

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session
7898
House Bill No. _____



Introduced by HON. LINABELLE RUTH R. VILLARICA
4th District, Bulacan

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Republic Act. No. 9439, otherwise known as "*An Act Prohibiting the Detention of Patients in Hospitals and Medical Clinics on the Ground of Nonpayment of Hospital Bills or Medical Expenses*", was a groundbreaking law that provided reprieve to indigent patients who were unable to settle their medical expenses from being inhumanely detained in hospitals.

However, ten years after its enactment, said law has been found wanting in some aspects, among which is in the relief it provides less-privileged patients. Though it did address the illegal detention of patients in hospitals, it failed to address the imposition of interest or penalties on medical expenses that are left by indigent patients who could not afford to pay their hospital bill. This aggravates further the plight of these patients, who do not only have to contend with paying their hospital bills, but also the interests due these unpaid accounts.

Thus, to provide substantive relief to indigent patients, this bill seeks to prohibit the imposition of interest and/or penalty charges on unpaid hospital bills and medical expenses of patients who earn minimum wage or less, for one year from the patient's discharge. The one-year allowance is given in the hope that this will be sufficient time for the patients to fully settle their medical bills before they are charged with interest and/or penalties.

Given the intent of this Bill, immediate passage is most earnestly sought.

LINABELLE RUTH R. VILLARICA

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AN ACT
PROHIBITING THE IMPOSITION OF INTEREST AND/OR PENALTY CHARGES ON
UNPAID HOSPITAL BILLS AND MEDICAL EXPENSES OF PATIENTS WHO EARN
MINIMUM WAGE OR LESS

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

SECTION 1. Declaration of Policy. – It is the policy of the State to protect and promote the right to health of the people.

SEC. 2. Prohibition on Interest and/or Penalty Charges on Unpaid Hospital Bills or Medical Expenses. – It shall be unlawful for any hospital or medical clinic to charge interest or impose other penalties on unpaid hospital bills and medical expenses of patients who earn minimum wage or less, for one year from the date of the discharge.

This prohibition shall likewise apply to the unpaid hospital bills and medical expenses of minor patients whose parents or legal guardians earn minimum wage or less.

Any officer or employee of the hospital or medical clinic responsible for billing who violates the provisions of this Act shall be punished by a fine of not less than Twenty Thousand Pesos (PhP20,000.00) but not more than Fifty Thousand Pesos (PhP50,000.00), or imprisonment of not less than one (1) month but not more than six (6) months, or both such fine and imprisonment, at the discretion of the proper court.

SEC. 3. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – The Department of Health shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to carry out the provisions of this Act within ninety (90) days from its effectivity.

SEC. 4. Repealing Clause. – All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations, and issuances inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

SEC. 5. Effectivity. – This Act shall take effect immediately upon its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,