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

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 7210

Introduced by ANG PROBINSYANO
Party-List Representative Alfred Delos Santos

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article II, Section 15 of the 1987 Constitution makes it the State’s
responsibility to “protect and promote the right to health of the people” and to
“instill health consciousness among them. Acting upon this, in 2018, Republic
Act No 11036 (“Mental Health Act”) was passed, which, in Section 3 thereof,
bound the State to the following objectives:

SECTION 3. Objectives. — The objectives of this Act are as follows:
(a) Strengthen effective leadership and governance for mental health by,
among others, formulating, developing, and implementing national
policies, strategies, programs, and regulations relating to mental
health;
(b) Develop and establish a comprehensive, integrated, effective, and
efficient national mental health care system responsive to the
psychiatric, neurologic, and psychosocial needs of the Filipino people;
(c) Protect the rights and freedoms of persons with psychiatric, neurologic,
and psychosocial health needs;
(d) Strengthen information systems, evidence and research for mental
health;
(e) Integrate mental health care in the basic health services; and
(f) Integrate strategies promoting mental health in educational
institutions, the workplace, and in communities.

It is in furtherance of these policies and commitments that this Bill is
proposed. This Bill firstly aims to establish a mental health emergency hotline.
The hotline shall be operational 24/7, with call centers established in every
region, so that any and all callers can, and will be, immediately assisted.
Secondly, it seeks to put into place barangay mental health workers and
city/municipal mental health professionals. The barangay mental health
workers, in particular, shall (1) maintain close contact with those most in need
of mental health services and (2) take charge of building community awareness of, thereby boosting the accessibility of, the government’s mental health services.

It is for the foregoing premises that the approval of this Bill is earnestly sought.

Alfred C. Delos Santos

Representative, Ang Probinsyano Partylist
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AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A MORE ACCESSIBLE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE THROUGH THE CREATION OF MENTAL HEALTH CONSULTATION DESKS AND GOVERNMENT-RUN MENTAL HEALTH HOTLINE

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

SECTION 1. Short Title. – This Act shall be known as the “Accessible Mental Health Services Act.”

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. – It is the policy of the state to protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them. It is likewise the policy of the State to ensure that mental health is prioritized as an equally important component of overall health of a person. To his end, the State shall endeavor to make mental health services more accessible by bringing it as close to every Filipino family in the barangay level. The State shall also provide avenues to Filipinos who need immediate medical assistance with regard to their mental health conditions.

SECTION 3. Definition. – For purposes of this Act, the following terms shall mean:

a) “Mental health” refers to a state of well-being in which the individual realizes one’s own abilities and potentials, copes adequately with the normal stresses of life, displays resilience in the face of extreme life events, works productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a positive contribution to the community;

b) “Mental health condition” refers to a neurologic or psychiatric condition characterized by the existence of a recognizable, clinically-significant
disturbance in an individual's cognition, emotional regulation, or behavior that reflect a genetic or acquired dysfunction in the neurobiological, psychosocial, or developmental processes underlying mental functioning. The determination of neurologic and psychiatric conditions shall be based on scientifically-accepted medical nomenclature and best available scientific and medical evidence;

c) “Mental health professional” refers to a medical doctor, psychologist, nurse, social worker, or any other appropriately-trained and qualified person with specific skills relevant to the provision of mental health services;

d) “Mental health services” refer to psychological, psychiatric or neurologic activities and programs along the whole range of the mental health support services including promotion, prevention, treatment and aftercare, which are provided by mental health facilities and mental health professionals;

e) “Mental health worker” refers to a trained person, volunteer, or advocate engaged in mental health promotion, providing support services under the supervision of a mental health professional;

f) “Psychiatric or neurologic emergency” refers to a condition presenting a serious and immediate threat to the health and well-being of a service user or any other person affected by a mental health condition, or to the health and well-being of others, requiring immediate medical intervention; and

g) “Psychosocial problem” refers to a condition that indicates the existence of dysfunctions in a person's behavior, thoughts and feelings brought about by sudden, extreme, prolonged or cumulative stressors in the physical or social environment.

SECTION 4. Creation and Operation of a Mental Health Emergency Hotline. – The Department of Health, with the assistance of the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) and Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) shall establish a national mental health emergency hotline aimed at providing telephone and cellphone numbers which the public may call for immediate assistance and medical intervention regarding psychiatric or neurological emergencies.

The hotline shall be manned by mental health workers, under the close supervision of mental health professionals. It shall run twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and shall be available to answer calls and send medical response teams in the fastest possible time. The DOH shall, in consultation with experts from the mental health profession, create the call structure, provision of emergency psychological intervention through telephone, and others kinds of assistance to be provided, aside from referring the case to the nearest government hospital.
A centralized national call center shall be established and it shall refer each mental health emergency to the nearest government hospital to the patient for immediate action. They shall also alert the mental health worker or workers posted in the barangay where the person needing immediate mental health intervention in order for the former to be the first responder and assist the latter and his or her family.

SECTION 5. **Better Access to Mental Health Information, Support, and Potential Interventions through a Barangay Mental Health Worker and City/Municipal Mental Health Professional.** – There shall be at least one (1) city or municipal mental health professional posted in the city or municipal health center. He or she shall provide mental health services to residents of the city or municipality and supervise the barangay mental health workers assigned within the LGU’s territory.

He or she shall also lead the conduct of small discussion groups or forum within the community about mental health with the goal of breaking the misinformation and stigma around mental health and mental disorders. A report on the progress of the said program shall be submitted to the regional offices of DOH annually.

There shall be at least one (1) mental health worker in every barangay in the Philippines. The barangay mental health worker shall complete the necessary training as determined by the DOH.

The said barangay mental health worker shall be posted in the barangay health clinics and shall serve as the community’s first responder and field personnel in all matters relating to mental health.

The following shall be the main duties of a barangay mental health worker:

a) regularly visit persons diagnosed as having a mental health condition residing in their barangay;

b) assist persons with mental health conditions and their families in accessing mental health services in government hospitals;

c) assist the mental health professional in the conduct of small discussion groups or forum within the community about mental health;

d) assist persons who wish to consult with mental health professionals and connect them with mental health professionals or institutions providing mental health services; and

e) other tasks that the city or municipal mental health professional may assign from time to time.
SECTION 6. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – The DOH, with the assistance of the relevant government agencies, shall provide for the implementing rules and regulations for this Act within six (6) months from its effectivity.

SECTION 7. Appropriations. – The amount of twenty-five million pesos (PhP 25,000,000.00) shall be appropriated for the initial implementation of the provisions of this Act. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the continued implementation of the Act shall be regularly incorporated in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA).

SECTION 8. Separability Clause. – If any provision or part of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions or parts unaffected shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 9. Repealing Clause. – All laws, executive orders, presidential decrees or issuances, letters of instruction, administrative orders, rules, and regulations contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SECTION 10. Effectivity Clause. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,