

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

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 498



Introduced by Representative Stella Luz A. Quimbo

AN ACT
INSTITUTIONALIZING THE ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUALS IN CRISIS SITUATION
(AICS) PROGRAM AND PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR

The Philippines, as a developing country, faces a number of development issues which should be addressed by long-term solutions as well as short term interventions. As of 2018, 17.6 million Filipinos are living below the poverty line. The hunger rate is 13.6 percent as of June 2021 which translates to 3.4 million Filipinos feeling hunger in the period between April to June. In terms of wages, based on 2018 figures, the average family income is deplorable at P313,000 a year, or about P26,000 per month. Families in the lowest income decile have it even worse at P113,000 a year or approximately P9,416 a month.

These figures show that an ordinary Filipino worker does not have the financial capacity to meet the demands of a personal emergency such as death or illness of a family member if faced with such a difficulty. By spending more than what they could to attend to these difficult situations, people are pushed further into poverty.

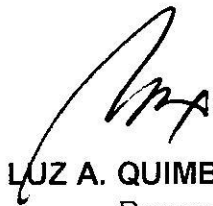
Therefore, many Filipinos living in vulnerable conditions all over the archipelago are in need of immediate relief when they face exigencies stemming from familial matters, medical emergencies, and disasters. Most of the time, these individuals could not go to hospitals, funeral parlors, or go back home to their provinces, to avail of basic social services because they lack the financial capability and support to do so.

The pandemic has worsened the plight of those in crisis situations. A 2021 study of hospitalization expenditures of COVID-19 patients in the UP Philippine General Hospital revealed that total expenses clustered around P51,000 to P200,000, and that most spending was between P101,000 to P150,000. Aside from this, relatives who need to go back to their provinces face additional costs on top of fares because of minimum public health requirements such as COVID-19 testing. Because of their living conditions, the poor are disproportionately at risk of being infected with the virus, which would entail additional costs for medicines, treatment, or worse, funeral expenses. Families with

members attending online classes also face additional financial burden to fulfill online learning needs such as electronic gadgets and mobile data.

Fortunately, even before the pandemic, the Department of Social Welfare and Development has rolled out the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation Program to provide immediate relief to the marginalized sector should they face difficult circumstances. Thus, this bill seeks to institutionalize the said program in order to introduce a permanent national program that is financially and administratively capable of responding to the needs of Filipinos when dealing with an extreme circumstance.

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



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SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation (AICS) Act”.

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared a policy of the State to provide immediate relief to all individuals in extreme and difficult situations. Priority attention shall be given to the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized sectors of the society. Such assistance to be given to the individuals and families who need immediate intervention will allow them to access basic services in order to fully recover from their dire situations.

SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act, the following terms are defined, as follows:

a) *Burial Assistance* refers to the assistance to defray funeral and related expenses;

b) *Cash assistance* for other support services refers to an assistance provided to individuals and families in extremely difficult circumstances in which the need does not fall on other types of assistance;

c) *Crisis Situation* refers to a condition whereby an individual or group of persons are faced with a different and stressful situation, resulting to the impairment of his/her psychosocial functioning, and thereby needing series of interventions to prevent further exposure to vulnerabilities, exploitation, and abuse;

d) *Educational Assistance* refers to the assistance given to eligible students to help defray school expenses and/or cost of sending students/children to school,;

e) *Food assistance* refers to the assistance to beneficiaries amounting to at least P80.00 per meal per individual for meals;

f) *Medical Assistance* refers to assistance to help shoulder hospitalization expenses, cost of medicines, other medical treatment or procedures, or professional fees;

g) *Target beneficiaries* refers to individuals and/or families who are indigent, vulnerable, disadvantaged, or are otherwise in crisis situation based on the assessment of the Social Workers; and

h) *Transportation Assistance* refers to the assistance for the purchase or payment of transport tickets and/or expenses to enable the beneficiaries to return to their home provinces permanently or seek further medical interventions in another place, or to attend to emergency concerns or critical situations of family members or other individuals in need.

SEC. 4. *The Assistance to Individuals in Crisis (AICS) Program.* – The Assistance to Individuals in Crisis (AICS) Program shall provide integrated services to individuals and families in crisis or difficult situations in the form of psychosocial intervention or direct financial and material assistance.

The AICS Program shall provide its target beneficiaries with transportation assistance, medical assistance, burial assistance, educational assistance, food assistance, cash assistance, psychosocial intervention, or referral for other services, subject to screening, verification, and assessment of the beneficiaries' needs by social workers; *Provided*, that in providing educational assistance, working students in public education institutions shall be prioritized.

SEC. 5. *Conditions for Eligibility to Receive AICS Assistance.* – The client seeking assistance shall present to the social worker assigned the following documents as may be necessary to the type of assistance applied for:

- a) Any valid identification card;
- b) Police blotter;
- c) Police certification;
- d) Medical case study report, medical certificate, or medical abstract;
- e) Hospital billing statement or statement of account;
- f) Medical prescriptions;
- g) Death certificate;
- h) Funeral contract;
- i) School enrolment assessment form or certificate of registration;
- j) School identification card;
- k) Travel documents; or

- l) Any other supporting documents as may be required in the implementing rules and regulations of this Act.

SEC. 6. Rates of Assistance. – The range of the rates of assistance per type, including the frequency with which a beneficiary may avail the same, shall be as follows:

TYPE	PARTICULARS	COST OF ASSISTANCE		FREQUENCY OF AVAILMENT
		MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	
Transportation Assistance	Land Travel	Actual cost based on ticket quotation		Once a year
	Sea Travel			
	Air Travel			
Medical Assistance	Hospitalization or hospital bill	P1,000.00	P150,000.00	Once every three months
	Medicines (Out-patient)	P1,000.00	P10,000.00	
	Laboratory procedures (Out-patient)	P1,000.00	P10,000.00	
Burial Assistance	Funeral expenses	P5,000.00	P25,000.00	One client may avail two services at the same time
	Transfer of cadaver	P5,000.00	P25,000.00	
	Casualties during disaster/calamity		P10,000.00 per casualty	
Educational Assistance (2 children per family and 3 children for solo parent)	Elementary students	P1,000.00	P10,000.00	Once every school year
	High School students	P1,500.00		Once every semester
	Senior High School or College Students	P3,000.00		
Food Assistance	Food subsidy for individuals/families	P1,000.00	P5,000.00	As needed, subject to assessment
Cash Assistance for other support services	Other needs	P1,000.00	P10,000.00	Once every applicable incident
Provision of PPE		P1,000.00	P2,000.00	One every three months

SEC. 7. Lead Agency. – The DSWD shall serve as the central planning, coordinating, implementing, and monitoring body of the Program.

In the implementation of this Act, the DSWD shall perform the following functions:

- a) Screen, verify, and assess the beneficiaries' situation and the identify the appropriate intervention to fully serve their situation;
- b) Provide the appropriate assistance to the beneficiaries from the array of benefits enumerated in Section X of this Act;
- c) Coordinate with different national and local agencies, including organizations from the private sector to ensure full implementation of statutory commitments herein;
- d) Submit an annual report to Congress on all aspects of the operations of the programs, financial status, and other relevant data; and
- e) Perform such other functions as may be necessary or incidental to the proper implementation of this Act;

SEC. 8. *Advisory Council.* – An Advisory Council shall be created at the regional and national levels to be headed by the DSWD.

The regional advisory councils and national advisory council (NAC) shall have, as members, representatives from the DSWD, Department of Health (DOH), Department of Education (DepEd), Department of Transportation (DOTr), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). The regional advisory councils and NAC shall also have, as additional members, two (2) representatives from accredited nongovernmental organizations working or monitoring social welfare service programs.

The Advisory Councils shall have the following functions:

- (a) Meet regularly to promote coordination across agencies to enhance the implementation of the program and jointly address and resolve program implementation issues;
- (b) Recommend to the President measures and policies for the responsive delivery of the commitments under this Act and integration with the general poverty reduction strategy of government;
- (c) Promulgate a grievance redress system and accept complaints and grievances pertaining to the implementation of the AICS; and
- (d) Review the monitoring and assessment reports of the Independent Monitoring Committee and submit necessary policy recommendations to Congress to improve and strengthen the program, if necessary.

SEC. 9. *Independent Monitoring Committee* – An Independent Monitoring Committee shall be created at the regional, and national levels, composed of representatives from the private sector and civil society organizations (CSOs) to complement the monitoring activities of the DSWD and provide feedback for appropriate

action. It shall submit a report on the results of its monitoring activities relative to the implementation of the program to the respective regional advisory councils and the NAC. A monitoring and evaluation report shall be submitted to the DSWD and to the Joint Congressional Oversight Committee at regular intervals, as determined in the implementing rules and regulations.

SEC. 10. *Annual Report of the Program.* – The DSWD shall annually publish a full report of the AICS covering the implementation of the previous fiscal year. The said report shall include financial disclosures, number of clients/beneficiaries served, and recommendations to the President and to both chambers of Congress on how to further enhance it. This report shall be submitted to Congress before the submission of the President's Budget Message.

SEC. 11. *Program Transparency.* – The DSWD shall regularly and timely post and update on its website a report of financial disclosures and information about beneficiaries based on geographical area, social, economic, and cultural circumstances.

SEC. 12. *Joint Congressional Oversight Committee.* – Upon the effectivity of this Act, a Congressional Oversight Committee, hereafter referred to as the AICS Oversight Committee is hereby constituted. This Committee shall set the overall framework to review the implementation of this Act. It shall likewise determine inherent weaknesses in the law and recommend necessary remedial legislation or executive measures.

The AICS Oversight Committee shall be composed of six (6) members with the chairpersons of the Committee on Poverty Alleviation of the House of Representatives, and the Committee on Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development of the Senate as Co-Chairpersons; and six (2) members from each House, to be designated by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Senate President, respectively.

For purposes of determining remedial legislation, the AICS Oversight Committee shall, within six (6) years after the effectivity of this Act, conduct a review which shall include a systematic evaluation of the impact of this Act, accomplishments of the program, and the performance of its implementing agency.

SEC. 13. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within one (1) month from the effectivity of this Act, the Secretary of Social Welfare and Development shall, in coordination with appropriate government departments and agencies with the participation of local government units, promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to carry out the provisions of the Act.

SEC. 14. *Appropriation.* – The amount necessary to implement this Act shall be included in the General Appropriations Act of the year following its enactment into law and thereafter.

SEC. 15. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, orders and rules and regulations contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

SEC. 16. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette.

Approved,