

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
FIRST REGULAR SESSION

House Bill No. 0573



INTRODUCED BY Rep. GREG G. GASATAYA


EXPLANATORY NOTE

Healthcare, especially Mental Healthcare, has become quite neglected among college students due to the extreme priority of universities to excel in the academe and in both curricular and non-curricular activities. As cases of self-injury among students rise because of lack of mental health care and awareness in universities, it must be realized by the state that in order to attain our desired intellectual development in students, we must also provide sufficient mental health services and promote mental health awareness to them.

According to the National Center for Mental Health of the Department of Health (DOH), the suicide rate in the Philippines is 2.5 for men and 1.7 for women (per 100,000 population). In 2012, the DOH estimated more than 2,500 cases of suicide: 2,008 of which are male and 550 female. Despite having the lowest suicide incidence among the ASEAN countries, the World Health Organization (WHO) noted in a 2011 report that the Philippines is the country with the highest incidence of depression in Southeast Asia. In 2004 alone, the DOH recorded over 4.5 million cases of depression. The DOH further reported that only 30 of every 90 of depressives will seek medical help while the other 60 will be ashamed to seek help because of the stigma associated with the illness.

Despite the alarming state of mental health in the country, there are only 490 psychiatrists for our entire population of more than 100 million and it remains inaccessible to the poor due to costly consultations. The lack of legislation, according to leading psychologists and psychiatrists, may well be among the reasons our suicide rate continues to increase. Our mental health personnel for our tertiary educational institutions also remain limited despite the increasing need for mental healthcare among students. The undersigned believes that improved mental health services that attend to students' mental, developmental, and emotional needs would help prevent spiteful incidences among college students and would assist in their holistic development as we eliminate the said barrier to learning.

In this light, this Bill seeks to promote mental healthcare among college students through the recruitment, hiring, and training of additional mental health personnel for state universities and colleges.



REP. GREG G. GASATAYA
Lone District of Bacolod City

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House Bill No. **0573**

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AN ACT
TO RECRUIT, HIRE, AND TRAIN ADDITIONAL UNIVERSITY-BASED MENTAL HEALTH
PERSONNEL

SECTION 1.*Short Title* – This Act shall be known as the “Universities and Colleges Mental Health Act of 2019”.

SECTION 2.*Declaration of Policy.*—It is hereby declared the policy of the State to uphold the basic right of all Filipinos to mental health.

SECTION 3.*Purposes.*— this Act aims to:

- (a) assist State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) to recruit, train, and hire additional university-based mental health personnel;
- (b) adequately address the mental, emotional, and developmental needs of SUC students
- (c) remove the emotional, behavioral, and psycho-social barriers to learning so as to enhance the preparedness and ability to learn and intellectually develop of SUC students
- (d) support school staff and faculty in improving manageability of students, conducting behavioral interventions to improve student discipline, and develop anticipative awareness and skills to identify warning signs of need for mental health services; and
- (e) provide support to parents in improving the academic success of their children.

SECTION 4.*Definition of Terms.* — For the purposes of this act, the following terms shall be defined as:

- (a) *Mental Health Service Provider* – includes a qualified university psychiatrist
- (b) *Mental Health Services* – includes direct, individual, and group services provided to students, parents, and school personnel by mental health service providers
- (c) *University Psychiatrist* – refers to an individual who possesses documented competence in evaluating mental health and licensed or certified by a professional regulatory authority.

SECTION 5. *Hiring of Additional University-based Psychiatrists.* – The Secretary of Education, shall, subject to existing rules and regulations of the Department of Education, the Civil Service Commission, and the Department of Budget and Management, provide for hiring of additional university-based psychiatrists such that each SUC would have at least three (3) university psychiatrists and other mental health services providers when the need arises.

SECTION 6. *Guidelines.* – The Secretary of Education, subject to the approval of the Secretary of the Department of Health, shall issue the necessary guidelines in the selection, recruitment, and hiring of personnel and the nature of the scope of the mental health services to be offered one hundred twenty (120) days after the effectivity of this Act.

SECTION 7. *Appropriations.* – There shall be appropriated from the National Treasury amounts as may be deemed necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act.

SECTION 8. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part hereof is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

SECTION 9. *Repealing Clause.* – Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule, or regulation contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act is hereby modified or amended accordingly.

SECTION 10. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

APPROVED,