

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

THIRTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 1343

Introduced by **REP. JUAN MIGUEL F. ZUBIRI**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Eight years since Republic Act 7719, otherwise known as the National Blood Services Act of 1994, the country has not yet succeeded in fully thwarting commercialism of blood supply. The Philippines is one among a few countries in Asia where commercial blood is still available.

The Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC), as an auxiliary to the government, has been an active partner in its promotion of health and welfare service since 1947. Its Blood Program (now called Blood Services) was the main provider of volunteer-sourced blood until about 5 years ago when hospital-based blood banks started proliferating. RA 7719 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) state PNRC's role in the implementation of the National Voluntary Blood Services Program as follows: lead the promotion of voluntary blood donation through public education, donor recruitment, form part in the network of blood service facilities that will provide safe blood, participate in the monitoring and evaluation of the Program. The importance of these roles make PNRC a member of the tripartite group, together with the Department of Health and the Philippine Blood Coordinating Council, that will help ensure that the country's blood supply is adequate and safe to every patient who will undergo blood transfusion or will require blood products.

Providing safe blood, however, is not without cost. Blood bank supplies, composed mostly of blood bags and reagents, comprise the biggest cost. At the PNRC, supplies which include materials to test for transfusion-transmitted infections (malaria, syphilis, hepatitis B, HIV, and hepatitis C) account for 65% of the total cost of one unit of blood, or approximately P500.00/unit. If one considers other maintenance and operating costs (repair and maintenance of blood bank equipment; electricity to run equipment such as blood collection, transportation, personnel and other administrative costs, and capital costs for the continuous upgrading of blood service facilities), the present allowable blood service fee of P700.00-P800.00 per unit can barely sustain the operation of any blood service facility. A comparison of blood service fees with other countries shows that the

Philippines charges the cheapest among the countries in the Western Pacific Region. For an organization like the PNRC which caters to charity patients who can pay only a part of the blood service fee, sustaining blood bank operations is difficult to maintain. Providing an average of 112,000 units of blood annually required the additional support from government and non-government agencies.

Every year, the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office allocates P12,000,000.00 and the Department of Health, approximately P8,000,000.00. Together, these funds constitute 50% of the fund source of the PNRC Blood Services, with the remaining 50% coming from Blood Service Fees. Such allocation is a product, however, of painstaking request and long agony of waiting which leads to unavailability of blood bank supplies especially in the first half of the year. Cuts in the budget of these agencies and other priorities of these agencies also affect negatively the amount to be allocated to PNRC. The uncertainties of being able to get funds result to lag in the implementation of yearly action plans to increase blood collection. How can PNRC continue to institute quality assurance procedures, implement developmental plans to cope with the advances in blood banking if it cannot even be assured of supplies to meet basic requirements for blood safety.

The final responsibility for every country's blood programme rests with the government and government support for such type of programme should offer stability. In every country where the Red Cross/Red Crescent Society plays a role in part or in whole in the provision of blood, the Society will not be able to do its part without the support of the government. Such support has enabled the sustainability of Blood Programmes in countries such as Japan, Thailand, Australia, HongKong, New Zealand, Korea and India.

To increase blood collection (quantity) that will fill the gap between demand for and supply of safe blood requires increasing costs. To provide quality blood requires a greater cost. Both are necessary in saving and protecting lives.

The necessity of establishing a special fund, therefore, to assist the PNRC in its operational and developmental activities is a matter that needs serious consideration.

Approval of this Bill is earnestly sought.

JUAN MIGUEL F. ZUBIRI
Representative
3rd District, Bukidnon

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AN ACT
CREATING A SPECIAL FUND FOR THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL RED CROSS BLOOD SERVICES

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

SECTION 1. There is hereby declared a policy to assist the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) Blood Services in providing an adequate supply of safe blood for charity patients and in upgrading its Blood Service Facilities in line with Quality Management within the resources of the National Government.

SECTION 2. A Special Fund in the amount of P50,000,000.00 is hereby appropriated to come from the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (P20,000,000.00) and the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (P20,000,000.00) and the National Treasury through the Department of Health (P10,000,000.00) to be used by the Philippine National Red Cross Blood Services in carrying out activities for public education, donor recruitment, donor screening, blood collection, blood testing, component preparation, and quality assurance in blood banking.

SECTION 3. The equivalent amount shall be made available to the PNRC as a monthly allocation.

SECTION 4. The PNRC shall utilize the amount to recover costs associated with providing blood to charity/indigent patients. A maximum of 10% of the amount may be used to pay for capital expenses such as vehicles for blood collection and blood distribution, computers for donor database, and other blood bank equipment for quality assurance. Pay patients shall be charged Blood Service Fees to help ensure sustainability. PNRC may continue to solicit additional funds to augment resources made available to the PNRC.

SECTION 5. In coordination with the Department of Health and the hospitals, government or private, PNRC shall provide annually a minimum of 170,000 units of blood, completely processed in accordance with the standards set by the Department of Health.

SECTION 6. Penalties - Any employee or official of the PNRC who misrepresents, misuses, or diverts the funds for the Blood Services for private gain or pecuniary interest shall be fined one hundred thousand pesos (P100,000.00) and imprisoned for at least six (6) months without the benefit of probation.

SECTION 7. This Act shall take effect after thirty (30) days following its publication in the Official Gazette or in any newspaper of general circulation.

Approved.