



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

H. No. 10284

BY REPRESENTATIVES GASATAYA, GO (M.), ROBES, NIETO, AMANTE-MATBA, SARMIENTO, TY (D.), QUIMBO, CALDERON, GATO, BARBA, SANCHEZ, TUTOR, GONZAGA, KHO (W.), CASTRO (F.L.), DIMAPORO (A.), BABASA, BORDADO, SAULOG, ELAGO, NATIVIDAD-NAGAÑO, JIMENEZ, FARIÑAS (R.C.), YAP (E.), DALIPE, ARENAS, GARCIA (P.J.), GATCHALIAN, REVILLA, RODRIGUEZ, YU, AGABAS, ERMITA-BUHAIN, BAUTISTA-BANDIGAN, BIAZON, CAMPOS, CUARESMA, DAZA, DUAVIT, FARIÑAS I (R.C.), FRASCO, GARCIA (J.E.), GO (E.C.), GONZALEZ, JALOSJOS, LIMKAICHONG, MATUGAS, SAGARBARRIA, SUANSING (H.), SUAREZ (D.), SY-ALVARADO, TEJADA, UY (J.), VARGAS, VIOLAGO, ZAMORA (W.K.), BENITEZ, BERNOS, BRAVO, CABREDO, CAMINERO, CARI, CO (A.N.), DAGOOC, DALOG, DELOS SANTOS, DELOSO-MONTALLA, DIMAPORO (M.K.), DUJALI, DY (F.M.C.), ESPINA, GULLAS, GUYA, LABADLABAD, MACEDA, NAVA, OUANO-DIZON, PLAZA, SALIMBANGON, SILVERIO, TAMBUNTING, TAN (A.S.), TAN (A.), TIANGCO, VERGARA, VILLA, SAKALURAN, SALO, VILLARICA, MARIANO-HERNANDEZ AND BOLILIA, PER COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 1256

AN ACT

STRENGTHENING THE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES OF STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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 “*State Universities and Colleges*
2 (*SUCs*) *Mental Health Service Act*”.

3
4 **SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy.** – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to uphold the basic
5 right of every Filipino to sound mental health and ensure access to appropriate interventions, therapy,

1 and treatment as needed. Pursuant to this mandate, the State shall institute policies to promote the mental
2 health and wellness of students, faculty, teaching and non-teaching staff, and other personnel in the
3 campuses of SUCs through, among others, the establishment of a Mental Health Office in all SUCs, and
4 the hiring, deployment and training of additional SUCs-based mental health service personnel.
5

6 All SUCs shall ensure that proper and adequate mental health services are provided to their
7 students, faculty, non-teaching staff and other personnel. In this regard, all SUCs, through their Mental
8 Health Offices, shall design programs and provide services that shall assist students in resolving
9 emotional, behavioral and psychosocial issues that are barriers to learning and enhance the preparedness
10 of the faculty, teaching, non-teaching staff, and other personnel to foster an enabling environment for
11 students to acquire knowledge and to develop intellectually.
12

13 **SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.*** - As used in this Act:
14

15 (a) *Guidance counselor* refers to an individual who possesses a license or certification granted by the
16 Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) and holds at the minimum a master's degree in Guidance
17 and Counseling, Guidance, or Counseling, without prejudice to those registered under the grandfather's
18 clause of Republic Act No. 9258, otherwise known as the "Guidance and Counseling Act of 2004", and
19 is competent to perform guidance and counseling, career guidance and implement mental health
20 programs;
21

22 (b) *Mental health* refers to a state of well-being in which the individual realizes one's own abilities and
23 potentials, copes adequately with the normal stresses of life, displays resilience in the face of extreme
24 life events, works productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a positive contribution to the
25 community;
26

27 (c) *Mental health professional* refers to a medical doctor, nurse, guidance counselor, psychologist, or any
28 other appropriately-trained and qualified person with specific skills relevant to, and necessary for, the
29 provision of mental health services;
30

31 (d) *Mental health services* refer to the psychosocial, psychiatric, or neurologic activities and programs
32 along the whole range of the mental health support services including promotion, prevention, treatment,
33 and aftercare, which are provided by mental health facilities and mental health professionals;
34

35 (e) *Psychologist* refers to a natural person who has professional training and clinical skills in
36 psychotherapeutic intervention and assessment for mental health problems and possesses a license or
37 certification granted by the PRC and holds at the minimum a master's degree in Psychology without
38 prejudice to those granted licenses under the grandfather's clause of Republic Act No. 10029, otherwise
39 known as the "Psychology Act of 2009";
40

41 (f) *SUCs-based mental health service personnel* refers to any mental health professional who is hired or
42 deployed by, or has a contract with a SUC to render mental health services in each campus of the SUC.
43

44 **SEC. 4. *Establishment of Mental Health Offices in All SUCs Campuses.*** - The Commission on
45 Higher Education (CHED) shall, subject to the rules and regulations of the Civil Service Commission
46 (CSC) and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), and the policies, standards, and
47 guidelines of the CHED, require all SUCs to establish a Mental Health Office in all their campuses.

1 The Mental Health Offices shall set up campus hotlines with dedicated and trained guidance
2 counselors to provide assistance to the whole SUC Community, especially the students. Special attention
3 shall be given to those identified to have mental health problems or conditions, especially those at risk
4 of committing suicide.
5

6 The CHED and the SUCs, through their Mental Health Offices, shall initiate and sustain a
7 heightened campaign to raise the collective consciousness about mental health. The awareness campaign
8 shall give special emphasis to the issues of suicide prevention, stress handling, mental health and
9 nutrition, and guidance and counseling. The campaign shall ensure that the whole SUC community,
10 especially the students, is aware of in-campus mental health services.
11

12 The SUCs, through the Mental Health Offices, shall develop and provide for sufficient allocation
13 for mental health programs and projects designed to maintain and address the mental health and well-
14 being of the faculty, students, and personnel of the SUCs.
15

16 Each Mental Health Office shall be manned by, train and deploy mental health professionals who
17 shall serve as the mental health service personnel of the SUCs.
18

19 The SUCs-based mental health service personnel of the Mental Health Offices, including those who
20 shall be hired upon the effectivity of this Act, shall create a mechanism for timely crisis intervention and
21 suicide prevention and the appropriate response strategies for the whole SUCs community, especially the
22 students.
23

24 The CHED shall, in coordination with the SUCs, establish mechanisms to maximize existing services
25 offered by other executive departments such as the attached agencies to the Department of Health (DOH)
26 dealing with mental health and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).
27

28 **SEC. 5. Hiring, Training and Deployment of Mental Health Professionals.** - Subject to the
29 guidelines set by the CHED, Civil Service Commission (CSC), Department of Budget and Management
30 (DBM), and the SUCs, the SUCs shall hire, train and deploy mental health professionals, including a
31 psychologist, to the Mental Health Office to ensure that each SUC shall have mental health professionals
32 or mental health service providers within five (5) years from the effectivity of this Act.
33

34 The SUCs shall, in coordination with the CHED, prepare the appropriate plantilla positions for the
35 additional SUC-based mental health service personnel to be hired under this Act subject to the existing
36 organizational, staffing, position classification and compensation policies, rules, and regulations to be
37 submitted to the DBM for evaluation and approval.
38

39 Notwithstanding the provisions of Republic Act No. 9258, otherwise known as the "Guidance and
40 Counseling Act of 2004", the SUCs may hire, as may be necessary, graduates with relevant background
41 in psychology or similar fields, who do not yet qualify as mental health professionals to provide SUCs-
42 based mental health services: *Provided*, That they undergo sufficient capacity building as determined by
43 the CHED and are supervised by qualified mental health professionals in their provision of mental health
44 services: *Provided, further*, That they meet the relevant qualifications and are licensed as mental health
45 professionals within three (3) years from their date of hiring.
46

47 The CHED and the SUCs, through the Mental Health Offices, shall formulate a scheme for the
48 continuous training of mental health service personnel, taking into consideration the latest information,
49

1 studies and know-how on mental health and mental health services, in accordance with the provisions of
2 Republic Act No. 10912, otherwise known as the “Continuing Professional Development Act of 2016”.

3
4 **SEC. 6. Professional and Career Development of Mental Health Professionals.** - The CHED
5 shall, in coordination with the DBM, CSC, DOH and the PRC:

6
7 (a) Prepare a uniform career and personnel development plan that shall include provisions on personal
8 wellness, merit promotion, performance evaluation, in-service training, graduate scholarships, research
9 grants, and incentive award system;

10
11 (b) Match the salary grades of mental health professionals with related plantilla items under the provisions
12 of Republic Act No. 6758, otherwise known as the “Position Classification and Compensation Act of
13 1989,” as amended;

14
15 (c) Align the qualifications and standards for the qualification outcomes of Mental Health Professionals
16 to the provisions of Republic Act No. 10968, otherwise known as the “Philippine Qualifications
17 Framework Act”;

18
19 (d) Revisit the organizational structure of the SUCs to provide competent and professional personnel who
20 shall provide supervision and technical assistance to the guidance counselors;

21
22 (e) Review, revise, and develop the duties and responsibilities of mental health professionals in accordance
23 with laws governing their professions;

24
25 (f) Prepare a performance evaluation plan that considers the improvement of the efficiency and
26 organizational effectiveness of each counselor: *Provided*, That each employee shall be informed regularly
27 by the immediate supervisor of one’s performance evaluation; and

28
29 (g) Provide periodic training, retooling and skills upgrading to mental health professionals.

30
31 **SEC. 7. Salary Scale.** - The career and salary scales of mental health professionals in SUCs shall
32 provide for a gradual progression from a minimum to a maximum salary by means of regular increments,
33 to be given regularly based on merit and competencies.

34
35 The entry level of mental health professionals shall not be lower than Salary Grade 16.
36 Psychometricians shall have, as entry level, Salary Grade 11.

37
38 **SEC. 8. Contract with SUCs-Based Mental Health Personnel.** - In case of scarcity of available
39 mental health service personnel for full time employment in the Mental Health Offices of the SUCs, the
40 SUCs may enter into agreements for their hiring on a contractual or part-time basis in the campuses of
41 the SUCs.

42
43 **SEC. 9. Benefits.** - The Mental Health Professionals in the Mental Health Offices shall enjoy the
44 rights, privileges and other benefits provided in Republic Act No. 7305, otherwise known as the “Magna
45 Carta of Public Health Workers”, Republic Act No. 11036, otherwise known as the “Mental Health Act”
46 and other pertinent laws.

47
48 **SEC. 10. Appropriations.** - The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act shall be

1 included in the Annual General Appropriations Act.
2

3 **SEC. 11. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – Within sixty (60) days after the effectivity of this
4 Act, the CHED shall, in coordination with the DOH, the Philippine Association of State Universities and
5 Colleges, and other concerned stakeholders, issue the rules and regulations necessary for the hiring,
6 training and deployment of the SUCs-based guidance counselors, psychologists and other mental health
7 service personnel, and for the implementation of this Act.
8

9 **SEC. 12. *Suppletory Application.*** - The applicable provisions of Republic Act No. 11036, otherwise
10 known as the “Mental Health Act”, insofar as they are not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act,
11 shall apply suppletorily.
12

13 **SEC. 13. *Separability Clause.*** – If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the
14 remainder of this Act or any provision not affected, shall remain in full force and effect.
15

16 **SEC. 14. *Repealing Clause.*** – Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order, letter of
17 instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this
18 Act is repealed, modified or amended accordingly.
19

20 **SEC. 15. *Effectivity.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official*
21 *Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,