

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila



THIRTEENTH CONGRESS
Third Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 5719

Introduced by Representative Anna York P. Bondoc, MD

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to promote awareness on breastfeeding amongst couples seeking to get married, by mandating that all applicants for a marriage license receive instructions and information relative to breastfeeding and infant nutrition.

The backbone of a healthy nation is built on healthy infants and children. While building awareness on family planning and responsible parenthood is a step in the right direction towards such goal, a targeted and specific campaign must likewise be launched so that persons in the best position to ensure the health of Filipino children are equipped with accurate and updated information.

The 2002 Global Strategy on Infant and Young Child Feeding (Global Strategy) developed jointly by the World Health Organization and United Nations Children's Educational Fund recommends that all infants 0-6 months should be exclusively breastfed and that the same continue up to 2 years of age and even beyond. Similarly, the United Nations Children's Educational Fund has found that a breastfed child is three times more likely to survive infancy than one not breastfed.

In view of the foregoing, it becomes clear that a targeted and specific information and awareness campaign on breastfeeding and infant nutrition, alongside that of family planning and responsible parenthood, and aimed at couples intending to be married, becomes critical and imperative for the future of this country.

This bill specifically seeks to address such necessity by requiring that couples applying for a marriage license be instructed and informed not just on family planning and responsible parenthood, but also on breastfeeding and infant nutrition.

In this light, the immediate approval of this bill is earnestly and urgently sought.

Anna York P. Bondoc
Anna York P. Bondoc, MD

**AN ACT TO PROMOTE AND SUPPORT BREASTFEEDING AS AN
ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF FAMILY PLANNING AND
RESPONSIBLE PARENTHOOD, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

FAMILY SUPPORT FOR BREASTFEEDING ACT

WHEREAS, Presidential Decree No. 965, A Decree Requiring Applicant for Marriage License to Receive Instructions on Family Planning and Responsible Parenthood (PD. 965) requires that all applicants for marriage license “receive instructions and information on family planning and responsible parenthood from the [local] Family Planning Office”.

WHEREAS, Section 12, Article 2 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution declares that “[t]he State recognizes the sanctity of family life and shall protect and strengthen the family as a basic autonomous social institution. It shall equally protect the life of the mother and the life of the unborn from conception. The natural and primary right and duty of the parents in the rearing of the youth for civic efficiency and the development of moral character shall receive the support of the government”.

WHEREAS, Section 13, Article 2 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution likewise declares that “[t]he State recognizes the vital role of the youth in nation-building and shall promote and protect their physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual, and social well-being.”

WHEREAS, Section 15, Article 2 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution further declares that “[t]he State shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them”.

WHEREAS, a comprehensive and effective responsible parenthood program should not be limited to promotion of family planning, but should incorporate proper infant nutrition as an inherent component of each child’s right to enjoy, and each parent’s responsibility to provide, the highest attainable standard of health as declared in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which the Philippines is a signatory.

WHEREAS, current Government efforts and programs aimed towards promoting breastfeeding as an optimal and cost-effective means of infant and young child nutrition should be formally incorporated into the family planning and responsible parenthood promotion and information dissemination mechanism set forth in Presidential Decree No. 965.

WHEREAS, proper and adequate nutrition from infancy is indispensable to ensuring that the youth grow up healthy, equipped and prepared to take on their role in nation-building.

WHEREAS, education and preparation for responsible parenthood should start even prior to celebration of the marriage, so as to allow ample time for consideration and deliberation by prospective husband and wife on their options and priorities.

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

Section 1. Additional Duty of Family Planning Office. Each Office of Family Planning is hereby mandated, upon application and/or request by applicants for marriage license and other interested persons pursuant or relative to Section 2 of PD 965, to give instructions and information not only pertaining to family planning and responsible parenthood, but to extend the same to cover proper topics relative to breastfeeding and infant nutrition.

The city or municipal health officer shall continue to be assisted by the city or rural health nurse, members of the city or rural health unit, and such other personnel from different agencies of the government involved in efforts towards promotion of responsible parenthood.

Section 2. *Certificate of Compliance.* Further to Section 1 herein, no marriage license shall be issued by the Local Civil Registrar unless the applicants present a Certificate of Compliance issued by the local Family Planning Office, certifying that they had duly received comprehensive instructions and information on family planning, responsible parenthood, breastfeeding and infant nutrition.

The instructions and information shall be given, and the certificate issued, free of charge.

Section 3. *Assistance of National Departments and Agencies.* Agencies and offices of the National Government shall, as appropriate, cooperate, coordinate and/or assist, local Family Planning Offices in order to further promote and support responsible parenthood.

Specifically, the Department of Health, Department of Social Welfare and Development, and Population Commission shall endeavor to furnish each Family Planning Office with the proper information and resources to keep the latter updated on current studies and research relating to family planning, responsible parenthood, breastfeeding and infant nutrition.

Section 4. *Assistance from Private Sector.* If necessary or appropriate for such purpose, the Family Planning Office may seek and request volunteer doctors, nurses, or other duly-licensed health professionals or healthcare workers, to assist in giving the instructions and information mandated by this Act, provided however that in no event shall anyone promote, endorse, market, or do any act tending to promote or endorse any commercially-produced and/or -sold product, or any paid medical, health or wellness service.

Section 5. *Repealing Clause.* All laws, orders, issuances, and rules and regulations or parts thereof inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Section 6. *Separability Clause.* The provisions of this Act are hereby deemed distinct and separable from each other. If any provision hereof be declared invalid or unconstitutional, such invalidity or unconstitutionality shall not affect the other provisions which shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 7. *Effectivity.* This Act shall take effect ninety (90) days following its publication in at least two newspapers of general circulation.