



NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE]
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES]
Second Regular Session]

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SENATE

RECEIVED BY: _____

P.S. Res. No. 671

Introduced by SENATOR WIN GATCHALIAN

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE STATUS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11036, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "MENTAL HEALTH ACT", FOR THE PURPOSE OF IDENTIFYING THE CHALLENGES IN THE DELIVERY OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES, EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EXISTING POLICIES, AND RECOMMENDING POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE INTERVENTIONS TO ADDRESS AN IMPENDING PANDEMIC OF MENTAL HEALTH IN THE COUNTRY

1 **WHEREAS**, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the
2 mental health and well-being of people worldwide, with a global increase of
3 25% in rates of anxiety and depression during the first year, while also raising
4 concerns of increased suicidal behavior. This notwithstanding, access to
5 mental health services has been severely hindered;¹

6

7 **WHEREAS**, according to a study examining the prevalence of
8 psychiatric symptoms and factors contributing to the psychological impact of
9 COVID-19 in the Philippines, a country that underwent one of the strictest
10 lockdowns globally, approximately 25% of respondents reported moderate-to-

¹ World Health Organization (2022). Mental health and COVID-19: early evidence of the pandemic's impact: scientific brief, March 2, 2022
See: <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/352189>

1 severe anxiety and 17% reported moderate-to-severe depression and
2 psychological distress;²

3
4 **WHEREAS**, data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed
5 a 74% increase in suicide incidents from 2019 to 2020, then making it the
6 28th leading cause of death in the country. This represented a significant rise
7 from 2019 when suicides ranked as the 39th leading cause of death.
8 Specifically, there were 4,892 recorded cases of death due to intentional self-
9 harm in 2020, surpassing the 2,808 deaths recorded in 2019. Although the
10 preliminary estimated number of suicides for 2022 stood at 2,865, it is evident
11 that the average number of deaths caused by suicide rose significantly during
12 and after the pandemic, reaching an annual average of 4,085 deaths from
13 2020-2022 as compared to a pre-pandemic annual average of 2,752 from
14 2017-2019;³

15
16 **WHEREAS**, the pandemic has likewise significantly impacted the
17 mental health of one of the most vulnerable sectors – the learners. Recent
18 figures from the Department of Education (DepEd) paint a distressing picture,
19 with a staggering 412 student suicides recorded in SY 2020-2021 and SY
20 2021-2022;⁴

21
22 **WHEREAS**, considering a looming mental health pandemic, it is crucial
23 for the government to urgently intervene by improving and investing in mental
24 health services across healthcare, protection, education, and welfare;

25
26 **WHEREAS**, Republic Act No. 11036, otherwise known as the “Mental
27 Health Act”, was enacted on June 20, 2018, with the primary objective of
28 improving effective leadership and governance for mental health, establishing
29 a comprehensive, integrated, and efficient national mental health care system
30 that addresses the psychiatric, neurologic, and psychosocial needs of the

² Tee, M.L., et al., (2020) Psychological impact of COVID-19 pandemic in the Philippines. J Affect Disord. See: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7444468/>

³ PSA data (2017-2022)

⁴ DepEd Letter addressed to Sen. Win Gatchalian, sent via email on May 16, 2023

1 Filipino population, and integrating mental health care into primary
2 healthcare services;

3

4 **WHEREAS**, on January 22, 2019, the Department of Health (DOH)
5 issued the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the Mental Health
6 Act, providing essential guidance for its successful implementation. The IRR
7 emphasizes the significance of accessible, available, affordable, and
8 acceptable mental health services;

9

10 **WHEREAS**, on May 9, 2023, the Senate Committee on Health and
11 Demography, in conjunction with the Committee on Finance, conducted an
12 inquiry, in aid of legislation, to discuss updates on the implementation of the
13 Mental Health Act. During the said hearing, significant concerns were raised,
14 revealing inadequate provision of mental health care benefits and prevention
15 services, a distressing number of suicide cases, and substandard conditions
16 at the National Center for Mental Health (NCMH);⁵

17

18 **WHEREAS**, during the said inquiry, it was also highlighted by this
19 representation that in 2019, the NCMH received 3,125 calls, including 700
20 suicide-related calls, while the PSA recorded approximately 2,800 suicides in
21 the same year. In 2020, calls increased to 11,000, with suicide-related calls
22 rising to 2,800. Unfortunately, suicides doubled from 2,800 in 2019 to 4,400
23 in 2020. In 2021, calls further rose to 14,000, with 5,000 related to suicide—
24 almost seven times higher than in 2019;⁶

25

26 **WHEREAS**, notwithstanding the high demand for mental health
27 services, they remain inaccessible due to high costs. A recent study conducted
28 by the Harvard University's humanitarian research center revealed that high
29 treatment and service costs, coupled with stigma, act as barriers for Filipinos
30 seeking mental health care. 40% of mental health practitioners or providers

⁵ Transcript of the Senate Committee on Health and Demography, Public Hearing on Senate Bill Nos. 920, 1717, 2058, and 2062 and Senate Resolution No. 562, May 9, 2023, pp. 11-15

⁶ *Id.* at pp. 96-97, 168-171

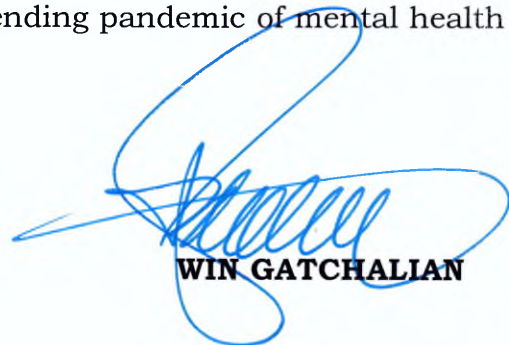
1 surveyed considered expensive treatment and services as the primary obstacle
2 to accessing mental health care in the country;⁷

3
4 **WHEREAS**, recent studies have noted that despite the initiation of
5 various national and local mental health response programs during the
6 COVID-19 pandemic in the country, these efforts were “sporadic”, “lacked a
7 strategic collaborative approach among stakeholders”, and “failed to provide
8 adequate social services and interventions”;^{8, 9}

9
10 **WHEREAS**, indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic is a wakeup call for public
11 mental health stakeholders and has underscored the urgent need to prioritize
12 public mental health services in the country. Consequently, a comprehensive
13 assessment of the current implementation of the Mental Health Act is
14 imperative;

15
16 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE**
17 **PHILIPPINES**, to direct the appropriate Senate Committee to conduct an
18 inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the status of the implementation of Republic
19 Act No. 11036, otherwise known as the “Mental Health Act”, for the purpose
20 of identifying the challenges in the delivery of mental health services,
21 evaluating the effectiveness of existing policies, and recommending policy and
22 legislative interventions to address an impending pandemic of mental health
23 in the country.

Adopted,



WIN GATCHALIAN

⁷ Bollettino, V., et al., (2023) COVID-19-related mental health challenges and opportunities perceived by mental health providers in the Philippines. *Asian Journal of Psychiatry*. See: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1876201823001338>

⁸ Yabut, H.J., et al., (2021) Setting up a COVID-19 Mental Health Response Strategy among Local Government Units. De La Salle University. See <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58ff0e1fa5790aa37e3fa35a/t/60ac718dbaaa1d400c051805/1621914041927/JRIG%2BPolicy%2BBrief%2BVolume%2B1%2BIssue%2B7.pdf>

⁹ Arevalo, Ma. V., et al., (2022). Addressing the gaps in the Philippine public mental health strategy. *Lancet Psychiatry*
See: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366\(22\)00040-2/fulltext#back-bib4](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(22)00040-2/fulltext#back-bib4)