

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

House Bill No. 7673



Introduced by **MAGDALO Party-List Representative**
HON. GARY C. ALEJANO

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Section 15, Article 2 of the Philippine Constitution mandates:

"The State shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them. "

Thousands of infants each year are born with serious birth defects of the brain and spine, called neural tube defects. The most common of these are *spina bifida*, the incomplete closure of the spinal column and *anencephaly*, a fatal condition in which an infant is born with a severely underdeveloped brain and skull.

Only recently have researchers made some progress in preventing these defects. Studies show that as many as seventy percent (70%) of neural tube birth defects could be prevented if all women of childbearing age consume 400 micrograms of folic acid daily, before conception and during early pregnancy. Folic acid is a B vitamin found naturally in foods such as leafy green vegetables, beans, citrus fruits, and juices and in certain multivitamins capsules. Unfortunately, a majority of women lack information about this.

Thus, this bill seeks to provide a national folic acid education campaign in order to urge women to take the simple step to prevent neural tube defects.

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


GARY C. ALEJANO
Representative
Magdalo Para sa Pilipino Party-List

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ACT

TO PROVIDE FOR A NATIONAL FOLIC ACID EDUCATION PROGRAM TO PREVENT BIRTH DEFECTS

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

1 **SECTION 1. Short Title.**- This Act shall be known as the "*Folic Acid Promotion and*
2 *Birth Defects Prevention Act of 2018*".

3
4 **SEC. 2. Promotion of the Beneficial Effects of Folic Acid in the Prevention of Birth**
5 **Defects.**- The Department of Health shall carry out a program, directly or through special
6 arrangements with other government agencies and other promotional entities engaged in public
7 information activities, to provide education and training for health professionals and the general
8 public for purposes of explaining the effects of folic acid in preventing birth defects and to
9 encourage women of reproductive capacity to consume the appropriate amount of folic acid as
10 dietary supplement on a daily basis.

11
12 Pursuant thereto, the Secretary of Health may consult with the appropriate public or
13 private entities, including national nonprofit and nongovernment organizations, health
14 professionals and health insurance and health plan providers, to ensure the success of such
15 education and training program. In addition, the Secretary shall, directly or through partnership
16 with other sectors, provide technical assistance to public and nonprofit private organizations to
17 fulfill the mandate provided for in Sections 2 and 3 hereof.

18
19 **SEC. 3. Continuing Research and Study on the Effects of Folic Acid.**- The Department
20 of Health shall conduct continuing studies on the effects of folic acid to increase the
21 understanding of the same on the health of the citizenry, especially its contribution to the
22 prevention of birth defects, cleft lip and palate, and heart defects. It shall likewise conduct
23 research with respect to such education and training, including identifying effective strategies for
24 increasing the rate of consumption of folic acid by women of reproductive capacity. In addition,
25 it shall provide for appropriate epidemiological activities regarding folic acid, birth defects and
26 neural tube defects.

27
28 **SEC. 4. Evaluation of Program Implementation.**- The Secretary of Health shall cause
29 the review of the program to evaluate the extent to which the activities carried out, pursuant to
30 Sections 2 and 3 hereof, have been effective in fulfilling the goals of the program, including their
31 effect on different sectors of the population. Methods of evaluation to be undertaken pursuant
32 thereto may include surveys of knowledge and attitudes on the consumption of folic acid and on

1 blood folate levels and the complete and timely monitoring of infants who are born with neural
2 tube defects.

3
4 **SEC. 5. *The Secretary of Health shall include.*** - In the Department's program the
5 implementation of this Act, the funding of which shall be included in the annual General
6 Appropriations Act (GAA).

7
8 **SEC. 6. *Separability Clause.***- If any provision or part hereof is held invalid or
9 unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected thereby shall
10 remain valid and subsisting.

11
12 **SEC. 7. *Repealing Clause.***- Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order,
13 letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary to or inconsistent with the
14 provisions of this Act is hereby repealed, modified or amended accordingly.

15
16 **SEC. 8. *Effectivity Clause.***- This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
17 publication in the *Official Gazette* or in two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,