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SENATE

Senate Bill No. 810

INTRODUCED BY SEN. JINGGOY EJERCITO ESTRADA

EXPLANATORY NOTE

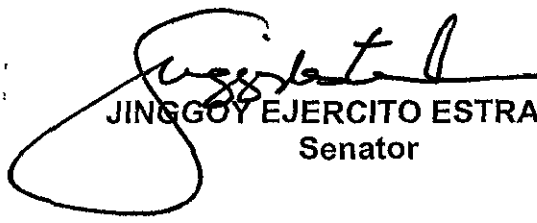
Autism is a developmental disability that appears during the first three years of life and severely hinders the way information is gathered and processed by the brain, causing problems in communication, learning and social behaviors.

This disability is more prevalent in boys than in girls and does not recognize racial, ethnic, or social boundaries. Each autistic child or adult may exhibit any combination of the behaviors in any degree of severity. It is estimated that one out of 500 Filipinos are autistic or approximately 140,000 Filipinos of the 70 million population. Of those affected, only 10% have been diagnosed.

Autism as a disability is virtually unknown in the Philippines. For such a long time, this sector has been lacking in government support. Government resources which were poured in on autism programs were not sufficient. Because of the lack of educational and financial support from the government, it is only the upper and middle class families who can afford to send their autistic children to special schools.

Undeniably, addressing the needs of autistic individuals would require the political will to effect comprehensive and integrated plan for autism. In addition to this, there is likewise a lack of trained and equipped teachers and medical and health workers who can cater to the special needs of children and adults with autism. These considerations reflect the need of establishing a center for autism which will specifically focus on the needs of children and adults with autism which will hopefully enable them to be productive members of society.

In view of the above mentioned considerations, immediate passage of this proposed measure is earnestly sought.


JINGGOY EJERCITO ESTRADA
Senator

Senate Bill No. 810

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INTRODUCED BY SEN. JINGGOY EJERCITO ESTRADA

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A CENTER FOR AUTISM AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

SECTION 1. Declaration of Policy. - It is hereby recognized that autism remains to be unknown in the Philippines because of the lack of government support. Until now, autistic individual belong to the marginalized sectors of Philippine society, preventing their total rehabilitation, self-development and self-reliance.

SEC. 2. Definition of Terms. - For purposes of this Act, the terms below shall be construed to mean, except where explicitly indicated or where the text clearly indicates otherwise as follows:

a) Autism - is a developmental disability that appears during the first three years of life; the result of a neurological disorder that affects the functioning of the brain; autism and its associated behaviors occur in approximately 15 of every 10,000 individuals;

b) Disability - shall mean 1) a physical or mental impairment to 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; or 3) being regarded as having such an impairment;

c) Disabled Gifted - persons who demonstrate superior performance capabilities in intellectual, creative, specific academic areas, leadership, or in the arts in spite of physical, sensory or psychological disabilities;

d) Disabled Worker - means a worker whose earning capacity is impaired by mental, physical, or sensory deficiency or injury;

e) Handicap - refers to a disadvantage for given individual, resulting from an impairment or disability that limits or prevents the function of activity, that is considered normal given the age and sex of the individual;

f) Impairment - is any loss, diminution or aberration of psychological, physiological, or anatomical structure or function;

g) Indigent patient - a disabled person whose level of income falls below the poverty threshold;

h) Rehabilitation - an integrated approach to physical, psychological, cultural, spiritual, educational, or vocational, measures that create conditions for individual to attain the highest possible level of functional ability; and,

i) Special Education (SPED) - that type of education specifically designed for learners with special needs who can not profit maximally from regular education such that they require trained personnel, modifications in the curricula, teaching methods, instructional materials and adaptations in facilities equipment.

SEC. 3. Creation of a Center for Autism. - There is hereby created a Center for Autism which shall be tasked to perform the following functions:

- 1) Formulate and implement an integrated and comprehensive master
- 2) Create a diagnostic, therapeutic and rehabilitation clinic;
- 3) Provide vocational training programs for autistic adults;
- 4) Provide free diagnosis and rehabilitation services to indigent autistic;
- 5) Provide continuing training programs for teachers, therapists, medical
- 6) Provide other services such as counseling, orientation and referral
- 7) Increase public awareness and concern on autism by spearheading advocacy programs.

SEC. 4. Governing Board, Composition, Term, Functions. - There is hereby created a National Autism Board referred as to the Board, which shall be under the Office of the President. The Board shall govern the Center for Autism and shall be composed of the following:

- 1) One(1) representative from the Department of Health, who shall sit as Chairperson;
- 2) One(1) representative from the Department of Education who shall sit as the Vice-Chairperson;
- 3) One (1) representative from the Department of Social Welfare and Development as Member;
- 4) Two (2) representatives from the National Council for the Welfare of Disabled Persons as Members;
- 5) Two (2) representatives from the Autism Society of the Philippines as Members;
- 6) Two (2) representatives from the Parents of Children and Adults with Autism as Members.

SEC. 5. Secretariat - The Board shall have a Secretariat under an Executive Officer who shall be appointed by the President. The Executive Officer shall manage the day-to-day operations of the Board and shall be assisted by a Deputy Executive Officer who shall likewise be appointed by the President. The Executive Officer shall have the following powers and functions:

- 1) Execute, administer and implement the policies and measures approved by the Board;
- 2) Direct and supervise the affairs and operations of the Board;
- 3) Submit within thirty (30) days after the close of every calendar year an annual report to the Board and such other reports it may require;
- 4) Submit an annual budget and such supplementary budgets as may be necessary to the Board for its consideration and approval;
- 5) Represent the Board in all transactions with other offices, agencies, instrumentalities of government and with all persons and other entities, public or private, domestic or foreign; and,

6) Appoint, subject to confirmation of the Board, and discipline in accordance with Civil Service laws, rules and regulations, the officers and personnel below the level of Deputy Executive Officer.

The Deputy Executive Officer shall perform the following functions:

- 1) Assist the Executive Officer in the discharge of his powers and functions;
- 2) Act as the Executive Officer during the Executive Officer's absence; and
- 3) Discharge such other powers and functions as may be required by the Executive Officer and the Board

SEC. 6. Appropriations. - For the initial operating expenses of the Center, the amount of Five Million Pesos (5,000,000.00) is hereby appropriated from the available funds of the Office of the President. Thereafter, it shall submit to the Department of Budget and Management, its proposed budget for inclusion in the General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 7. Transitory Provisions. - Within the period of one hundred and eighty (180) days after the approval of this Act, the Board constituted shall start its operation. All other government offices having functions similar to the Board shall then cease to perform such functions. Henceforth, these functions shall be deemed transferred to the Board.

SEC. 8. Implementing Rules and Regulations. - The Board in consultation with appropriate agencies from the private and government sectors shall issue guidelines and prescribe rules and regulations within one hundred (120) days after the effectivity of this Act which shall be published in two (2) newspapers of general circulation. A copy of such guidelines, rules and regulations shall be furnished the Congress of the Philippines.

SEC. 9. Repealing Clause. - All laws, decrees, orders, rules and regulations and other issuances, or parts thereof, inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

SEC. 10. Separability Clause. - Should any provision of this Act, be declared invalid or unconstitutional, no other provisions hereof be affected thereby.

SEC. 11. Effectivity. - This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

Approved,