



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

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 5437

Introduced by Honorable MARK A. VILLAR

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

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The bill establishes a free medicine assistance program in a health district to benefit only the underprivileged, the elderly, the disabled and the poorest of the poor which shall be administered by the Department of Health, in coordination with the Department of Social Welfare and Development

It is common knowledge that some of our countrymen die not because their sickness is incurable, but due to lack of medicine or proper medical treatment or assistance on account of poverty. In one study, it was stated that low income of poor families and high prices of medicines at most commercial outlets reduce purchasing power of the poor with respect to pharmaceutical products, leading to self-medication and inadequate medical consultations and treatments of illnesses. In addition to the lack of purchasing power of the poor, they further lack access to free and/or subsidized medicines caused by: a) the poor's lack of access to medical professionals and medical facilities; b) the lack of health insurance coverage for the poor and the indigents; and c) the lack of budget and inadequate systems and procedures for government procurement of drugs and medicines in public facilities.

Hence, the government cannot always remain indifferent to this reality. It must offer some direct help somehow for the intended beneficiaries to feel its impact.

In this context, the bill seeks to address, starting with this approach, the problem of lack of medicine, the cost of which is beyond the reach of many Filipinos on account of poverty.

The proposed legislation is mandated by the Constitution that the State shall protect and promote the right of the people to health (Sec 15, Article II, Constitution) and shall adopt an integrated and comprehensive approach to health development with the end view of making essential health services available to all the people at affordable cost, giving priority to the needs of the underprivileged, the sick, the elderly, the disabled and the women and children.

In view of the foregoing reasons approval of this bill is earnestly sought.



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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 Medicine for the Poor Act."

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy. - It is hereby the policy of the State to promote the right to health and well-being of the people and to adopt a system of effecting the delivery of free medicine to those who have less in life, giving priority to the underprivileged, the sick, the elderly, the disabled and the poorest of the poor.

SEC. 3. 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 its authorized government hospital in each particular congressional district, to be known as the health district, in coordination with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

SEC. 4. Eligible Beneficiaries. - The program shall be limited to eligible beneficiaries to be identified by the DOH through the government hospital in the health district in coordination with the DSWD. The implementing rules and regulations shall see to it that the intended beneficiaries come from the ranks of the poorest of the poor, the Program being strictly a poverty alleviation measure.

SEC. 5. Appropriations. - There is hereby appropriated the sum of Twenty Million Pesos (P20,000,000.00) for each health district 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.

SEC. 6 Rules and Regulations. - The DOH, jointly 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.

SEC. 7. Repealing clause. - All provisions of laws, orders, decrees, including rules and regulations inconsistent herewith are hereby repealed and/or modified accordingly.

SEC. 8. 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.

SEC. 9. Effectivity. - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its publication in one (1) national newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,