Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City,

THIRTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session



HOUSE BILL NO. 1765

Introduced by: **REP. PROSPERO A. PICHAY, JR.**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

In an age when medical breakthroughs are as common as catching colds, it is lamentable that health care services have yet to reach every nook and cranny of the 7,100+ island Philippine archipelago. Out of the 1,525 municipalities nationwide, about 18% or some 275 towns do not have a single doctor. More staggering is the fact that there are only 1,738 hospitals nationwide to cater to the medical needs of the estimated 68 million Filipinos today. It is no wonder why six out of ten deaths in the country are not medically-attended.

This bill proposes the establishment of a floating medical center which shall be jointly operated and maintained by the Philippine Navy and the Department of Health. The vessel will follow an itinerary and schedule of medical visits to the different provinces, municipalities and cities throughout the country wherein local patients requiring hospitalization and/or special medical services who cannot be given such adequate services in their local hospitals shall be referred by the latter to, and attended by the floating medical staff.

Provinces classified by the National Economic Development Authority as the most depressed, disadvantaged, and underserved shall be given top priority and if the need arises, the vessel may be rerouted from its scheduled route to provinces declared as calamity areas by the National Disaster Coordinating Council.

The proposed medical center shall sail only within the territorial jurisdiction of the Philippines and may dock in any part of the country where vessels/boats are authorized to dock under the customs and maritime laws.

Under this proposed measure, the Secretary of Health is mandated to negotiate and/or accept donations or grants from any person, natural or juridical, domestic or foreign, for the establishment of the Center and its subsequent improvement, or addition to its facilities geared at modernization. He/she is authorized to coordinate with medical groups, domestic or foreign, for support and assistance in the form of medical supplies and equipment, and special medical missions.

The bill likewise embodies a provision for the establishment of a *balikbayan* program for Filipino medical practitioners abroad who may be given special incentives in exchange for free medical services to be conducted aboard the Center for a certain number of days.

As envisioned, the Center shall accommodate medical interns and visiting medical practitioners, both domestic and foreign, to complement the Center's regular staff on a voluntary basis.

This proposed measure was originally conceived by the US-based Physicians for Peace and Physicians for Peace-Philippines, a group of world-renown medical specialists who have committed to extend full support and assistance to the Philippine government particularly in obtaining a serviceable vessel which shall serve as the floating medical center.

For a people increasingly becoming susceptible to diseases such as dengue, malaria, tuberculosis, and for a nation of 4.5 million malnourished schoolchildren, the need to enact this bill has never been more urgent than today.

PROSPERO A. PICHAY, JR.



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AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A FLOATING MEDICAL CENTER TO BE KNOWN AS THE PHILIPPINE FLOATING MEDICAL CENTER AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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

SECTION 1. There is hereby established a floating medical center to be known as the Philippine Floating Medical Center, hereinafter referred to as the Center.

The Center shall be headed by a Medical Director who is a duly licensed physician and shall be appointed by the Secretary of Health.

SEC. 2. The Philippine Navy and the Department of Health shall jointly maintain and operate the Center within the territorial jurisdiction of the Republic of the Philippines. It shall have the right to dock the Center in any part of the Philippines where vessels/boats are authorized to dock under the Customs and Maritime Laws.

The medical specialists and staff of the Center, both regular and visiting, shall not only provide medical services on board the Center but may also conduct medical consultations and operations in local hospitals and/or clinics within the vicinity of the pier/harbor where the Center is moored.

SEC. 3. The Flag Officer-in-Command of the Philippine Navy and the Secretary of Health shall be authorized to fix, or revise, the itinerary and schedule of the Center's medical visits to the different provinces, municipalities and cities throughout

the country; *Provided, That,* provinces classified by the National Economic Development Authority as the most depressed, disadvantaged, and underserved shall be given top priority; *Provided, Further That,* the Center may be rerouted from its scheduled route to provinces declared as calamity areas by the National Disaster Coordinating Council.

SEC. 4. All patients requiring hospitalization and/or special medical services who cannot be given such adequate services in their local hospitals shall be referred by the latter to, and attended by the Center.

SEC. 5. Patients who can afford to pay the cost of hospitalization and/or medical treatment extended to them shall be required to do so. Indigents who are not members of any health insurance program shall not be required to pay the cost of hospitalization and/or medical services rendered; *Provided, That* the Center shall ensure that they are subsequently enrolled in the national health insurance program. The patient's capacity to pay or their state of indigence shall be determined by the Center.

SEC. 6. The organization and management of the Center shall be subject to the rules and regulations to be issued by the Secretary of Health: *Provided, That,* the Center shall admit interns and visiting medical practitioners, domestic and foreign, as its facilities may permit, on a voluntary basis.

SEC. 7. The Secretary of Health shall endeavor to negotiate and/or accept donations or grants from any person, natural or juridical domestic or foreign, for the establishment of the Center and its subsequent improvement, or addition to its facilities geared at modernization. Toward this end, he/she shall coordinate with medical groups, domestic or foreign, for support and assistance in the form of medical supplies and equipment, and special medical missions.

He/she shall establish a *balikbayan* program for Filipino medical practitioners abroad who may be given special incentives in exchange for free medical services to be conducted aboard the Center for a certain number of days.

SEC. 8. The sum of fifty million pesos (P50,000,000) is hereby authorized to be charged against the current year's appropriation of the Contingent Fund for the initial expense of the Center. Thereafter, there shall be appropriated annually under the budget of the Department of Health.

SEC. 9. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

Approved,