

## CARING FOR EDUCATORS, CARING FOR LEARNERS: TEACHERS' VIEWS ON THE WELLNESS LEAVE POLICY

*by:*

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The recent approval of the Wellness Leave Policy (WLP) by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) marks a significant milestone in promoting the holistic well-being of government employees, including teachers. This initiative is welcomed by teachers as both necessary and timely, recognizing the immense responsibilities that come with the teaching profession.

Teaching is often described as a vocation of the heart. Yet, behind the dedication and passion lies the reality of long hours, heavy workloads, and emotional demands. From lesson planning and classroom management to administrative tasks and community involvement, teachers carry responsibilities that extend far beyond the classroom walls.

Moreover, studies have shown that Filipino workers rank among the highest in stress levels in Southeast Asia. According to the Gallup Survey 2021 on Southeast Asia Countries Stress levels, at 50 percent, worker stress in the Philippines was the highest in Southeast Asia in 2021. (Dela Pena, 2022) Likewise, the Philippines ranked second when it comes to daily sadness, ranked third on daily anger, and ranked seventh in Southeast Asia on daily worry,

In relation, stress for teachers may cause by the expectation of the society to nurture not only the academic growth but also the emotional and social development of students. Hence, the Wellness Leave Policy acknowledges this reality that teachers, like all public servants, are not machines but human beings who need rest, renewal, and care.

The additional five-day leave dedicated to wellness provides teachers with opportunities to have the time to pause, reflect, and seek professional or personal support when needed. Physically, they can engage in activities such as exercise, medical check-ups, or simply rest to restore energy. Lastly, teachers can reconnect with family, pursue hobbies, or engage in spiritual practices. This policy is not just about days off—it is about valuing the humanity of teachers and ensuring that their well-being translates into more effective service to learners.

Ultimately, the Wellness Leave Policy serves as a powerful reminder that the health of teachers is not a privilege but a fundamental need. When educators are given the chance to rest and restore, they return to the classroom with renewed vitality, creativity, and compassion—qualities that enrich not only their own lives but also the learning experiences of students, the support of parents, and the strength of the wider school community.

#### *References:*

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