

## Prompt payment for mental health workers eyed

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QUEZON City Rep. Patrick Michael Vargas is pushing for the enactment of a bill providing immediate compensation benefits to entitled mental health service users under Republic Act 11036 or the Mental Health Act.

Vargas filed House Bill 2789 seeking to amend RA 11036 by introducing a new provision on the Rights of Service Users that mandates the immediate release of compensation benefits and other special financial assistance should mental health service users sustain “temporary or permanent mental disability while in the performance of duty or by reason of his or her office or position.”

Vargas, vice chair of the House social services committee, said his bill sheds light on the struggles of Filipino workers and the risks that come with work-related stress, which according to experts can lead to several mental health problems such as depression or even dementia.

“Filipino workers are hardworking and resilient. Every blood, sweat, and tears they pour into a day’s work must be compensated with sufficient safeguards to protect their mental health and well-being,” Vargas said.

In 2021, the legislator noted the Department of Health (DOH) estimated that at least 3.6 million Filipinos are facing mental health issues during the pandemic, including depression, substance use disorders such as alcohol use disorder, and mood disorders like bipolar disorder.

About 1.14 million Filipinos have depression, 847,000 are battling alcohol-use disorders, while 520,000 others were diagnosed with bipolar disorder, according to the DOH’s Disease Prevention and Control Bureau.