

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

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session



HOUSE BILL NO. 8123

Introduced by Rep. Winston "Winnie" Castelo

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The places we live in and our environment affect our health in a significant manner. Sectors that are not usually associated with health, such as the transportation, agriculture, and housing sectors have profound impacts on health. For example, traffic congestion is a factor that affects air quality and noise pollution. In contrast, encouraging and creating an environment that is more conducive for healthier transportation policies, such as walking and cycling, helps in greatly reducing health risk factors.

This bill seeks to improve our understanding of the relationship between the environment we live in and health factors, including but not limited to, air quality, physical activity levels, housing quality, access to primary health care and health care facilities, injury risks, and availability of nutritious and affordable food.

Through this bill, it is proposed that policies, programs, or projects of the government should be reviewed in order to ensure that it is consistent with improving environmental health or reducing its negative impact to the community's health and to the environment. Thus, it aims to implement a "Health in all Policies" approach and improve accountability of policymakers for health impacts and providing emphasis on the consequences of public policies on health systems, determinants of health, and well-being. By gathering the right information to gain an understanding on how policies and programs affect our health, decision-makers can promote policies to improve and protect our health.

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


WINNIE CASTELO

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"AN ACT REQUIRING GOVERNMENT AGENCIES TO IMPLEMENT HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENTS AND TAKE OTHER ACTIONS TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT QUALITY OF COMMUNITIES."

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* - This Act shall be known as the "Health Impact Assessment Act".

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* - It is the policy of the State to protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature. Pursuant to this policy, this Act shall require government agencies to implement health impact assessments and take other actions to improve the health and the environmental quality of communities.

SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.*

- a. "Environmental health" means the health and well-being of a population as affected by the direct pathological effects of chemicals, radiation, and some biological agents; and the effects of the broad physical, psychological, social, and aesthetic environment;
- b. "Health" means a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity;
- c. "Health impact assessment" means a systematic process that uses an array of data sources and analytic methods and considers inputs from stakeholders to determine the actual or potential effects of a proposed policy, program, or project on the health of a population and the distribution of those effects within the population.

SEC. 4. *Health Impact Assessments.* - All departments and agencies of the government are required to carry out health impact assessments prior to the implementation of policies, programs, or projects, to ensure appropriate consideration of the impacts on public health resulting from such policy or planning decisions.

SEC. 5. Consultation with the Secretary of Health - The Secretary of Health shall be consulted in relation to policies, programs, or projects that could have significant impact on the health of the population.

The Secretary of Health shall give Secretaries of other Departments advice for health promotion and the adoption of policies capable of fostering the enhancement of the health and welfare of the population.

SEC. 6. *Guidance for Health Impact Assessments* - The Secretary of Health, in collaboration with the Inter-Agency Working Group, shall develop guidance for the assessment of the potential health effects of government policies, programs, or projects. This shall include background on international efforts to bridge urban planning and public health institutions and disciplines and a review of health impact assessment best practices and evidence-based measures implemented in other countries.

The Secretary of Health shall establish a program focused on advancing the field of health impact assessment, including collecting and disseminating best practices, providing technical assistance and training, conducting monitoring and evaluations.

SEC. 7. *Inter-Agency Working Group on Environmental Health* - The Secretary of Health, in coordination with the Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources, shall establish an Inter-Agency Working Group to discuss the environmental health concerns, particularly concerns disproportionately affecting disadvantaged populations.

The Inter-Agency Working Group shall be composed of Permanent Representatives from each of the following departments or government agencies as *ex-officio* members:

- (A) Department of Agriculture;
- (B) Department of Trade and Industry;
- (C) Department of National Defense;
- (D) Department of Education;
- (E) Department of Energy;
- (F) Department of Health;
- (G) Department of Interior and Local Government;
- (H) Department of Labor and Employment;
- (I) Department of Department of Transportation and Communications;
- (J) Department of Environment and Natural Resources; and
- (K) Such other government agencies as the Secretary of Health and the Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources shall jointly determine to be appropriate;

Ex-officio members of the Inter-Agency Working Group may designate their respective alternates who shall at least be an Assistant Secretary in rank and their acts shall be considered the acts of their principal.

SEC. 8. *Responsibilities of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Environmental Health.*- The Inter-Agency Working Group shall be responsible for the following:

- a. Raise awareness on the relevance of health across all policy areas to ensure that the potential positive and negative consequences of decisions are not overlooked;
- b. Serve as a centralized mechanism to coordinate a national effort to discuss and evaluate evidence and knowledge on the relationship between the general environment and the health of the population of the Philippines; determine the range of effective, feasible, and comprehensive actions to improve environmental health; and examine and better address the influence of social and environmental determinants of health;
- c. Establish specific goals within and across departments and government agencies for environmental health promotion, including accountability for reaching those goals, and monitor progress in meeting specific environmental health promotion goals;
- d. Establish a platform to communicate plans and research results relating to environmental health to enable reporting and coordinate activities to produce useful and timely information;
- e. Develop a research agenda for departments and government agencies to support research and longitudinal studies. Review evaluation and economic data relating to the impact of government interventions on the prevention of environment health concerns;
- g. Monitor, gather, and collate reports of environment health impact to develop models for addressing community quality-of-life issue;
- h. Provide a description of evidence-based best practices, model programs, effective guidelines, aids, and other strategies for promoting environmental health;
- i. Make recommendations to improve government efforts relating to environment health promotion and to ensure government efforts are consistent with available standards and evidence;
- j. Assist the Secretary of Health with the development of guidance for the assessment of potential health effects of policies, programs, or projects of the government.

The Inter-Agency Working Group shall meet at least three (3) times each year, or as often as deemed necessary.

SEC. 9. Annual Conference on Health Impact Assessments. - The Secretary of Health shall sponsor an annual conference on environmental health to enhance coordination, build partnerships, and share best practices in environmental health data collection, analysis, and reporting.

SEC. 10. *Appropriations.* - The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act shall be included in the budget of the Department of Health in the General Appropriations Act of the year following its enactment into law and thereafter.

SEC. 11. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or section of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, the other provisions and sections not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 12. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, or issuances, or any part thereof which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SEC. 13. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved.