development
15 centers must have an autism specialist available. Early childhood education centers shall be
16 established, subject to appropriations, giving priority to regions where there are limited or
17 nonexistent resources and a significant need.

18 SECTION 6. *Review of Special Education Services.* – The Secretary of Education shall
19 appoint such regional and city advisory committees as he deems necessary to review special
20 educational services to differently-abled children, including children with autism spectrum
21 disorder as defined in this Act and to consider any problems with respect to the provision of
22 educational services to differently-abled children and to give advice thereon. Such committees
23 shall include persons broadly representative of community organizations interested in the
24 differently-abled, professions related to the educational needs of the differently-abled, and the
25 general public. The members of such committees shall serve at the discretion of the Secretary of
26 Education.

1 SECTION 7. *Autism Spectrum Disorder Research and Report.* – The Department of
2 Health and the Department of Education shall jointly prepare and submit to Congress for its
3 review and consideration a 10-year strategic plan within one (1) year after the effectivity of this
4 Act to address the growing number of persons who need services for autism spectrum disorder.

5 The study shall–

- 6 (a) determine the prevalence of autism spectrum disorder among students;
7 (b) evaluate the extent to which students with autism spectrum disorders are more
8 likely to miss school, have delayed rates of development, or have reduced cognitive skills; and
9 (c) report on current national and local programs to educate the youth about the
10 treatment of autism spectrum disorder, as well as evaluate the value of such programs.

11 SECTION 8. *Funding.* – The amount of FIFTY MILLION PESOS (P50,000,000.00) is
12 hereby appropriated for the programs established under this Act. This shall be included in the
13 annual budget of the Department of Education.

14 SECTION 9. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part hereof is held invalid or
15 unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall remain
16 valid and subsisting.

17 SECTION 10. *Repealing Clause.* – Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive
18 order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary to or inconsistent
19 with, the provisions of this Act is hereby repealed, modified, or amended accordingly.

20 SECTION 11. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
21 publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,

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