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SENATE
S. No. 269

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Introduced by Senator Manuel "Lito" M. Lapid

AN ACT
INSTITUTIONALIZING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TERTIARY CARE
HOSPITALS IN ALL REGIONS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the fore the existing gaps and problems that beset our country's health care system. With the growth in the number of infected persons, hospitals and other health facilities even in the National Capital Region reached their full capacities¹. During the initial days of the pandemic, we only have the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine as the sole confirmatory testing laboratory for the virus in the whole Philippines². The situation is even worse in the provinces. Already a month into the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ), for the whole of Mindanao, testing for COVID-19 can only be done at the Southern Philippines Medical Center in Davao City³. For Visayas area, there are only two testing laboratories: Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center in Cebu and Western Visayas Medical Center in Iloilo⁴. The prognosis for our health care system, as revealed by

¹ Yamsuan, Cathy Canares and Jovic Yee. *5 Metro Manila hospitals reach full capacity for COVID-19 cases*. Inquirer.net (25 March 2020). Retrieved from: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1247913/5-metro-hospitals-reach-full-capacity-for-covid-19-cases>

² Modesto, Catherine. *How COVID-19 testing is conducted in PH*. CNN Philippines. (20 March 2020). Retrieved from: <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/3/20/coronavirus-testing-in-philippines.html>

³ Colina, Antonio IV. *RITM plans to capacitate DavNor hospital for testing of COVID-19*. Minda News. (15 April 2020). Retrieved from: <https://www.mindanews.com/top-stories/2020/04/ritm-plans-to-capacitate-davnor-hospital-for-testing-of-covid-19/>

⁴ *16 laboratories now testing for COVID-19*. CNN Philippines. (15 April 2020). Retrieved from: <https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/4/15/16-laboratories-now-testing-for-COVID-19.html>

how we responded to this pandemic, is bleak – it is in bad shape and is in dire need of upgrading.

According to the 2019 DOH Hospitals Profile, the National Capital Region has the most tertiary care DOH hospital with 16. Regions I, II, and III have three each. Regions V, VI, VII, and XI have two each. Regions IV-A, VIII, IX, X, XII, and CAR have only one. Region IV-B and XIII do not have a level 3 hospital.⁵

Ang layunin po natin ay hindi na kailanganin ng ating mga kababayan na pumunta pa sa Metro Manila o sa malalayong lugar mula sa kanila upang makatanggap ng serbisyo ng tertiary hospital. Sa ganito po ay makababawas na po sa gastos nila at mapapalaki pa po lalo ang pagkakataon na maagapan ang kanilang karamdaman dahil po may agarang lunas na higit na malapit sa kanilang pamayanan.

One way that we can improve its ailing condition is to build and establish more hospitals all over the country, specifically new hospitals which are classified as tertiary care facilities. The mission is not only to give universal access to health care, but to give universal access to a health care institution with world-class quality medical services and are at par with international standards and best practices. This proposed measure envisions that all of the regions will have their own tertiary care hospitals within five (5) years from its effectivity, with top priority being given to regions which do not have any regional hospital of whatever classification lower than tertiary care.

This bill also provides that provinces which are geographically isolated from their region's tertiary care hospital such as island provinces shall have the priority for the establishment of a tertiary care hospital of their own. To ease the budgetary burden to the government, new facilities need not be constructed for areas which already have regional hospitals – instead they shall only be considered for upgrading, modernization and conversion to a tertiary care hospital. With this program, our constituents in the provinces will no longer have to travel all the way to Metro Manila or the highly urbanized cities of neighboring regions in order to attend to their medical needs.

⁵ DOH Hospitals Profile. Retrieved from:

https://doh.gov.ph/sites/default/files/publications/DOH-Hospitals-Profile_0.pdf

In view of this, early passage of this bill is sought.



MANUEL "LITO" M. LAPID
Senator



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*Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines
in Congress assembled:*

1 SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as "Regional Tertiary Care
2 Hospitals Act."

3 Section 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared as the policy of the
4 State to adopt an integrated and comprehensive approach to health development,
5 which shall be available and accessible to all the people at affordable cost. Towards
6 this end, the Philippine health delivery system must be reformed and modernized in
7 order for it to be available, accessible and affordable pursuant to the common goal of
8 bringing universal health care for Filipinos.

9 Section 3. *Establishment of Tertiary Care Hospitals in All Regions.* – Within five
10 (5) years from the effectivity of this Act, all regions must have at least one (1) tertiary
11 care hospital operating within its territorial jurisdiction. The Department of Health
12 (DOH) must formulate a prioritization plan for the purpose of implementing this Act,
13 subject to the following priority considerations:

- 14 a. Regions which do not have a tertiary care hospitals;
15 b. Regions with provinces with significant population but which are
16 geographically isolated (e.g. island provinces);
17 c. Regions with low population-to-tertiary care hospital ratio; and

1 d. Regions with existing level 2 hospitals that could be considered for
2 upgrading, modernization and conversion to a tertiary care hospital.

3 Section 4. *Audit and Inventory of Regional Hospitals.* – Within six (6) months
4 from the promulgation of the implementing rules and regulations of this Act, an audit
5 and inventory of the physical facilities, equipment and instruments as well as the
6 personnel of the Regional Hospitals shall be conducted to determine the present
7 classification of the respective regional hospitals. The result of the audit and inventory
8 shall be the basis of the respective upgrade and modernization plan for each Regional
9 Hospital.

10 Section 5. *Appropriations.* - The amount necessary for the implementation of
11 this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations of the Department of
12 Health.

13 Section 6. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within sixty (60) days from
14 the effectivity of this Act, the Department of Health, in coordination with other relevant
15 government agencies, shall issue the necessary rules and regulations to implement
16 the provisions of this Act.

17 Section 7. *Repealing Clause.* — All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders,
18 proclamations, rules and regulations, or any part thereof, which are inconsistent with
19 the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

20 Section 8. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part of this Act, or the
21 application thereof to any person or circumstance, is held unconstitutional or invalid,
22 the remainder of this Act shall not be affected thereby.

23 Section 9. *Effectivity Clause.* — This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days from
24 its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general
25 circulation.

26 *Approved,*