

Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
Quezon City



**SIXTEENTH CONGRESS**  
**Second Regular Session**

House Bill No. **5381**

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**Introduced by Representative ESTRELLITA "GING" B. SUANSING**

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**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

Visual impairment among the elderly is a consequence of a functional loss of vision. This can be caused by degenerative eye disorders and other underlying diseases. Senior citizens with functional visual impairment are more prone to falls, burns, and other form of injuries, as well as bouts of depression. Because visual impairment substantially interferes with a person's activities of daily living, and with frail bodies, senior citizens rely and become dependent on others for their care. There is also the matter of costly medical services, which most of our senior citizens are unable to avail.

By intervening in a timely fashion and linking senior citizens to appropriate services, the State can assist in maintaining the health, welfare, and improve the quality of life of our elderly.

This bill seeks to establish a national senior vision services program which will provide comprehensive services to the elderly who suffer from functional visual impairments. The services included in the program are rehabilitation and equipment service; advice, information and signposting service; and a registry for senior citizens with functional visual impairments. Client assessment, information and referral for health care services, as well

as client and family counseling and education are integrated in the abovementioned services.

Elderly persons are eligible for the national senior vision services if they suffer from a visual impairment that substantially interferes with their ability to perform activities of daily living, even if they are not "legally blind."

In view of the forgoing, approval of this bill is earnestly sought.



**ESTRELLITA B. SUANSING**

1<sup>st</sup> District, Nueva Ecija

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**AN ACT**

**CREATING A NATIONAL SENIOR VISION SERVICES PROGRAM FOR  
ELDERLY PERSONS WITH FUNCTIONAL VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS**

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

**SECTION 1. Short Title.** – This Act shall be known as the "Senior Vision  
Services Act."

**SECTION 2. Declaration of Policies.** – It is the policy of the State to protect  
and promote the right to health of the people and instill health  
consciousness among them.

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.

Pursuant to these policies, it shall establish a national senior vision  
services program for elderly persons with functional visual impairments.

**SECTION 3. Definition of Terms.** – For purposes of this Act, the term

1 (A) "Senior vision services" means the provision of medical and other  
2 needed services to elderly persons who have a functional visual  
3 impairment. These services may include, but shall not be limited to,  
4 vision screening; eye examination; information and referral; client  
5 and family counseling; referrals for ophthalmological, optometric, or  
6 other health care services; provision of corrective eyeglasses;  
7 technical assistance and training for human services personnel to  
8 serve persons who are blind or visually impaired; and low vision  
9 screening;

10 (B) "Visual impairment" or "vision impairment" means a vision loss to  
11 such a degree as to qualify as an additional support need through a  
12 significant limitation of visual capability resulting from either  
13 disease, trauma, congenital, or degenerative conditions that cannot  
14 be corrected by conventional means such as refractive correction,  
15 medication, or surgery;

16 (C) "Functional visual impairment" means an impairment of sight that  
17 substantially interferes with an elderly person's ability to perform  
18 specific daily living skills and tasks. Persons who are not regarded as  
19 legally blind, pursuant to this paragraph, but who experience such  
20 an impairment of sight, shall be deemed eligible for senior vision  
21 services pursuant to this Act;

22 (D) "Elderly" or "senior citizen" means any resident of the Philippines  
23 who is at least sixty (60) years of age or older; and

24 (E) "Secretary" means the Secretary of Health

25 **SECTION 4. National Senior Vision Services Program.** – There is hereby  
26 established a national senior vision services program for elderly persons  
27 with functional visual impairments and shall be under the direction of the  
28 Secretary of Health. The Secretary of Health shall include in the program  
29 services such as, but not limited to:

30 (A) *Rehabilitation and Equipment Service.* – The Rehabilitation and  
31 Equipment Service shall provide assessments and individual  
32 packages of rehabilitation and support on personal care, access to

1 communication and support on other difficulties of senior citizens  
2 caused by their functional visual impairment.

3 Senior citizens can access this service through:

- 4 (1) A consultant ophthalmologist;
- 5 (2) A Social Work Team;
- 6 (3) A high street optician, general practitioner, or other  
7 health professional.

8 (B) *Advice, Information and Signposting Service.* – The Advice,  
9 Information and Signposting Service is aimed at assisting senior  
10 citizens with functional visual impairment and their caregivers when  
11 they are consulting at the Ophthalmic Outpatient  
12 Department/Ophthalmic Wards at government hospitals.

13 (C) *Registry for Senior Citizens with Functional Visual Impairments.* –  
14 Hospitals shall also maintain the Registry for Senior Citizens with  
15 Functional Visual Impairments. This receives referrals from  
16 consultant ophthalmologists and supports people to access a range  
17 of support services.

18 Moreover, in providing senior vision services, the Secretary shall take into  
19 consideration the lack of services for elderly persons in need of senior vision  
20 services to establish or to expand existing blind or visually impaired services  
21 currently provided or available in municipalities and cities throughout the  
22 country. The Secretary shall likewise ensure that due consideration is given  
23 to the geographic and existing service demands for senior vision services  
24 within a municipality or city.

25 **SECTION 5.** *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days  
26 from the effectivity of this Act, the Secretary shall promulgate the  
27 implementing rules and regulations necessary to carry out the provisions of  
28 this Act.

29 The Secretary shall submit a report to the House of Representatives  
30 and the Senate, prior to, but in no event later than, December thirty-first, in

the year following enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, which shall include, but not be limited to:

(A) Financial reports of the program operations established pursuant to this Act;

(B) An analysis of the program's ability to provide such nationwide senior vision services to elderly persons with functional visual impairments;

(C) Recommendations on the continuation of such program and the need for program expansion, if appropriate; and

(D) Other information deemed necessary.

**SECTION 6. Appropriations.** – The sum of Fifty Million Pesos (PhP50,000,000.00) is hereby authorized to be appropriated from the National Treasury for the first three (3) years of implementation of this Act immediately following its enactment. Thereafter, the sums necessary for the continuous implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual appropriations of the Department of Health as a separate and distinct item.

**SECTION 7. Separability Clause.** – If any provision or part hereof is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

**SECTION 8. Repealing Clause.** – Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule, or regulation contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act is hereby repealed, modified, or amended accordingly.

**SECTION 9. Effectivity Clause.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,