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SENATE

RECEIVED BY: 

Senate Bill No. 611

Introduced by Senator Juan Miguel F. Zubiri

**AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A CENTER FOR AUTISM AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

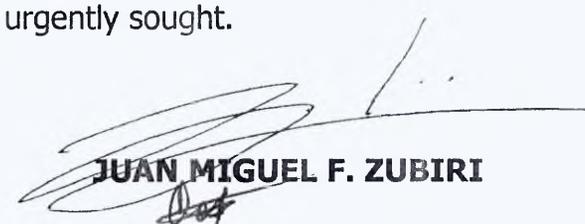
Cases of autism spectrum disorder in the Philippines have been steadily climbing in the past ten years. Per the Department of Health, the number of Filipinos on the spectrum has ballooned from five hundred thousand in 2008 to one million in April 2018, and that is only from a limited statistical pool. As this number continues to rise, it is imperative that the Philippine government finally recognize the prevalence of autism and provide much-needed services to people living with it.

As a neurodevelopmental condition, autism affects a person's communicative and interactive abilities. It often manifests itself through symptoms from early childhood. There is, at the moment, no identifiable cause for it, and as such, no cure. Even so, we can ensure that people on the spectrum receive proper, personalized treatment such as applied behavioral analysis, speech therapy, occupational therapy, and verbal behavior therapy. Quality treatment will help them gain foundational skills that will make them better equipped to lead healthy and meaningful lives.

But these treatments are moot if they remain financially inaccessible. In a 2014 study, researchers in the United States and the United Kingdom estimated that expenses for lifelong care of an individual with autism can add up to \$2.4 million. Autism care is a costly burden. A government-funded Center of Autism will help alleviate some of that burden, especially for indigent patients and their families.

The establishment of a Center for Autism will answer to the needs of people dealing with autism, as it will offer accessible diagnostic, therapeutic, and rehabilitation services, as well as vocational training services to adults with autism. It will also launch a strong autism awareness program to normalize and destigmatize autism in society, and help us all create an environment conducive to the growth and development of people on the spectrum.

In view of the foregoing, approval of this bill is urgently sought.


JUAN MIGUEL F. ZUBIRI

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Senate Bill No. 611

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

1 **SECTION 1. Declaration of Policy.** – It is hereby declared the policy of the
2 state to promote and protect the right of all individuals to live a full, healthy, holistic and
3 quality life. This includes individuals who are suffering from autism or any kind of
4 developmental disability. Therefore, the state shall promote and protect the rights of
5 autistic individuals by providing them adequate support through easy access to health
6 care, educational and other services.

7 **SEC. 2. Definition of Terms.** – For purposes of this Act, the terms below shall
8 be constructed to mean, except where explicitly indicated or where the text clearly
9 indicates otherwise as follows:

- 10 a) **Autism** – is a developmental disability that appears during the first three
11 years of life; the result of a neurological disorder that affects the
12 functioning of the brain;
- 13 b) **Disability** - shall mean 1) a physical or mental impairment that
14 substantially limits one or more psychological, physiological or
15 anatomical function of an individual or activities of such individual; 2) a
16 record of such an impairment; or 3) regarded as having such an
17 impairment;
- 18 c) **Disabled Gifted** – persons who demonstrate superior performance
19 capabilities in intellectual, creative, specific academic areas, leadership,
20 or in the arts in spite of physical, sensory or psychological disabilities;
- 21 d) **Disabled Worker** – means a worker whose earning capacity is impaired
22 by mental, physical, or sensory deficiency or injury;

- 1 e) **Handicap** – refers to disadvantage for given individual, resulting from
2 an impairment of disability that limits or prevents the function of activity,
3 that is considered normal given the age and sex of the individual;
- 4 f) **Impairment** – is any loss, diminution or aberration of psychological,
5 physiological, or anatomical structure of function;
- 6 g) **Indigent patient** – a disabled person whose level of income falls below
7 poverty threshold;
- 8 h) **Rehabilitation** – an integrated approach to physical, psychological,
9 cultural, spiritual, educational, or vocational, measures that create
10 conditions for individual to attain the highest possible level of functional
11 ability; and,
- 12 i) **Special Education (SPED)** – type of education specifically designed
13 for learners with special needs who cannot profit maximally from regular
14 education such that they require trained personnel modifications in the
15 curricula, teaching methods, instructional materials and adaptations in
16 facilities equipment.

17 **SEC. 3. Creation of a Center for Autism.** – There is hereby created a center
18 for Autism which shall be tasked to perform the following functions:

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

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

- 33 1) One (1) representative from the Department of Health, who shall sit
34 as Chairperson;
- 35 2) One (1) representative from the Department of Education who shall
36 sit as the Vice-Chairperson;

- 1 3) One (1) representative from the Department of Social Welfare and
2 Developmental as Member;
- 3 4) Two (2) representatives from the National Council for Welfare of
4 Disabled Persons as Members;
- 5 5) Two (2) representatives from the Autism Society of the Philippines as
6 Members; and,
- 7 6) Two (2) representatives from the Parents of Children and Adults with
8 Autism as Members.

9 **SEC. 5. Secretariat** – The board shall have a Secretariat under an Executive
10 Officer who shall be appointed by the President. The Executive Officer shall manage the
11 day-to-day operations of the Board and shall be assisted by a Deputy Executive Officer
12 who shall likewise be appointed by the President.

13 The Executive Officer shall have the following powers and functions:

- 14 1) Execute, administer and implement the policies and measures
15 approved by the Board;
- 16 2) Direct and supervise the affairs and operations of the Board;
- 17 3) Submit within thirty (30) days after the close of every calendar year
18 an annual report to the Board and such other reports it may require;
- 19 4) Submit an annual budget and such supplementary budgets as may be
20 necessary to the Board for its consideration and approval;
- 21 5) Represent the Board in all transactions with other offices, agencies,
22 instrumentalities of government and with all persons and other
23 entities, public or private, domestic or foreign; and,
- 24 6) Appoint, subject to confirmation of the Board, and discipline in
25 accordance with Civil Service laws, rules and regulations, the officers
26 and personnel below the level of Deputy Executive Officer.

27 The Deputy Executive Officer shall perform the following functions;

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

34 **SEC. 6. Appropriations.** – For the initial operating expenses of the Center, the
35 amount of Fifty Million Pesos (50,000,000.00) is hereby appropriated from the available

1 funds of the Office of the President. Thereafter, it shall submit to the Department of
2 Budget and Management, its proposed budget for inclusion in the General Appropriations
3 Act.

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

9 **SEC. 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – The Board in consultation
10 with appropriate agencies from the private and government sectors shall issue guidelines
11 and prescribe rules and regulations within one hundred (100) days after the effectivity of
12 this Act which shall be published in two (2) newspapers of general circulation. A copy of
13 such guidelines, rules and regulations shall be furnished to the Congress of the
14 Philippines.

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

18 **SEC. 10. *Separability Clause.*** – Should any provision of this Act, be declared
19 invalid or unconstitutional, other provisions of this Act which are not affected hereby shall
20 continue to be in full force and effect.

21 **SEC. 11. *Effectivity.*** – This act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
22 publication in the Official Gazette or in any two (2) newspapers of general circulation in
23 the Philippines.

24

25 *Approved,*