

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

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FIFTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 514

**Introduced by AKBAYAN Party-List Representatives
Hon. Kaka Bag-ao and Hon. Walden Bello**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

From barangay health workers to midwives, nurses and doctors.

That the Philippine health sector is experiencing a brain drain is no hidden fact. Nurses are leaving the country, and between 1994 to 2003 alone around 85,000 Filipino nurses went abroad. Doctors have also joined the fray: 3,000 doctors left the country as nurses from 2000 to 2005, while an additional 3,000 enrolled in nursing schools in 2006.

The migration of health professionals has impaired the country's health sector. During the past three years, 200 hospitals have closed down, while around 800 partially closed their operations due to the lack of nurses and doctors. Recently, the secretary of the Department of Health announced that the government might need to spend more on health to 'import' nurses and doctors from South Asia.

AKBAYAN believes that a simple and innovative solution could help reverse the scenario. According to the Department of Health, there are about 1.3 million barangay health workers (BHW) all over the country. This provides the country with a potent workforce that has the commitment and experience to deliver basic healthcare services in communities where such services are direly needed. With the right training, our BHWs could become midwives, dentists, nurses and doctors, filling up the gap left by medical professionals who have opted to work abroad.

The “Bibong BHW Education and Training Program” proposed under this measure seeks to scale up the capabilities of barangay health workers through the institutionalization of an innovative ‘step ladder’ training program that the University of the Philippines has initiated.

The bill has the following objectives: 1) establish an education and training program for BHWs that integrates capability and skills-building with voluntary community health work; 2) strengthen the accreditation system for BHWs, thus professionalizing the volunteer program, and; 3) provide additional incentives for BHWs.

The training and education component of the measure follows a 'step ladder' system, with the following tiers:

- Certificate of Barangay Health Work, a 3-month basic course on community health work that shall be required to all BHWs. This shall include basic dental care, reproductive health, STI and HIV/AIDS prevention, nutrition, physical therapy, traditional and herbal medicine and reflexology.

- Bachelor of Science in Community Health, an 18-month program that shall include courses on maternal and child healthcare, community nursing, advanced local health research, community organizing, among others. BHWs may specialize in midwifery, pharmacology, occupation therapy, dentistry, or physical therapy. Graduates of this course shall be eligible to take the licensure examination for the above specializations.
- Bachelor of Science in Nursing, a 15-month program that shall include all the necessary courses on nursing. Graduates of this course shall be eligible to take the Nursing Licensure Board Examination.
- Doctor of Medicine, a five-year program that shall include all courses on Medicine. Graduates of this course shall be eligible to take the Physicians Licensure Board Examination.

In between each 'step', the trainees shall be required to go back to their communities to work with local hospitals, rural health units, or community health centers for at least six months. BHWs may enter and exit at any level, provided that they take placement tests that shall be administered by the Civil Service Commission.

The bill also grants additional benefits for BHWs, among them full scholarships, socialized subsidies, or study now pay later schemes for those who wish to proceed to advanced courses; an increase in their allowance to 4,500, exclusive of other allowances; mandatory Philhealth membership for all accredited BHWs, and free medical services for veteran BHWs.

In light of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



Hon. KAKA BAG-AO
Representative, Akbayan Party-list



Hon. WALDEN BELLO
Representative, Akbayan Party-list

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**AN ACT CREATING THE BARANGAY HEALTH WORKER EDUCATION AND
TRAINING PROGRAM, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR 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 “Bibong BHW Education and Training
Program”.

Section 2. Declaration of Principles. – The State declares its commitment to uphold
and promote the right to health of the people through the delivery of community-based
health care programs and services. It recognizes the importance and urgency of making
healthcare accessible at the community level, the frontline in the struggle to make each
and every Filipino fit and strong

The State likewise affirms and upholds the welfare of community-based health workers,
whose services and sense of volunteerism are crucial in preventive and primary health
care delivery. It is committed to provide continuing education and training and additional
incentives to community-based health workers to expand opportunities available to them.

Section 3. Definition. – For the purposes of this Act, the term “Barangay Health
Worker” refers to a person who has undergone basic training on Barangay Health Work
under any accredited government and non-government organization and who voluntarily
renders health care services in the community after having been accredited to function as
such by the provincial health board.

**Section 4. Step Ladder Education and Training Program for Community-based
Health Workers.** – The Department of Health, in coordination with the University of the
Philippines, shall develop a continuous, competency-based step-ladder education and
training curriculum for barangay health workers. The curriculum shall train the barangay
health workers as healthcare providers, community organizers, health service managers,
trainers and educators, and researchers.

The program shall have the following levels:

- a.) *Certificate of Barangay Health Work* - a 3-month course that shall include basic
orientation and training on health programs and institutionalized health service
delivery system, primary healthcare, basic community organizing, local health
research, basic local resource generation and mobilization, training needs analysis,
basic report writing and communication skills, and program planning and
development. Courses on basic dental care, reproductive health, STI and

HIV/AIDS prevention, nutrition, physical therapy, traditional and herbal medicine and reflexology shall also be offered.

b.) *Bachelor of Science in Community Health* – an 18-month program that shall include courses on maternal and child healthcare, community nursing, advanced local health research, community organizing program development, organizational development, and advanced resource generation. A program scholar shall be required to choose any of the following for his or her specialization: midwifery, pharmacology, occupation therapy, dentistry, or physical therapy. Graduates of this course shall be eligible to take the licensure examination for midwifery, pharmacology, occupation therapy, dentistry, or physical therapy.

c.) *Bachelor of Science in Nursing* – a 15-month program that shall include all the required courses on nursing. Graduates of this course shall be eligible to take the Nursing Licensure Board Examination.

d.) *Doctor of Medicine* – A five-year program that shall include all courses on Medicine. Graduates of this course shall be eligible to take the Physicians Licensure Board Examination.

Section 5. Service Leave. – As a requirement for the completion of each level, program scholars shall render health and community services in their own rural health units or municipal or provincial hospitals for a minimum of six months to integrate lessons in the course work with community healthcare services delivery. The Service Leave shall be supervised and/or facilitated by the program's faculty members and representatives or leaders from the scholars' community.

Section 6. Placement Examinations. – The Department of Health, in coordination with local governments and the Civil Service Commission, shall conduct regular placement examinations to determine the eligibility, competency, skills, and knowledge of program applicants or scholars who wish to enroll at any level.

Section 7. Educational Requirement for Program Admission. – A minimum of high school education shall be required to be eligible for admission to the program, with the exception of the Doctor of Medicine component, eligibility for which shall require college education or completion of the Bachelor of Science in Nursing component of the program.

To help non-high school graduates to enter the program, the Department of Education shall conduct regular diploma placement tests and shall develop and establish a secondary education acceleration program, both of which shall be provided for free for individuals willing to volunteer to deliver community-based health care services.

Section 8. Program Implementation. – With the support and assistance of the Department of Health, provincial governments, in coordination with municipal governments, and city governments are hereby mandated to provide and implement the Barangay Health Work program. Local Government Units may likewise authorize DOH-accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to conduct the training program.

The Department of Health, in coordination with the Commission on Higher Education, shall accredit State Universities and Colleges or private educational institutions to offer the advanced courses.

Section 9. Support for Program Scholars. – The basic course shall be offered to community health workers free of charge. The Department of Health shall offer full scholarships, socialized subsidies, and "study now pay later" schemes for community health workers taking the advanced courses.

Section 10. Accreditation for Barangay Health Workers. – To be accredited as a Barangay Health Worker, completion of the Certificate of Barangay Health Work shall be required. Graduates of the basic level courses shall be accredited by the Provincial Health Board, with the participation of TESDA, PhilHealth, and accredited training NGOs.

Graduates of the Nursing and Medicine courses shall be accredited by the Department of Health or DOH-accredited State Universities and Colleges.

Section 11. *Non-discrimination policy.* Discrimination on the basis of age, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, economic background, religion, ethnic heritage or race, and disability in the accreditation of barangay health workers is prohibited. A non-discrimination policy shall be crafted and enforced by the Department of Health, in coordination with the Provincial Health Board, to ensure the implementation of this provision.

Section 12. *Automatic Accreditation.* – Individuals who have served as barangay health workers for at least five years upon the enactment of this measure shall be deemed graduates of the Certificate of Barangay Health Work course and shall automatically be granted accreditation.

Section 13. *Compensation and Other Incentives.* –

- a.) All accredited Barangay Health Workers shall be entitled to monthly basic pay of four thousand five hundred pesos (P4,500). Subsistence allowance, including a Christmas bonus equivalent to their one (1) month salary. Furthermore, they shall be entitled to subsistence allowance, hazard allowance, and travel allowance, the amount of which shall be determined by their respective local government units.
- b.) All accredited Barangay Health Workers shall be entitled to insurance coverage under the National Health Insurance Program. Premium contributions for the insurance enrolment shall be covered by the provincial, city or municipal government concerned.
- c.) The Philhealth is hereby mandated to accredit Barangay Health Workers for the delivery of certain health services. They shall receive compensation from Philhealth for services delivered.
- d.) Barangay Health Workers who have served for at least five years shall receive free medical treatment and services in public health clinics or hospitals.

Section 14. *Appropriation.* – a.) An initial allocation of Fifty Million Pesos (P50,000,000.00) shall be included in the General Appropriations to support the policies and objectives under this Act. Congress shall provide subsequent appropriations in the annual budget of the Department of Health under the General Appropriations Act.

b.) Cost Sharing for Local Government Units. – Local governments shall adopt a cost-sharing financing scheme for the implementation of the basic course on Barangay Health Work depending on the income level of the concerned local government units.

Section 15. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – With ninety (90) days from the approval of this Act, the Department of Health and the University of the Philippines, together with the Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education shall promulgate the rules and regulations necessary for the implementation of this Act.

Section 16. *Repealing Clause.* - All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations, or parts thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Section 17. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following the completion of its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved.