

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

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 1894



Introduced by Representative Richard I. Gomez

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed our country and the entire world, in more aspects and levels that we could fathom. The phenomenon brought a staggering number of deaths, an unprecedented effect on local, national and global economies, and even psycho-social and cultural changes, that have changed the ways in which we conduct our daily lives.

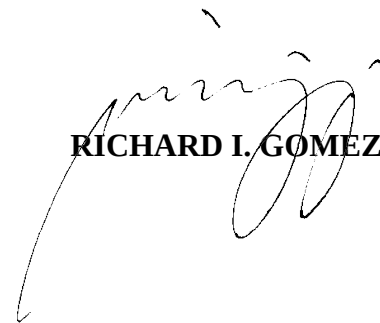
Indeed, our country has fought hard and has gained ground with the COVID-19 virus. But only in hindsight do we realize the many things that we could have done better. One of these aspects relate to our level of preparedness for a pandemic of this magnitude. Many times, it takes a huge crisis to expose the weaknesses in our government systems. One of these was the lack of research direction, facility and capacity in addressing highly infectious diseases such as the COVID-19 virus.

In this regard, the present organization of the Department of Health (DOH) focuses on a limited scope -- surveillance, policy, and management. The two most relevant bureaus related to a disease outbreak are: (1) Bureau of Epidemiology and (2) Disease Prevention and Control Bureau. The former's functions include to: (a) Develop and evaluate surveillance systems and other health information systems, (b) Collect, analyze and disseminate reliable and timely information on the health status, (c) Investigate disease outbreaks and other threats to public health, and (d) Network public health laboratories in support of epidemiological and surveillance activities. The latter's functions include to: (a) oversee the systems integration, and (b) oversee the technical integration of the bureau.

On the other hand, the University of the Philippines- Manila, in 1996 created the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to carry out its medical research and development function. This institution was strengthened in 1998 through Republic Act No. 8503, or the "Health Research and Development Act." At present the UP NIH houses the following institutes: (1) Institute of Ophthalmology, (2) Institute of Socio-Biomedical Research, and (3) Institute of Biotechnology and Molecular Biology.

This bill proposes the following actions: (a) to create another institute within the UP NIH to carry out research on infectious diseases and immunology- with the goal of anticipation and better preparation of looming epidemics caused by viruses, bacteria or other pathogens. This institute will be called, “Institute of Infectious Diseases and Immunology,” and (b) to formalize an organizational, functional, financial and advisory relationship between the UP NIH and the DOH.

It is imperative that our government develops, funds and supports our national capacity to better defend the Filipino people against our present and future health threats.



RICHARD I. GOMEZ

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

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 1894

Introduced by Representative Richard I. Gomez

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING THE INSTITUTE OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES AND
IMMUNOLOGY 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 known as the " Institute of Infectious Diseases and Immunology (IIDI) Act."

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy. - It is the policy of the State to protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them. The State recognizes that research, science and technology is essential for national development and progress.

To this end, the State shall formulate and implement policies that shall address current health issues, such as the quality and adequacy of health and medical human resources, health institutions, and delivery of health services, and shall give priority to research, the development and promotion of innovations in both technology and services, the use of safe and indigenous health-promoting practices, and their appropriate utilization by the health sector.

In this regard, the State shall prioritize the establishment of an institute that will conduct in-depth studies on viruses and their potential disease-causing agents that affect people, plants, and animals, in order to provide the scientific bases for the treatment of viral diseases, and for the formulation of policies that shall prevent the transmission of these diseases within the community and national context.

SEC. 3. Objectives. - This Act seeks to:

- a) Establish a medical research institute that shall focus on understanding and discovering infectious diseases, as well as finding ways of controlling its spread and suppression of the pathogens;
- b) Attach such institute to the UP Manila National Institutes of Health (UP NIH); and

- c) Formalize an organizational, financial, functional and advisory relationship between UP NIH and the Department of Health (DOH)

SEC. 4. Creation of the Institute of Infectious Diseases and Immunology - The Institute of Infectious Diseases and Immunology (IIDI) is hereby created and shall be an institute of the UP Manila NIH.

The IIDI shall serve as the premier research and development institute in the field of infectious diseases of all types of pathogens. It shall be a venue for scientists, research institutes and other organizations in the Philippines and abroad, to work collaboratively to study pathogens of agricultural, industrial, clinical, and environmental significance.

SEC. 5. Mandate. - The IIDI shall implement policies, plans, programs, and projects for the development of infectious diseases and immunology science and technology in the country and the promotion of scientific and technological activities for both the public and private sectors. It shall ensure that the results of these activities are properly applied towards self-reliance and utilized to accelerate economic and social development towards the protection of the citizens and resources.

SEC. 6. Powers, Functions, and Duties. - To accomplish its mandate, the IIDI shall have the following powers, functions, and duties:

- a) Together with the DOH's appropriate bureaus, IIDI shall be the convener for the formulation of the National Infectious Diseases and Immunology Research Agenda, in consultation with all concerned stakeholders, that will encompass researches involving pathogens of plant, animal and humans;
- b) Undertake scientific and technological research and development in the fields of infectious diseases and immunology;
- c) Conduct product research and development in the areas of diagnostics, therapeutics, and vaccines in cooperation with the private sector and concerned government agencies;
- d) Promote and undertake the transfer of the results of scientific research and development in collaboration with government agencies, industry, and the academe;
- e) Promote, advocate and oversee research ethics, biosafety, and biosecurity;

- f) Develop and maintain an information system on infectious diseases and immunology science and technology for use by both the public and private sectors;
- g) Develop and implement, together with other entities concerned, programs for strengthening scientific and technological capabilities through human resource development, infrastructure, and institution so building;
- h) Provide laboratory and technical services on infectious disease and immunology;
- i) Promote and advocate the national programs on infectious disease and immunology science and technology; and,
- j) Establish linkages with local and international partners.

SEC. 7. Organizational Structure. – The structure of the IIDI shall be patterned after similar and standard structures of the UP NIH institutes.

SEC. 8. Engagement of Balik Scientists and Foreign Experts. - The IIDI may engage the services of Balik Scientists and foreign experts who shall work together with the local scientists and experts, following the terms of reference and compensation structure in accordance with Republic Act No. 11035 or the "Balik Scientist Program Act" and other existing laws.

SEC. 9. Interdepartmental Cooperation. - The IIDI shall collaborate with the DOH, Department of Science and Technology (DOST), Department of Finance (DOF), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM) and other relevant government agencies, in accessing and mobilizing available information, reports, technical expertise, equipment, materials and supplies as may be required to implement this Act.

The scientific findings of the IIDI shall be integrated in other plans relating to disease control and prevention and in the plans of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases, as created by Executive Order No. 168 s. 2014, or its successor body, for the management of public health emergencies relating to infectious diseases.

SEC. 10. Entitlement to Magna Carta Benefits. - Qualified employees of the IIDI shall be covered by Republic Act No. 8439, otherwise known as "Magna Carta for Scientists, Engineers, Researchers and Other Science and Technology Personnel in Government".

SEC. 11. Infectious Diseases Research Fund. - All donations, contributions, grants, bequests, or gifts, in cash or in-kind, received by the IIDI from various sources shall be placed into a fund, to be known as the Infectious Diseases and Immunology Research Fund and such donations shall be exempt from donor's tax: Provided, That, acceptance of grants, bequests, contributions, and donations from foreign governments shall be subject to the approval of the President of the Philippines, upon the recommendation of the Secretary of DOH and the Secretary of Department of Foreign Affairs.

SEC. 12. Authority to Solicit, Negotiate, and Receive Donations, Grants, Gifts, Legacies, Endowments, and Contributions. - The IIDI may solicit, negotiate with, and receive from any public or private domestic or foreign sources legacies, gifts, donations, grants, endowments, contributions or other transfers of ownership and/or possession of real or personal properties of all kinds in favor and for the benefit of the IIDI, which shall all be part of the special account in the general fund.

SEC. 13. Tax Exemptions. - Donations, grants, gifts, endowments, legacies, and contributions used actually, directly and exclusively for the purpose of the IIDI shall be exempt from donor's so tax and the same shall be considered as allowable deduction from gross income for purposes of computing the taxable income of the donor, in accordance with Sec. 34 (H)(2)(a) of the National Internal Revenue Code of 1997, as amended. Likewise, such other transfers of ownership and/or possession of real or personal properties of all kinds shall be exempt from all taxes.

SEC. 14. Annual Report. - The IIDI shall submit its annual report to the President and to the Committees on Health, Science and Technology in both Houses of Congress, not later than the 30th of March of every year following the effectivity of this Act. The annual report shall provide a full and detailed account of the status of the implementation of this Act and policy recommendations.

SEC. 15. Joint Congressional Oversight Committee. - There shall be a Joint Congressional Oversight Committee on the implementation of this Act, which shall be jointly chaired by the Chairpersons of the Committees on Health and Science and Technology of the Senate and House of Representatives. It shall be composed of the Chairpersons of the Senate Committees on Agriculture, Food and Agrarian Reform, the Chairpersons of the Committees on Agriculture and Food of the House of Representatives, and two (2) Members from each House representing the minority who shall be appointed by the Senate President and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

SEC. 16. Appropriations. - The initial amount for the implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriations of the DOH. Thereafter, the funding of which shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 17. Implementing Rules and Regulations. - The DOH Secretary shall, in consultation with DBM, DOST, Civil Service Commission, and other relevant government agencies, promulgate the necessary rules and regulations within one hundred twenty (120) days from the effectivity of this Act.

SEC. 18. Separability Clause. - If any portion or provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, other provisions hereof shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 19. Repealing Clause. - All laws, decrees, orders, rules, and regulations or other issuances or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 20. Effectivity. - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved.