

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

THIRTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 2349

INTRODUCED BY HON. FERJENEL G. BIRON, M.D.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Our government nowadays is at the forefront battling the growing sentiment of the poor that they are being neglected. Many of them die of sickness not because their illnesses are terminal but because they can hardly afford the medicines they need to restore their health. While our constitution upholds health as a right of all Filipino citizens, the sad reality is that health has become a privilege only the well heeled have access to. The financial handicap of the poor meanwhile becomes more unbearable in times of illness.

The greatest wealth of a nation is its people. Thus, the government shall ensure that no one sick will be deprived his right to medical attention including the supply of medicines despite his financial status. We have constitutional directives to reduce economic inequalities, to endeavor to provide medical care to paupers. The Filipino populace deserves a concrete action. Those who have less in life should have a little more in medicines when they get sick.

The "Free Medicines for the Poor Act" is an effective measure to counter the inaccessibility of medicines to our underprivileged and impoverished constituents. It seeks to bridge the growing gap between health and poverty by providing the poor medicines that would help them remain healthy. It will also offset the emergent alienation of the poor to the State as this bill addresses their primary need for health care.

The approval of this bill, once and for all, will prove that ours is a government that cares.



FERJENEL G. BIRON, M.D.
Representative, 4th District of Iloilo

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AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A FREE MEDICINE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR THE
POOR AND PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR

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

SECTION 1. Title - This Act shall be known as the "Free
Medicines for the Poor Act."

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy - It is hereby the policy of the
state to protect and promote the right to health and well-being of
every Filipino and to adopt a system of implementing the delivery of
free medicines to those who have less in life, giving priority to the
ailing, the malnourished, the elderly, the disabled and the poorest of
the poor.

SECTION 3. Objectives. In consonance with the foregoing
policies, the State shall pursue the following objectives:

- (a) Establish a Free Medicine Assistance Program for the Poor
- (b) Maximize efforts to ensure that the medicine needs of the
poor are properly met
- (c) Ensure that the free medicines provided in this Program are
availed only by qualified recipients who shall be limited to
the underprivileged, the ailing, the malnourished, the elderly
and the disabled.

**SECTION 4. Establishment of Free Medicine Assistance
Program.** There is hereby established a Free Medicine Assistance
Program, hereinafter referred to as the "Program," to be administered
by the Department of Health (DOH) through district hospitals and
health centers in all municipalities, in coordination with the
Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

SECTION 5. Eligible Beneficiaries - The program shall be restricted to qualified recipients to be identified by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) . The implementing rules and regulations shall guarantee that the intended beneficiaries come from the ranks of the poorest of the poor, the Program being strictly a poor-oriented measure. For purposes of this Act, the poorest of the poor refers to a household whose monthly income is less than Three Thousand Pesos (P 3,000.00).

SECTION 6. Availment of Free Medicines - The medicines shall be availed from district hospitals and local health units. All medicines which will be released to qualified recipients shall be accounted for through a quarterly report to be submitted at the Department of Health National Office.

SECTION 7. Appropriations - There is hereby appropriated the sum of Five Hundred Million Pesos (P500,000,000.00) to fund the initial requirements of this Act. The National Government shall subsequently include in the budget of the Department of Health in the General Appropriations Act such amount as may be necessary to carry out the objectives of this Act within six (6) months from the effectivity hereof.

SECTION 8. Rules and Regulations - The DOH, along with the DSWD, shall prescribe such rules and regulations as may be necessary to carry out the provision of this Act within six (6) months from the effectivity hereof.

SECTION 9. Repealing Clause - All provisions of laws, orders, decrees, including rules and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed and/or modified accordingly.

SECTION 10. Separability Clause - If any part or provision of this Act shall be held to be unconstitutional or invalid, other provisions hereof which are not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SECTION 11. Effectivity - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days followings its publication in one (1) national newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,