

**HON. WIN GATCHALIAN**

Chairperson

Senate Committee on Basic Education

Senate of the Philippines

Pasay City

Dear **Senator GATCHALIAN**,

The Department of Social Welfare and Development supports **Senate Bill No. 379** entitled, *"An Act Strengthening the Promotion and Delivery of Mental Health Services in Basic Education Schools Through the Institutionalization of the Mental Health and Well-Being Program, Prescribing the Hiring and Development of Mental Health Professionals, Prescribing the Creation of Plantilla Positions of Guidance Associates in the Department of Education, Increasing the Salary Grades of Guidance Counselors, Appropriating Funds Therefore, and for Other Purposes"* or the **"Basic Education Mental Health and Well-being Promotion Act"**, authored by the Honorable Chairperson, that seeks to institutionalize mental health and well-being program to eliminate the stigma on mental health counseling, to ensure the emotional and social well-being of basic education learners, and teaching and non-teaching personnel in both private and public schools.

For the enhancement of the Bill, we recommend the following:

1. **Head of the Mental Health and Well Being Center (Center)**, to review and/or revise Sections 7 and/or 10 of the Bill due to seemingly conflicting provisions:

***"Section 7. The Mental Health and Well-Being Center; Personnel. - ... x x x***

*The Center shall be supervised and headed by the **school principal** and shall have a Registered Guidance Counselor, Guidance Associate, and other support personnel. "*

***"Section 10. Personnel for the Center. - ... x x x It shall be headed by a Registered Guidance Counselor..."***

2. Creation of a **referral network** in the Department of Education which may be composed of government agencies who are members of the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPPS) sub-cluster including Non-Government Organizations and Professional Organizations on mental health. This referral network shall respond to other needs or higher levels of intervention among students which cannot be provided by a Guidance Counsellor or Guidance Associates in DepEd.
3. Introduce and define the following concepts in the bill:
  - (a) Persons with a mental illness or person living with a mental health issue;
  - (b) Confidentiality; and

(c) Informed Consent.

4. **Sec. 5. The Mental Health and Well-Being Program**, to include a dedicated “crisis hotline” to be made part of the program, which is intended for those who opt not to disclose his/her identity because of the stigma that may be brought by his/her mental health condition.
5. **Sec. 13. Hiring and Development of Mental Health Professionals**
  - i. To add requirements to qualify as a Mental Health Professional to ensure the quality of services to be provided based on the competency of personnel in providing interventions and services;
  - ii. To study the adequacy of the ration of mental health professionals vis-à-vis clients to be served given the limited number of mental health practitioners; and
  - iii. To ensure access to mental health services not just in private sector and large urban centers.

This is being submitted for the Chairperson’s consideration.

Thank you.

Regards,



REX GATCHALIAN  
Secretary

Date: \_\_\_\_\_