

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 7900



Introduced by: **REP. RAUL V. DEL MAR**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The United Nations Hunger Report of 2020 uses the term "hunger" to define periods when populations are experiencing food insecurity, meaning "they go for entire days without eating due to lack of money, lack of access to food or other resources."

In the Philippines, about a third of the population experiences hunger, more acutely because of the corona-virus pandemic, but even during "normal" times.

The health crisis such as the Covid-19 plague -- or some disaster like typhoon, earthquake or flooding -- intensifies the pangs because the small opportunity for some income is taken away when quarantine and lockdown are imposed. Absence of a calamity or end of an epidemic or disaster does not remove the poverty and the hunger. And worrying over where one's family's meal will come from is among the worst forms of torture that can be inflicted on a person.

Level of hunger

The record-high hunger rate is at its all-time high at 30.7% rate per the Social Weather Stations (SWS) September 17-20 survey. The estimated total number of the hungry is 7.6 million families, correctly rounded. That is more than 20 times the cumulative number of COVID-19 cases in the country: from the start of pandemic up to September 30 -- 311,694 cases per the Department of Health (DOH).

The estimated number of families in severe hunger (those who experienced hunger often or always for the last three months) is 2.2 million and the estimated number of families in moderate hunger (those who experienced hunger once or a few times in the last three months) is 5.5 million.

There must be people in the country who are so hungry that, as Mahatma Gandhi put it, "God cannot appear to them except in the form of a bread."

Monthly cash subsidy

This Bill proposes a monthly cash subsidy to the families in severe hunger, defined for the purpose as families suffering from severe hunger often or always. They are families that have no steady income for the daily food on the table, always hounded by the prospect whether they would have anything to eat today or the next day. They are literally starving and malnourished and sick, or on the verge of illness or death.

The monthly cash subsidy will be in the amount of P6,588 per family, which is the average amount of monthly help received from the government. This amount is hardly enough to survive on, considering that the amount of P6,588 monthly, divided by 30 days, is P219.60 daily and divided by 3 meals a day is P73.20 and further divided among 5 members of the family is only P14.64 per meal per family member.

This measure will provide the amount of One Hundred Seventy-Three Billion Nine Hundred Twenty-Three Million Two Hundred Thousand Pesos (P173,923,200,000.00) for the year or Fourteen Million Four Hundred Ninety-Three Thousand Six Hundred Pesos (P14,493,600.00) monthly to the 2.2 million families in severe hunger.

Provision for the future

The ultimate goal is to also include the 5.5 million families/households in moderate hunger. But that will need an additional Four Hundred Thirty-Four Billion Eight Hundred Eight Million Pesos (P434,808,000,000.00), which at present is not feasible because of financial constraints.

However, there is a provision in the measure to include them in the future when funds are available as certified by the Secretary of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), without the need of amendment through another legislative measure.

The reasons why

There is a compelling need for the Government to help its citizens who are hungry:

[1] It is the right thing to do, whatever may be the culprit: virulent disease, disaster, or plain poverty.

[2] People are the country's valuable resources, which it must protect as steadily and strongly as possible.

[3] It can help dissuade people from turning to criminal means to secure food. Pearl Buck says "hunger makes a thief of every man." Hungry people will not reach for a book but will hold a gun.

[4] There are funds that are otherwise lost in waste or corruption; it can never be said the state does not have money to help hapless citizens.

[5] Spending money to alleviate hunger will reduce the spending of money in public health care. Food is basic to good health, resistance to disease, and living.

Approval of this measure is earnestly requested.



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AN ACT
SAVING FAMILIES IN SEVERE HUNGER, AND PROVIDING FUNDS
THEREFOR

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

SECTION 1. Short Title. – This Act shall be known as the “Saving Families in Severe Hungry Act of 2020”.

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy. – It is the declared policy of the state to promote a just and dynamic social order that will ensure the prosperity and independence of the nation and free the people from poverty through policies that provide adequate social service, promote full employment, a rising standard of living, and an improved quality of life for all. In addition, the 1987 Constitution also provides that No person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law, nor shall any person be denied the equal protection of laws.

SEC. 3. Scope and Coverage. – The institutionalization of the Severely Hungry Family Subsidy Act will be on a monthly subsidy in the amount of

P6,588 which is the national average amount. That this subsidy will continue even after the pandemic period as the necessity for the same continue to exist.

SEC. 4. *Beneficiaries.* – Families in Severe Hunger with a maximum of five (5) members whose total combined income does not exceed P6,588.00 monthly or has no income nor subsequently rises above shall be automatically be listed as beneficiaries of Subsidy Assistance.

SEC. 4b. *Eligibility.* – To establish eligibility to the Families in Severe Hunger Subsidy Assistance, it is deemed proper that the country should have a credible database of families viz-a-viz the families' level of income. Th Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) should establish the Severely Hungry Family Database by enhancing the DSWD Listahanan to reflect the economic profiles of each Filipino family. The database should be regularly updated by the DSWD every year.

SEC. 5. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary to carry out the initial implementation of this Act shall One Hundred Billion Pesos (P100,000,000,000.00) to be included in the budget of DSWD. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the continuous implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA) of DSWD following the year of its approval.

SEC. 6. *Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).* – To ensure compliance, the DSWD and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), in consultation with the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and Committee on Finance of the Senate, shall promulgate rules and regulations to carry out the provision of this Act within six (6) months of its effectivity.

SEC. 7. *Separability Clause.* – If, for any reasons, any section or provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other sections or provisions which are not affected shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SEC. 8. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take after fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,