



## **Senate bill seeks expansion of privileges for persons with disability**

By Franco Luna – November 21, 2022

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MANILA, Philippines — A new Senate bill is pushing for the expansion of the privileges afforded to persons with disabilities, including employers who choose to hire PWDs.

In filing Senate Bill No. 1433, Sen. Ramon "Bong" Revilla, chairperson of the Senate Committee on Civil Service, Government Reorganization and Professional Regulation, pointed out that the number of PWDs in the Philippines is steadily climbing.

Under the measure, incentives are given to employers who hire PWDs as regular employees, while PWDs are given a P500 monthly stipend provided they are not covered by any other government assistance program.

Should the proposal pass, private entities that employ PWDs as regular employees shall be entitled to an additional deduction from their gross income, equivalent to 50% of the total amount paid as salaries and wages to persons with disabilities

The Philippine Statistics Authority reported in May 2019 that per the results of its National Disability Prevalence Survey, in 2016, around 12% of Filipinos aged 15 and older experienced severe disability. Almost one in every two (47%) experienced moderate disability while 23% with mild disability.

Just one-fifth (19%) experienced no disability, according to the report.

### **Assistive devices, assistive technology services for PWDs**

Revilla, who also chairs the Senate public works panel, pushed for free assistive devices and assistive technology services in the workplace for PWDs, who are also exempt from passport processing fees.

Of note, the bill also crosses out any mention of "disabled persons" and refers to those in the sector as "persons with disability."

Though the last existing census on the disability community in the country was conducted in 2010, a 2017 study by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies of 1,031 adult women and 823 children with disabilities in two cities, majority of respondents were found to be mobility-impaired (39.7%).

In its report on the Philippines in 2018, the US State Department affirmed in its Country Reports on Human Rights Practices that "great majority of public buildings remained inaccessible to persons with physical disabilities" in the country.

A 2018 study by the University of the Philippines Center for Local and Regional Governance found that only six out of 10 local governments in the country had established a dedicated PWDs Affairs Office.

Last week, Sen. Mark Villar also filed Senate Bill No. 1446 making automated teller machines accessible to

visually-impaired individuals.

Sen. Jinggoy Estrada also filed Senate Bill No. 1442 providing equal cash incentives to national athletes and athletes with disabilities who win medals in international sports competitions.