

HONORABLE CIRIACO B. GATO, JR.

Chairperson
Committee on Health
House of Representatives
Quezon City

Attn: **MR. ERWIN VICMAN R. LARA**
Committee Secretary

Dear **REPRESENTATIVE GATO**,

This refers to your letter dated 26 May 2023 requesting comments and recommendations on the following Bills:

House Bill (HB) No.	Title	Author
HBN. 229	AN ACT INSTITUTING A PHILIPPINE NATIONAL AUTISM CARE PLAN FOR THE SUPPORT OF PERSONS WITH AUTISM AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES	Representative Geraldine B. Roman
HBN. 3979	AN ACT INSTITUTING A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM FOR THE PREVENTION, EARLY DETECTION, DIAGNOSIS, AND TREATMENT OF PERSONS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES,"	Representatives Luis Raymund "LRay" F. Villafuerte, Jr., Miguel Luis R. Villafuerte, Tsuyoshi Anthony G. Horibata, Nicholas C. Enciso VIII
HBN. 5923	AN ACT ESTABLISHING A HEALTH AND EDUCATION GRANT PROGRAM RELATED TO AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS	Representative Patrick Michael D. Vargas
HBN. 6686	AN ACT INSTITUTING A COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL CARE PLAN TO ENCOURAGE COOPERATION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND RESEARCH FOR THE EDUCATION AND SUPPORT OF PERSONS WITH AUTISM AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES,"	Representatives Edvic G. Yap, Jocelyn P. Tulfo, Jefferey Soriano, Ralph Wendel P. Tulfo

HBN. 7892	AN ACT PROVIDING FOR PROTECTION AND WELFARE BENEFITS TO PERSONS WITH AUTISM AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES	Representative Marissa "Del Mar" P. Magsino
HBN. 8011	AN ACT ESTABLISHING A CENTER FOR AUTISM AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES	Representative Zia Alonto Adiong

Foremost, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), as the lead in social protection, promotes the rights and welfare of vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals and families, including Persons with Autism (PWA).

In 2018, the Department manifested support for bills of the same intent because it believes there is a need to protect PWAs and promote their participation and development, particularly those challenged to access specialized care and services.

Along with this, may we respectfully inform the Committee that the DSWD operates and manages centers and residential care facilities that cater to the needs of persons with disabilities, including neurological developmental disabilities. These are Elsie Gaches Village in Field Office (FO) NCR, AMoR Village in FO III, and Angels Haven in FO XI.

We then take this opportunity to submit our comments and recommendations for consideration of the Committee:

1. While the DSWD welcomes creating a National Autism Council or Board, we recommend that the proposed Council or Board be studied further. Councils or Boards are policy-making bodies. Implementing programs and services for persons with autism and their respective families is best performed by the agencies concerned. It is also recommended to include three representatives from the Autism Society Philippines and parents having children with autism each from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao areas;
2. On Section 10 of HBN 229, we suggest including DSWD, the National Council for Disability Affairs (NCDA), and the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) among agencies that will formulate or update policies and protocols to ensure that all educational institutions shall be inclusive to learners with neuro-developmental disabilities. Likewise, we recommend the inclusion of these agencies among those that will formulate the implementing rules and regulations that will ensure that all educational institutions are free from discriminatory policies to PWAs.

The DSWD is the Chairperson of the NCDA, which is mandated to formulate policies and coordinate the activities of all agencies, whether public or private, concerning disability issues and concerns. Meanwhile, the CWC is mandated to coordinate the implementation and enforcement of all laws; formulate,

monitor, and evaluate children's policies, programs, and measures. It chairs the sub-Committee on Children with Disabilities and Early Childhood Care and Development Council. Both are attached agencies of the DSWD.

3. On Section 12 of HBN 229; Section 13 of HBN 6686, and Section 10 of HBN 7892, we suggest including the phrase: ***"...and ensure their (PWAs) inclusion on the list of priority sectors."***
4. On Section 4.d of HBN 8011, we recommend using "National Council for Disability Affairs" instead of "National Council for the Welfare of Disabled Persons" as it was renamed to the latter under Executive Order 709 series of 2008.

Again, the DSWD supports the proposed measures that provide quality health and education accessible to PWAs. This is true to its mandate and commitment to providing social services anchored on the principles of social protection, which are rights-based, inclusive, and transformative.

For the Chairperson's consideration.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,



REX GATCHALIAN
Secretary
Date: 15 JUN 2023