

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session



HOUSE BILL NO. 1551

Introduced by
REPRESENTATIVE JOSE MARIA R. ZUBIRI, JR.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The unemployment rate of the Philippines as of March 2022 is at 5.8 percent as determined by the Philippine Statistics Authority. Unemployment ballooned when the pandemic began. Everything was affected and certain health protocols were put into place to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Part of the health protocols still adopted as of the filing of this bill is the testing for COVID-19 using either antigen kits or RT-PCR. The reason for this is that the pandemic is not yet over. Variants of the original COVID-19 continue to proliferate. And with spikes on the horizon once again, continued testing will be required.

It is noteworthy to remind that testing for the COVID-19 is still not that cheap. Those who are looking for a job will have to add this expense to their already mounting requirements. To help our jobseekers and in line with the mandate of the government to end the circulation of the virus, free tests should be made available to them.

Thus, approval of this bill is earnestly sought.

JOSE MARIA R. ZUBIRI, JR.
Representative
Third District, Bukidnon

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AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR FREE COVID-19 TESTING FOR ALL JOB HUNTERS AND
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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

Section 1. Declaration of Policy. – It is the policy of the State to afford full protection to labor, promote full employment, and guarantee that no person shall be denied access to equal employment opportunities.

The State shall ensure the safety of the entire workforce in line with its policy of adapting to the new normal by subsidizing the cost of COVID-19 testing part of the pre-employment process.

Section 2. Free Test against COVID-19 For All Job Hunters. – The Department of Health (DOH), in coordination with the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), shall provide for free and accessible COVID-19 testing for Filipino job hunters nationwide.

Section 3. Testing Not A Mandatory Requirement. – The test against COVID-19 for all Filipino job hunters shall not be mandatory requirement for employment.

Section 4. Coverage. – This Act shall apply to job hunters who are looking for employment in the Philippines during this pandemic. For purposes of this Act, a job hunter shall mean a Filipino citizen who satisfies any of the following:

- a) An individual looking for employment for the first time;
- b) An unemployed individual actively seeking employment; and
- c) A displaced worker whose employment was permanently terminated for authorized causes or by reason of the pandemic.

Section 5. Testing Centers to Allocate Tests for Job Hunters. – Upon effectivity of this Act, COVID-19 Testing Centers shall allocate an additional percentage of their daily testing capacity for job hunters. Said additional percentage shall be under advisement of the DOH.

Section 6. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – The DOH shall be primarily responsible in implementing the provisions of this Act. The DOH, in consultation with PhilHealth, DILG, DOLE and DTI, shall promulgate the necessary implementing rules and regulations within thirty (30) days upon the effectivity of this Act.

Section 7. Appropriations. – The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the funds of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the continued implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

Section 8. Separability Clause. – If any provision of this Act shall be held unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 8. Repealing Clause. – All laws, executive orders, rules and regulations, other issuances, or parts thereof inconsistent with or contrary to this Act are hereby deemed accordingly repealed or amended.

Section 9. Effectivity Clause. – This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days from publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,