

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

House Bill No. 9529



Introduced by the Honorable Precious Hipolito Castelo

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Vaccine hesitancy among Filipinos continues to threaten the objective of achieving herd immunity in the country.

Results of a recent Pulse Asia survey shows that 6 in 10 Filipinos do not want to get vaccinated against COVID-19. The survey was conducted from February 22 to March 3, which reveals that 61% of Filipinos would say “no” to the vaccine if it was offered during the said period. This was even an increase from the previous Pulse Asia survey released in January 2021, which showed that 47% of the respondents answered “no” on the same question. A big bulk of the respondents identify possible safety issues as the top reason why they do not want to get jabbed by the COVID-19 vaccine.¹

This is the current vaccine climate in the country, despite the continuous implementation of the National COVID-19 Vaccination Program and the arrival of more vaccines in the country. It is also evident that some who are already eligible to get the vaccine are waiting for their preferred vaccine brand which further delays their chance to get protected as soon as possible.

It is true that the vaccination roll-out is ramping up at 163,436 jabs administered daily, but quite truthfully, this is still not enough. At this rate, it will take about 2.3 years, or until September 2023, to fully vaccinate 70 million Filipinos and achieve herd immunity², on the assumption that such rate will be sustained until such date. Also, the statistics provided does not factor in the possibility that those who are fully vaccinated might need booster shots in the future.

Vaccine hesitancy jeopardizes the goal to further increase or even sustain the daily average jab rate. Vaccine education in the country should be rampant to combat misinformation and anti-vaccine conspiracy theories. Any strategy, even the employment of gimmicks and provision of perks that can help entice the hesitant population, would be able to help in addressing the issue of vaccine hesitancy.

Thus, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.


PRECIOUS HIPOLITO CASTELO

¹ Masambol, Bonz. “Pulse Asia: 6 in 10 Filipinos don't want to get vaccinated against COVID-19”. *Rappler.com*. Retrieved on May 31, 2021 at <https://www.rappler.com/nation/filipinos-vaccination-against-coronavirus-pulse-asia-survey-march-2021>

² Retrieved on May 31, 2021 at herdimmunity.ph

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AN ACT
ADDRESSING VACCINE HESITANCY IN THE COUNTRY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be referred to as the “Vaccine for Herd Immunity Act of 2021”.

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to adopt an integrated and comprehensive approach to health development which shall endeavor to make essential goods, health and other social services available to all people at affordable cost. Towards this end, the State shall ensure that Filipinos are well-informed about the benefits of getting vaccinated against COVID-19 to achieve the end goal which is herd immunity.

SEC. 3. *National Vaccine Education Program.* – The Department of Health (DOH) shall implement a National Vaccine Education Program by regularly showing COVID-19 infomercials in television, social media, radio, newspapers, and other available media. Weekly public webinars should also be conducted for a more detailed explanation about COVID-19 vaccines.

SEC. 4. *Addressing Vaccine Misinformation in Social Media.* – Social media posts which endorse vaccine misinformation shall be privately flagged by the DOH. The DOH shall implement strategies that will educate those who share and post about information that promotes vaccine hesitancy by encouraging them to attend webinars or watch videos that will educate them on the matter. This shall be done in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 and shall not in any way be a “shame campaign” against any person.

SEC. 5. *Provision of Perks and Benefits to the Fully Vaccinated.* – Employment of measures that will entice the hesitant population is allowed, including the provision of perks and benefits to the fully vaccinated, tax incentives and tax breaks, raffles and lotteries, and any other gimmicks that are not contrary to law, morals, good customs, public order, or public policy. Local government units are tasked to report any policy to the DOH before implementing it.

SEC. 6. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within thirty (30) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DOH, in coordination with the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF), shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to effectively implement the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 7. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary for the effective implementation of this Act shall be charged against the appropriations for the DOH under the current General Appropriations Act. Thereafter, such amount as may be necessary for its continued implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

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

SEC. 9. *Repealing Clause.* – Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary to or inconsistent with, the provisions of this Act is hereby repealed, modified, or amended accordingly.

SEC. 10. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,