

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City



THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

First Regular Session

House Bill No. 704

Introduced by REP. JUDY J. SYJUCO

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The outbreak of a mysterious ailment called "Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome" (SARS) also tagged as "killer pneumonia," raises worldwide panic. The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared SARS as "a worldwide health threat" that already claimed the lives of at least 333 people and sickened about 5,100 others worldwide.

The mysterious respiratory ailment believed to have first broken out in Guangdong province, China last November has spread in more than 20 countries including the Philippines, through international travel;

The World Health Organization announced that Vietnam has become the first country to contain SARS after it sealed off the Hanoi Hospital where its main outbreak occurred. A total of 63 people have become ill with SARS and five have died. The WHO added that SARS has peaked in many places, but fears the crisis is worsening in China.

In the Philippines, there are three cases of SARS, from which, Adela Catalon and her father did not survive, the sad fate of this deadly illness. Spread of SARS infection in the country can be seized through swift, decisive and vigilant action by our government and our people. In declaring Vietnam free of SARS, the WHO relied on the time-tested rule of thumb used by epidemiologists that state: an epidemic is over if no cases occur in a time span that is double the longest known incubation period of the disease, in the case of SARS, a 10-day incubation period.

According to the World Health Organization, Vietnam had conquered the deadly disease by identifying and isolating cases promptly, tracing their contacts, protecting medical workers, isolating suspected cases, screening travelers and quickly sharing with other governments.

This proposed bill seeks to institute policies and measures to immediately control, prevent and treat SARS through the implementation of a comprehensive information and education campaign; establishment of a SARS Isolation Center and Airport Quarantine Area; and the creation of a Philippine National SARS Council.

As proposed in this bill, a comprehensive SARS monitoring program or "BANTAY SARS" shall be likewise established under the Department of Health to determine and

monitor the magnitude and progression of SARS infection in the Philippines, and for the purpose of evaluating the adequacy and efficacy of the countermeasures being employed.

The bill likewise proposes a system for reporting procedures and contact tracing vis-a-vis other related health intelligence activities by the Department of Health. To implement the provisions of this proposed measure, a SARS Crisis Fund will be created, allocation and source to be determined and approved by the President of the Philippines upon recommendation by the Secretary of the Department of Health.

Hence, in view of the crisis situation and the urgency of control and preventive measures against SARS, immediate approval of this bill is earnestly sought.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Judy Syjuko', with a stylized flourish at the end.

JUDY J. SYJUCO

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AN ACT
INSTITUTING POLICIES AND MEASURES FOR THE PREVENTION, CONTROL
AND TREATMENT OF SEVERE ACUTE RESPIRATORY SYNDROME (SARS),
PROVIDING FUNDS THEREOF, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

SECTION 1. Title. – This Act shall be known as the “Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) Prevention, Control and Treatment Act of 2004.”

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policies. - Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) is a mysterious respiratory disease that threaten lives of the Filipino people and causes death in a very short period of days. The gravity of SARS threat demands strong State action today, thus:

- a) The State shall promote public awareness about the nature, causes and mode of transmission, consequences, means of prevention and control of SARS through a comprehensive nationwide education and information campaign, which shall be carried out in all barangays, schools, hospitals and workplaces;
- b) The State shall extend to every person suspected or known to be infected with SARS full protection of his/her human rights and civil liberties;
- c) The State shall promote utmost safety and universal precautions in hospital, clinic and laboratory procedures and in the travel (including domestic) and arrival from other countries of persons that carry the risk of SARS transmission.

SECTION 3. SARS Information and Education Campaign. – A comprehensive information and education campaign shall be conducted nationwide in the following areas and concerns:

- a) *Barangays.* - Local government units, in collaboration with the Department of Health (DOH), shall conduct an educational and information campaign on the nature, causes and prevention of SARS. The provincial governor, city or municipal mayor and the barangay chairman shall coordinate such campaign among other concerned government agencies, non-governmental organization, private sector and church-based groups.

- b) *Workplace* - All government and private employees, workers, managers and supervisors, including members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP), shall be provided with the standardized basic information and instruction on SARS. In collaboration with the Department of Health (DOH), the Secretary of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) shall oversee the SARS info campaign in all private companies while the DOH shall coordinate with the different heads of government agencies to monitor the education campaign in the government sector. The AFP Chief of Staff and the PNP Director General shall oversee the implementation of the campaign in the ranks of uniformed personnel.
- c) *Secondary and Tertiary Schools* – The Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), utilizing official information provided by the Department of Health, shall integrate instruction on the causes, modes of transmission and ways of preventing SARS in subjects taught in public and private schools at intermediate grades, secondary and tertiary levels.
- d) *Health Service* – SARS education and information dissemination shall form part of the delivery of health services by health practitioners, workers and personnel.
- e) *Filipinos Going to Other Countries* - The State shall ensure that all Filipino workers and diplomatic, military, trade, and labor officials and personnel to be assigned to other countries shall undergo or attend a seminar on the cause and prevention of SARS before certification for overseas assignment. It shall likewise apply to any individual scheduled to go to other countries for any personal or official reasons. The Department of Labor and Employment or the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Tourism and the Department of Justice through the Bureau of Immigration, as the case may be, in collaboration with the Department of Health, shall oversee the implementation of this section.

SECTION 4. SARS Isolation Center and Airport Quarantine Area – There shall be established a National SARS Isolation Center to be identified and maintained by the Department of Health. The Provincial Governor in collaboration with the DOH shall likewise identify and maintain a Provincial SARS Isolation Center. Funding requirement for the equipments and maintenance of the National and Provincial SARS Isolation Center shall be subsidized by the SARS Crisis Fund.

The SARS Isolation Center shall serve as the quarantine and treatment center for SARS infected persons.

There shall be established an Airport Quarantine Area in the Ninoy Aquino International Airport that will implement a mandatory quarantine for arriving passengers to detect if such passenger is contaminated with SARS. Provided, that travel records of persons subject to quarantine will show that they either stay, visit or pass thru countries identified as SARS affected area. The Bureau of Immigration in collaboration with the Manila International Airport Authority shall implement the quarantine procedures as provided in this section and to issue clearance for every subject passenger.

SECTION 5. The Philippine National SARS Council – There shall be created a Philippine National SARS Council to oversee an integrated and comprehensive approach to SARS prevention and control in the Philippines. The Council shall be directly under the Office of the President and to be headed by the Secretary of the Department of Health.

The Council shall be composed of the following:

1. The Secretary of the Department of Health as Chairman
2. The Secretary of the Department of Labor and Employment as Vice-Chairman
3. The Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs as Vice-Chairman
4. The Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development or his representative as member
5. The Secretary of the Department of Education or his representative as member
6. The Secretary of the Department of Interior and Local Government or his representative as member
7. The Secretary of the Department of Justice or his representative as member
8. The Secretary of the Department of Tourism or his representative as member
9. The Head of the Philippine Information Agency
10. The President of the League of Governors
11. The President of the League of City Mayors

SECTION 6. The Council shall be the sole and central advisory, planning and policy-making body for the comprehensive and integrated SARS prevention, control and treatment program in the Philippines. The Council shall perform the following functions:

- a) The Council shall issue implementing rules and regulation of this Act based on recommendations of the different government agencies concerned;
- b) To institute a nationwide SARS information and education program
- c) Establishment of a comprehensive SARS monitoring system including but not limited to the monitoring of the implementation of the rules and regulations of this Act;
- d) Develop a comprehensive long term national SARS prevention, control and treatment program;
- e) Issuance of other pertinent guidelines necessary for the implementation of this Act;
- f) Coordinate activities and strengthen working relationships between government and non-government agencies involved in the campaign against SARS;
- g) Coordinate and cooperate with foreign and international organizations regarding data collection, research and treatment modalities concerning SARS.

SECTION 7. Monitoring Program – A comprehensive SARS monitoring program or “BANTAY SARS” shall be established under the Department of Health to determine and monitor the magnitude and progression of HIV infection in the Philippines, and for the purpose of evaluating the adequacy and efficacy of the countermeasures being employed.

SECTION 8. Reporting Procedures. – All hospitals, clinics, laboratories, and testing centers for SARS shall adopt measures in assuring the reporting and confidentiality of any medical record, personal data, and other files. The Department of Health through its “BANTAY SARS” monitoring program shall receive, collate and

evaluate all SARS related medical reports. The "BANTAY SARS" data base shall utilize a coding system that promotes anonymity.

SECTION 9. Contact Tracing – SARS contact tracing and other related health intelligence activities shall be conducted by the Department of Health. Provided, That any information gathered shall remain confidential and classified, and can only be used for statistical and monitoring purposes.

SECTION 10. SARS Crisis Fund – For purposes of this Act, there shall be created a SARS Crisis Fund to be determined and approved by the President of the Philippines upon recommendation by the Secretary of the Department of Health.

SECTION 11. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in two (2) national newspapers of general circulation. The publication shall not be later than seven (7) days after approval hereof.

Approved,