

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS
Third Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 6476



Introduced by Congressman Alfredo D. Vargas III

EXPLANATORY NOTE

As part of the country's Millenium Development Goals (MDGs), the Philippines aims to improve maternal health by 2015.

According to the 5th Philippine Progress Report on the MDGs, however, it can be inferred that the Philippines may have not met its MDG target on maternal health as the maternal mortality ratio increased from 209 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 221 deaths in 2011, failing to meet the 2015 target of 52.

Thus, the State must continue to strive for the improvement of maternal health in the country and initiate programs to ensure that maternal health is protected.

This bill seeks to establish a Pregnancy Support Services Office under the Department of Health. The proposed office will be tasked to encourage and assist pregnant women to carry their children to live birth by providing services during and after pregnancy. Thus, this measure alleviates pregnant women and their families from the difficulties that may otherwise lead to abortion or death of a child during childbirth.

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


ALFREDO D. VARGAS III

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AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A PREGNANCY SUPPORT SERVICES OFFICE UNDER THE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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 "Care for Life Act"

Section 2. **Definition of Terms.**- For the purposes of this Act, the term:

- A. "Pregnancy support services" refers to services offered by the government, faith-based, and other providers, during and after pregnancy, that will encourage and assist women to carry their children to live birth by alleviating financial, social, emotional, and other difficulties that may otherwise lead to abortion, including the following:
1. Material assistance, including maternity and baby clothing, diapers, baby food (including formula), and baby furniture.
 2. Referrals for adoption, job training, housing, assistance with domestic violence, and food stamps and other governmental assistance.
 3. Crisis hotlines, including for violence or suicide prevention.
 4. Pro-bono obstetric and prenatal care services for women intending to carry their children to live birth, including services during pregnancy and following childbirth, and neonatal care services, including referrals for such services.
 5. Pro-bono legal services to assist women who wish to carry their children to live birth and parents with newborn children.

6. Child care services.
7. Services to assist parents to care for, and prepare to care for, a child with Down Syndrome or another prenatally diagnosed condition, and to facilitate the adoption of such children as appropriate.
8. Life skills mentoring, including the enhancement of the following competencies:
 - I. Strengthening of marriage.
 - II. Communication and conflict management for building healthy marriages and families.
 - III. Decision-making and relationship-building skills prior to marriage.
 - IV. High-risk behavior awareness.
9. Life-skills counseling.

B. "Secretary" refers to Department of Health Secretary.

Section 3. ***Pregnancy Support Services Office.*** – The Department of Health shall establish an Office of Pregnancy Support Services which shall encourage and assist pregnant women to carry their children to live birth by providing services, during and after pregnancy, that will alleviate the financial, social, emotional, and other difficulties that may otherwise lead to an abortion.

Section 4. ***Pregnancy Care Information Service.*** – The Secretary shall develop and maintain a comprehensive, publicly accessible, and user friendly database, to be known as the Pregnancy Care Information Service, to serve as a consolidated source of information on pregnancy support services. Further, it shall include pertinent information on the providers of the pregnancy support services listed in the database.

Section 5. ***Annual Conference.*** – The Secretary shall conduct an annual nationwide best practices conference, gathering experts from State and local governments, prenatal and parenting care centers, and other relevant facilities to:

- A. Share information on best practices in pregnancy support services; and
- B. Identify and address key burdens or adverse circumstances that pregnant women face.

Section 6. ***Public Outreach.*** – The Secretary shall develop and implement a public outreach campaign to provide information on pregnancy support services to vulnerable women, including those in low-income, urban and rural areas.

Section 7. ***Parental Care Grants to Institution of Higher Education.***- The Secretary may award competitive grants to institutions of higher education for the exclusive purpose of providing pregnancy support services, which may include:

- A. Employing a registered nurse, physician assistant or physician with specialized training in prenatal care.
- B. Establishing and maintaining student outreach programs to provide prenatal care, parenting assistance, and student housing assistance to the institution's pregnant and parenting students.

Section 8. ***Annual Report.*** - The Secretary shall submit an annual report to Congress on the activities, the funds expended on such activities, and the results achieved through such activities.

Section 9. ***Separability Clause.*** - If any provision of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, the same shall not affect the validity and effectivity of the other provisions hereof.

Section 10. ***Repealing Clause.*** - All laws, decrees, orders, and issuances, or portions thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

Section 11. ***Effectivity Clause.*** - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,