

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

FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

HOUSE BILL NO. 2297

Introduced by:

Rep. Godofredo V. Arquiza

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Visual impairment among senior citizens can also be called as "partially sighted," "low vision," "legally blind," and "totally blind" as used by schools, colleges, and other educational institutions to describe individuals with visual impairments. Partially sighted senior citizens indicate some type of visual problem, with a need of person to receive special education in some cases; Low vision senior citizens generally refers to a severe visual impairment, not necessarily limited to distance vision. Low vision applies to all senior citizens with sight who are unable to read the newspaper at a normal viewing distance, even with the aid of eyeglasses or contact lenses. They use a combination of vision and other senses, although they may require adaptations in lighting or the size of print. Legally blind indicates that a senior citizen has less than 20/200 vision in the better eye after best correction (contact lenses or glasses), or a field of vision of less than 20 degrees in the better eye.

The occurrence of vision impairment among senior citizens is the consequence of a functional loss of vision, rather than the eye disorder itself. Eye disorders which can lead to visual impairments can include retinal degeneration, albinism, cataracts, glaucoma, muscular problems that result in visual disturbances, corneal disorders, diabetic retinopathy, congenital disorders, and infection." Visual impairment can also be caused by brain and nerve disorders.

This bill seeks to provide "a standardized, objective approach to evaluating medical impairments for senior citizens." A Visual Impairment Services for Senior Citizens will provide criteria for evaluating permanent impairment of the visual system as it affects the senior citizen's ability to perform activities of daily living. It will further establish programs and services such as consultation, assessment, evaluation and the provision of necessary assistance for our senior citizens or elderly with visual or vision impairments.



GODOFREDO V. ARQUIZA

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AN ACT
ESTABLISHING VISUAL IMPAIRMENT SERVICES FOR SENIOR
CITIZENS WITH VISION IMPAIRMENTS

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

SECTION 1. Short Title. - This Act shall be known as the 'Visual Impairment Services For Senior Citizens Act of 2010.'

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. – It is hereby a declared policy of the state under Section 15, Article II of the Consitution to “protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them.” Section 11, Article VIII further provides that “the state shall adopt integrated and comprehensive approach to health development which shall endeavor to make essential goods, health and other social services to all people at affordable cost. There shall be priority for the needs of the under-privileged, sick, **elderly**, disabled, women, and children...”. In view of the foregoing, this act will provide health care for our senior citizens with visual or vision impairments.

SECTION 3. Definition of Terms. – For the purpose of this Act, these terms are defined as follows:

- (a) “Visual impairment” or “vision impairment” shall mean a vision loss to such a degree as to qualify as an additional support need through a significant limitation of visual capability resulting from either disease,

trauma, or congenital or degenerative conditions that cannot be corrected by conventional means, such as refractive correction, medication, or surgery.

- (b) “Senior citizen” or “elderly” shall mean any resident of the Philippines at least sixty (60) years old or older as defined in Republic Act 9994 Section 2(a), otherwise known as the “*Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010*.”

SECTION 4. Visually Impairment Services for Senior Citizens.- The Secretary of Health shall ensure the establishment of the following visually impairment services for the senior citizens:

(a) **Rehabilitation and Equipment Service.** - The Rehabilitation and Equipment service shall provide assessments, and individual packages of rehabilitation and support, personal care, access, communication and other difficulties of senior citizens caused by their visual impairment.

Senior citizens can access this service through:

- (1) a consultant ophthalmologist,
- (2) a Social Work Team,
- (3) a high street optician, GP or other health professional

(b) **Advice, Information and Signposting Service.** - The Advice, Information and Signposting Service is aimed at senior citizens with visual impairments, and carers who support senior citizens with a visual impairment, when they are attending the Ophthalmic Outpatients Department/Ophthalmic Wards at Government Hospitals .

(c) **Guide Communicator Service and Intervener Service.** - These are services for senior citizens with Dual Sensory Impairment and provide one to one support, assisting the elderly to access community facilities, such as going shopping, social and recreational activities, or in dealing with correspondence or financial matters. It can also assist people to work with other statutory services, or to arrange interpretation support for medical appointments, benefit or housing appointments etc.

(d) **Statutory Register for Senior Citizens with Visual Impairments.** – Hospitals shall also maintain the Statutory Register for people with Visual Impairments (including Dual Sensory Impairments). This receives referrals from consultant ophthalmologists and supports people to access a range of support services.

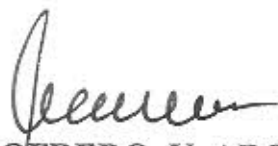
SECTION 5. Implementing Rules and Regulations. The Department of Health is hereby directed to issue the necessary rules and regulations to implement the provisions of this Act.

SECTION 6. Separability Clause. If any provision or part hereof is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remainder of the Act or the provision not otherwise affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

SECTION 7. Repealing Clause. Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order, letter of instruction, administrative rule or regulation contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act is hereby repealed, modified, or amended accordingly.

SECTION 8. Effectivity Clause. This Act shall take effect immediately after its approval.

Approved,


GODOFREDO V. ARQUIZA