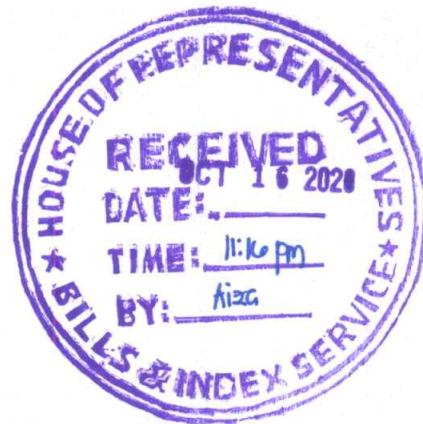


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

Eighteenth Congress
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 7901



Introduced by **Rep. Raul V. Del Mar**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The 1987 Philippine Constitution guarantees for the state to defend "the right of children to assistance, including proper care and nutrition and special protection from all forms of neglect, abuse, cruelty, exploitation and other conditions prejudicial to their development."

Stunting is a crisis that does not only affect physical growth of children. It also impacts on the individual's intellectual development and the country's economic growth.

III effects of nutrition

According to a Cebu study on longitudinal health and nutrition, children stunted from birth to two years of age were found to have poorer learning ability in school and were mostly in the list of late enrollees and chronic absentees. Stunted children earned at least 20% less than fully developed persons when they became adults. Recent studies suggest that childhood under-nutrition in the Philippines costs the country a loss of 1.5% to 3% of the gross domestic product (GDP) per year.

The Philippine government has recognized that malnutrition remains a serious and significant public health concern in the country. Stunting is now seen as one of the major impediments to human development and is recognized as an obtrusive marker of poor child development.

Despite efforts made by local and national agencies, both private and government, the state of malnutrition in the country remains at an alarming level with very little improvement in almost all types of malnutrition during the last decade.

Top 10 in stunting

Stunting or chronic malnutrition is considered high in magnitude and severity based on the WHO cut-off points. Currently, the country ranks fifth in East Asia and Pacific region with the highest stunting prevalence and is in the top 10 countries with the highest magnitude of stunted children in the world.

Although the country is currently implementing the Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition (PPAN) 2017-2022 to address the problem, the state is yet to identify a much pro-active strategy to reduce and prevent stunting, particularly in children 0 to 23 months of life and pregnant women in the last 3 months of pregnancy during which intervention is more effective and efficient.

The Dietary Supplement Program proposed in this Act seeks to provide cash assistance to pregnant women and parents of children aged 0 to 23 months who are not covered by current dietary aid programs by the government. The cash aid will provide them access to sufficient and quality supplementary food.

More than a welfare program

This is more than a welfare program as it addresses the physical and cognitive development a child to achieve full potential, and thus help break the cycle of malnutrition that plagues generations.

The proposed program, as condition for the cash, requires pregnant women and parents of children 0 to 23 months to attend complementary activities such as nutrition education classes, learning basic skill in food gardens, and encouraging them to take their children to government facilities for health, nutrition and other services. The proposed measure also seeks to use the dietary supplement activity as venue to improve capacity of mothers on child care and feeding practices.

Healthier, brighter, taller

Overall, the purpose is to provide opportunity for the children to grow up healthier, brighter and taller. Other than seeking to promote the well-being of the new generation of citizens, the proposed program is a sound investment in human capital to help spur economic development.



RAUL V. DEL MAR

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

Eighteenth Congress
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7901
HOUSE BILL NO. _____

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

AN ACT
TO PREVENT THE STUNTING OF CHILDREN AND MAKE EVERY
FILIPINO CHILD HEALTHIER, BRIGHTER AND TALLER
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

Chapter 1: Preliminary Provision

SECTION 1. Short Title – This Act shall be known as “Healthier, Brighter and Taller Filipino Children Act”

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy – It is the policy of the State to defend the right of children to assistance, including proper care and nutrition. The State recognizes importance of preventing chronic malnutrition in the country to address issues on poverty. The state shall therefore actively combat chronic malnutrition in recognition of the youth’s role in nation building and as a way to guard children’s rights and uphold the country’s contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals.

SEC. 3. Definition of Terms –

a) **Birth-weight** - first weight of the infant obtained after birth;

- b) **Breastfeeding** - a method of feeding an infant directly from the breast or feeding express breastmilk given through a dropper, a nasogastric tube, a cup and a spoon;
- c) **Complementary feeding** - complementary foods given at 6 months in addition to breastmilk;
- d) **Exclusive Breastfeeding** - a feeding practice where infant receives nothing but breastmilk with the exception of oral rehydration solution, drops or syrups, vitamins and minerals (WHO, UNICEF 2008);
- e) **Financial Institution** - refers to monetary institutions and/or depository banks accredited by government which will be tapped to serve as conduit in the release of food grants;
- f) **Food Grants** - are financial assistance given to qualified pregnant women and children 6-23 months for the purchase of food items as defined in this Act;
- g) **Food Items** - refers to nutrition commodities prescribed by the National Nutrition Council for consumption of pregnant women and children 6-23 months required for the infant/child's growth and development;
- h) **Height** - "stature" and is measured in standing position for children 2 years and over;
- i) **Length** - measurement from the top of the head to the heels at a prone position. It is used to measure children 0-23 months of age;
- j) **Low Birth Weight** - infants with low birth weight (less than 2.5 kilograms);
- k) **Local Nutrition Action Plan** - the blueprint for nutrition actions identified by local nutrition committees suitable to address and prevent nutrition issues and concerns in their locality;
- l) **Masterlist** - mother list of the target groups and can be used to determine if the targets are receiving the needed services;
- m) **Nutrition Counseling** - is a process in which a registered nutritionist-dietitian works with an individual to assess his or her dietary intake and nutritional status, and identify areas where change is needed;

- n) **Nutrition Education** - is any combination of educational strategies, accompanied by environmental supports, designed to facilitate the voluntary adoption of food choices and other food- and nutrition-related behaviors conducive to health and well-being. It is delivered through multiple venues and involves activities at the individual, community, and policy levels. It aims to provide people in rural and urban areas with adequate information, skills and motivation to procure and to consume appropriate diets (WPHNA);
- o) **Nutritionally-at-risk pregnant women** - Pregnant women whose weight fell below the 95th percentile of the reference criteria, thus having high risk of developing low birth weight babies;
- p) **Prenatal Care/ Antenatal Care** – four (4) or more visits of the pregnant women to a healthcare provider with the goal of providing regular check-ups for promotive or preventive health interventions such as micronutrient supplementation and screenings;
- q) **Stunting** - (height/length-for-age) being short among children of the same age, refers to chronic undernutrition during the critical periods and growth and development of a child leading to health issues, lowered cognitive development and decreased income in adulthood;
- r) **Trimester (Pregnancy Trimester)** – a period of about three months or between 12 to 14 weeks composed of different phases of fetal growth and development;
- s) **Wasting** - (weight-for-height/length) being thin among children of the same height/length and refers to acute undernutrition manifested by abrupt changes in food consumption or sickness;
- t) **Weight** - reflects attained growth in physical body weight relative to the child's age on a given day or visit; and
- u) **Children** - children 0 to 23 months old.

SEC. 4. Stunting Prevention Program - The stunting prevention program, hereinafter referred to as “program”, is established as a human capital investment program to prevent chronic malnutrition otherwise known as stunting by providing food grants during the first 0 to 23 months of life to

facilitate dietary intake and better chances of producing taller, brighter and healthier Filipinos.

SEC. 5. Eligible Beneficiaries – All pregnant women on their last 3 months and children aged 0 to 23 months old as registered in the barangay health center masterlist, provided that they have meet the following criteria:

- (a) Pregnant Women to complete at least 2 pre-natal visits.
- (b) Children 0 to 23 months have completed vaccine schedules, participated in monthly child growth monitoring and breastfed during the first 6 months of their lives.

SEC. 6. Program Components – The program shall follow an aggressive, multisectoral approach to prevent precursors of stunting such as food and nutrition insecurity and limited child rearing capacities. It shall have the following components:

- (a) **Social Preparation** – The National Nutrition Council (NNC) in cooperation with its regional offices shall prepare for the program implementation including collection of masterlists of program beneficiaries, orientation of local nutrition committees, arrangement of financial institutions who will act as conduit in the distribution of food grants.
- (b) **Food Grant** – The National Nutrition Council (NNC) shall provide for food grants for the purpose of dietary supplementation of pregnant women on their last trimester (3 months) and for children 0 to 23 months old. The grant is in the form of a cash assistance given monthly with a prescribed menu of food items for purchase initially at the amount of Php750.00 per month will be subject to an increase of 5% inflation rate per year.
- (c) **Nutrition Education and Social Mobilization** – To complement the food grant given, the regional offices of the National Nutrition Council (NCC) shall endeavor to provide nutrition education activities promoting positive health and nutrition behavior amongst the target beneficiaries. Capacity building activities for pregnant women and

mothers/caregivers of 0 to 23 months old children on proper health and nutrition will be conducted during dole out sessions using modules prescribed by the National Nutrition Council (NCC).

- (d) **Food Gardens** – Beneficiaries of the program shall be encouraged and capacitated to devote small spaces/containers for the cultivation of home/community food gardens to decrease household food insecurity and food costs with the assistance from the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Science and Technology.

SEC. 7. Mode of Cash Transfer. – The National Nutrition Council (NCC) shall provide beneficiaries with direct and secured access to food grants through any member of Accredited Financial Institutions (AFIs). For localities not adequately served by an AFIs, the NNC may, by itself or through the services of rural banks, thrift banks, cooperative banks, and institutions engaged in money remittances duly accredited by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP).

SEC. 8. Roles of Agencies / Lead Agency – The National Nutrition Council (NNC) shall serve as the planning, coordinating and monitoring body of the program. It shall create a Program Management Team to oversee the implementation of this Act and shall set-up the environment for program implementation by building a database for beneficiaries, capacitating local nutrition committees in the implementation of the program's components, coordinate with national and local agencies and other partners and stakeholders for a holistic program approach, prepare annual program reports and perform other functions as deemed necessary for the implementation of this Act.

- (a) **National Nutrition Council** – The National Nutrition Council (NNC) shall ensure the implementation of the program by provision resources of any form and technical assistance to facilitate efficiency of program planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. They shall set-up the implementing rules and regulations and establish a monitoring and evaluation system.

SEC. 9. *Monitoring, Review and Assessment* – The National Nutrition Council through its Regional Offices shall conduct annual monitoring and assessment of program implementation.

SEC. 10. *Appropriations* – The amount necessary to carry out the initial implementation of this Act shall be included in the budget of the National Nutrition Council. Thereafter, such sums as maybe necessary for the continuous implementation of this Act shall be included in the Annual General Appropriation Act (GAA) of the NNC following the year of its approval.

SEC. 11. *Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR)* –The National Nutrition Council, as the implementing agency, shall promulgate the Implementing Rules and Regulations to carry out the provision of this Act within three (3) months from its effectivity.

SEC. 12. *Separability Clause* – If, for any reason, 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. 13. *Repealing Clause* – All laws, decrees, letters of instructions, executive orders, resolutions or parts thereof which are inconsistent with the provision of this Act are hereby repealed, modified and amended accordingly.

SEC. 14. *Effectivity Clause* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation in the Philippines.

Approved.