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CITY ORDINANCE NO. _____

**DRAFT ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING AND INSTITUTIONALIZING THE
TUGUEGARAO CITY THERAPY, OPPORTUNITIES, AND UPLIFTMENT FOR
CHILDREN WITH HOLISTIC NEEDS (TOUCH) PROGRAM, PROVIDING FUNDS
THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

Authored by:

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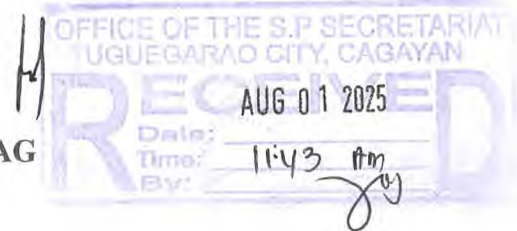
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WHEREAS, Section 13, Article II of the 1987 Philippine Constitution declares that the State recognizes the vital role of the youth in nation-building and shall promote and protect their physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual, and social well-being;

WHEREAS, Republic Act No. 7277, or the "Magna Carta for Disabled Persons," affirms the rights of persons with disabilities (PWDs) to comprehensive and accessible rehabilitation services;

WHEREAS, many underprivileged children in Tuguegarao City with developmental disabilities such as autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, intellectual disability, and others lack access to affordable therapy, education, and community inclusion programs;

WHEREAS, during the Executive Briefing of the City Government of Tuguegarao on July 30, 2025, among the areas of discussion of the City Mayor, Hon. Maila Rosario S. Ting-Que focused on programs which will aid and uplift the conditions of children with special needs and their parents, and to raise awareness on their treatment and other needs;

WHEREAS, it is imperative for the City Government of Tuguegarao to provide early intervention and long-term support to promote inclusive development, academic mainstreaming, and community empowerment;

NOW THEREFORE, be it **ORDAINED** by the 10th Sangguniang Panlungsod of Tuguegarao City, in session assembled:

SECTION 1. TITLE. This Ordinance shall be known as the **"TUGUEGARAO CITY PROJECT TOUCH ORDINANCE."**

SECTION 2. DECLARATION OF POLICY. It shall be the policy of the City Government of Tuguegarao to recognize, uphold, and promote the rights and welfare of children with special needs, particularly those from indigent families, through the provision of inclusive, community-based rehabilitation and development services that are aimed to provide adequate care, attention, and love. Towards this end, the City Government shall strengthen efforts for children with special needs by institutionalizing "Project T.O.U.C.H." or the "Therapy, Opportunities, and Upliftment of Children with Holistic Needs", and shall implement programs for them that is child-focused and appropriate for children with special needs.

SECTION 3. DEFINITION OF TERMS. When used under this Ordinance, the following terms shall mean:

- a) **Children with Special Needs** – refers to children who have been diagnosed or are suspected of having developmental, intellectual, sensory, neurological, or behavioral conditions such as, but not limited to, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, intellectual disability, speech and language delays, and other learning or developmental differences that may affect their ability to fully participate in conventional learning environments without additional support.
- b) **Holistic Needs** – refers to the comprehensive and interconnected needs of children with special needs, encompassing not only their physical and medical requirements but also their cognitive, emotional, social, behavioral, psychological, educational, and, where applicable, spiritual well-being.
- c) **Therapy** – refers to rehabilitative services provided by licensed professionals such as speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, and physical therapists, aimed at improving the child's functional abilities, communication skills, motor coordination, and independence.
- d) **Early Intervention** – refers to timely and structured programs or services provided to children aged 0–7 years (or beyond if appropriate) to address developmental delays and enhance their ability to reach developmental milestones, thereby minimizing long-term impacts of their conditions.
- e) **Special Education (SPED)** – refers to customized instructional programs and services designed to meet the individual educational needs of children with disabilities, including Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and the use of appropriate strategies, tools, or settings for learning.
- f) **Community Rehabilitation and Education Workers (CREWs)** – refers to trained barangay health workers, parents, or volunteers who provide basic rehabilitation, learning support, and outreach services under the supervision of qualified professionals, as part of the T.O.U.C.H. Program's grassroots implementation strategy.
- g) **Outreach Services** – refers to home-based or community-based services including screening, monitoring, referrals, and guidance provided to children with special needs and their families, especially those who are unable to regularly access the T.O.U.C.H. Center.
- h) **Inclusion** – refers to the process and goal of ensuring that children with special needs participate fully in the life of their communities—including schools, recreation, and social environments—on an equal basis with others, with reasonable accommodations provided as necessary.
- i) **Indigent** – refers to individuals or families who do not have sufficient income or resources to access basic social services, as determined and certified by the barangay and validated by the City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO).

SECTION 4. CREATION OF THE TOUCH PROGRAM. There is hereby established the "Therapy, Opportunities, and Upliftment of Children with Holistic Needs (T.O.U.C.H.) Program", under the supervision of the City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO), in partnership with accredited non-government organizations (NGOs), medical professionals such as but not limited to developmental pediatricians, schools, and community volunteers.

SECTION 5. OBJECTIVES. The T.O.U.C.H. Program shall have the following objectives:

- a) Provide free diagnostic, therapeutic, educational, and rehabilitation services to children with special needs
- b) Promote early detection, intervention, and developmental monitoring
- c) Train parents, caregivers, and volunteers for inclusive care
- d) Mainstream eligible children into regular academic and community settings
- e) Build awareness and reduce stigma on childhood disability within the community

SECTION 6. SERVICES OFFERED. The T.O.U.C.H. Program shall offer the following services:

- a) Developmental screening and diagnostics
- b) Speech, occupational, and physical therapy
- c) SPED tutorials and individualized education programs (IEPs)
- d) Parental coaching and psychological counseling
- e) Training of Community Rehabilitation and Education Workers or Volunteers (CREWs)
- f) Raise awareness among citizens, government employees, teachers, barangay officials and workers, and other volunteers how to identify and handle children suspected of having special needs
- g) Outreach, home visits, and referrals to partner agencies and NGOs
- h) Volunteer-led support services and community inclusion projects

SECTION 7. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA. For an applicant to be eligible for the benefits and services provided under the TOUCH Program, the applicant must be a resident of Tuguegarao City for at least six (6) months from the time of application, with apparent developmental delay or disability. Indigent or low-income household as certified by the barangay and CSWDO shall be prioritized.

SECTION 8. TOUCH CENTER. A central TOUCH Center shall be created or determined by the City Social Welfare and Development Office to house therapy rooms, diagnostic clinics, SPED tutorial areas, and community learning spaces. Satellite centers may be established in major barangays or clustered districts, subject to availability of space and funding.

SECTION 9. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND VOLUNTEERISM. The CSWDO shall recruit and train Community Rehabilitation and Education Workers (CREWs) from among qualified barangay health workers, parents, and volunteers. Beneficiary parents shall be encouraged to render community service hours to help sustain the program's operations.

SECTION 10. FUNDING AND APPROPRIATIONS. The initial funding for the implementation of the TOUCH Program shall be sourced from the Annual Executive Budget of Tuguegarao City, subject to the availability of funds in accordance with established legal precepts.

The City may also enter into partnerships with private foundations, government agencies, and international donors to supplement program needs.

SECTION 11. IMPLEMENTING RULES AND REGULATIONS (IRR). Within ninety (90) days from approval of this Ordinance, the City Social Welfare and Development Office, in coordination with the Office of the City Mayor, shall formulate the necessary IRRs for effective implementation.

SECTION 12. MONITORING AND EVALUATION. The CSWDO shall submit an annual report to the Sangguniang Panlungsod, including the number of beneficiaries served, program outcomes, and recommendations for enhancement.

SECTION 13. SEPARABILITY CLAUSE. If any provision of this Ordinance is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 14. REPEALING CLAUSE. All ordinances, rules, and regulations inconsistent with this Ordinance are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

SECTION 15. EFFECTIVITY. This Ordinance shall be effective upon its approval and upholding of its validity by the Sangguniang Panlalawigan.