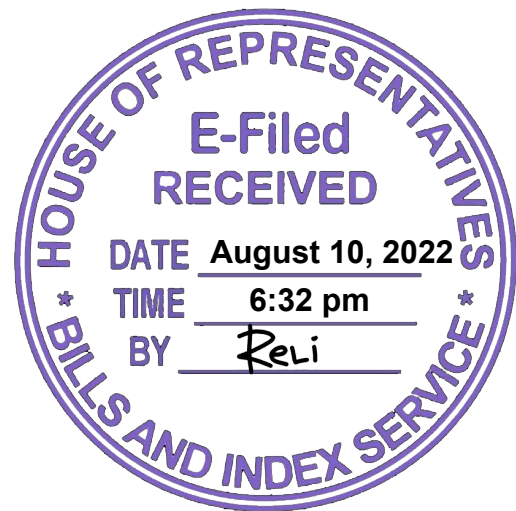




Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. **3503**



Introduced by **HON. EDWARD VERA PEREZ MACEDA**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The end to the crisis brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic is now within reach as the country is currently on its way to full health and economic recovery. While both the government and the Filipino people are optimistic towards our path to revitalization, let us not forget the lessons that came with our experience in dealing with the dreaded disease.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected all populated continents in the world, shut down the biggest of economies, halted operations of both private and public entities and sadly, cost millions of human lives. This health crisis further brought us to the realization that vulnerabilities on our public health system should be a matter of primordial state concern as it may trigger a domino effect that can cause our country to fold, collapse and eventually seek help from other jurisdictions who are also dealing with the same health crisis and are unable to provide much needed relief and assistance.

In order for these dreadful events to be mitigated in the future, our country should carefully and profoundly invest in the field of research and development particularly on the study of viruses and other contagious diseases. This is where the proposed Virology Institute of the Philippines (VIP) comes in.

The VIP will serve as the country's premiere research and development center to study all sorts of viruses, strains, pathogens and viral diseases in humans, plants and animals. The Institute shall likewise function as the primary hub that shall develop and formulate vaccines to counter possible infectious illnesses.

Interestingly, the VIP may also engage the services of Balik Scientists pursuant to Republic Act No. 11305 or the "Balik Scientists Act" so they can collaborate with our homegrown scientists to further strengthen the country's research and development capability.

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


EDWARD VERA PEREZ MACEDA
Representative, 4th District of Manila



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AN ACT
ESTABLISHING THE PHILIPPINE VIROLOGY SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
INSTITUTE AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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

1 **SECTION 1. *Short Title.*** – This Act shall be known as the “Virology Institute of the
2 Philippines (VIP) Act”.

3
4
5 **SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.*** – It is hereby declared the policy of the State:

- 6
7 (a) To protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health
8 consciousness among them;
9
10 (b) To undertake appropriate health, manpower development, and
11 research, responsive to the country’s health needs and problems;
12
13 (c) To recognize that science and technology are essential for national
14 development and progress;
15
16 (d) To give priority to research and development, invention, innovation, and
17 their utilization; and
18
19 (e) To support indigenous, appropriate, and self-reliant scientific and
20 technological capabilities, and their application to the country’s
21 productive systems and national life.
22

23 To this end, it is recognized that the establishment of an institute that will
24 conduct research and development activities/in-depth study on the
25 viruses affecting the lives of its people and resources is vital for the
26 protection of the health of its people and the preservation of the national
27 life.
28

29 **SECTION 3. *Objectives.*** – This Act seeks to establish a virology institute that shall
30 focus on the following Key Development Areas for virology science and technology
31 applications to ensure the State’s sustained progress:
32

- (a) Research on viruses using a modern approach such as molecular biology and its application or biotechnology.
- (b) Development of diagnostics, vaccines, and therapeutics (Molecular Biotechnology)
- (c) International cooperation and network of databases of virus infections.
- (d) Operation of a virus gene bank, virus genome laboratory, and virus reference laboratory to focus on viruses circulating in the Philippines for disease prevention and epidemiological studies.
- (e) Operation of a virus high containment laboratory dedicated to the study of highly infectious and highly pathogenic viruses.

SECTION 4. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act, the following terms shall mean:

- (a) Virology – is the scientific discipline concerned with the study of the biology of viruses and viral diseases, including the distribution, pathogenicity, viral cytopathicity, biochemistry, physiology, molecular biology, biotechnology , ecology, tropism, spillover or interspecies transmission, evolution, and clinical aspects of viruses.
- (b) Diagnostics – relates to methods, tests, techniques, and tools in viral diagnosis for humans, animals, and plants
- (c) Therapeutics – anti-viral, nanotechnology treatment approach, nucleic acid-based treatment, remedial agents, drugs for the treatment of viral diseases and infections for humans, animals, and plants.
- (d) Vaccines – are products that induce or stimulate active acquired immunity by producing antibodies to a specific infectious agent. It helps the body's immune system to recognize and fight pathogens like viruses or bacteria.

SECTION 5. *Creation of the Virology Science and Technology Institute of the Philippines.* – To carry out the provisions of this Act, there is hereby created a research and development institute under the Department of Science and Technology called the Virology Science and Technology Institute of the Philippines (VIP).

The VIP shall serve as the premier research and development institute in the field of virology, encompassing all areas in viruses and viral diseases in humans, plants, and animals. It shall act as a venue for scientists, both here and abroad, to work collaboratively to study viruses of agricultural, industrial, clinical, and environmental importance.

The Institute shall establish strategic partnerships with the world's leading scientists, virology centers, and institutes and conduct innovative and pioneering researches that will advance the frontiers of virology in the country.

SECTION 6. *Mandate.* – The Institute shall implement policies, plans, programs, and projects for the development of virology science and technology in the country and the promotion of scientific and technological activities for both the public and private sectors, and 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 its resources.

SECTION 7. Powers, Functions, and Duties. – To accomplish its mandate, the VIP shall have the following powers, functions, and duties:

- (a) Serve as the lead convener of the Virology research agenda as part of the National Unified Health Research Agenda (NUHRA).
- (b) Undertake scientific and technological research and development (R&D) in the field of virology.
- (c) Conduct product R&D in the areas of diagnostics, therapeutics, and vaccines.
- (d) Promote and undertake the transfer of the results of scientific research and development to concerned government agencies, industry, and academe.
- (e) Develop and maintain an information system on virology science and technology for use by both the public and private sectors.
- (f) Develop and implement, together with other entities concerned, programs for strengthening scientific and technological capabilities in virology and relevant disciplines through human resource development, infrastructure, and institution building.
- (g) Undertake policy research, technology assessment, and other related researches on virology.
- (h) Provide laboratory and technical services on virology.
- (i) Promote and advocate the national programs on virology science and technology
- (j) Establish linkages with local and international partners.

SECTION 8. Organizational Structure. – The VIP shall an attached agency of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) for purposes of policy and program coordination, and to ensure alignment in national policies and priorities. It shall be headed by a Director and two (2) Deputy Directors, one (1) for Research and Development, and another one (1) for Support, Policy and Linkages.

The VIP shall be composed of the Office of the Director, Office of the Deputy Director for Research and Development, Office of the Deputy Director or Support, Policy, and Linkages and the following divisions:

- (a) Virus Research
- (b) Diagnostics and Therapeutics Research
- (c) Vaccines Research
- (d) Technical Services and Training
- (e) Policy, Planning, and Linkages
- (f) Finance and Administration

The Deputy Director for Research and Development shall head the first three (3) divisions while the Deputy Director for Support, Policy, and Linkages shall head the next three (3) divisions.

Subject to the approval of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), the VIP shall determine its organizational structure and create new divisions or units as it may deem necessary and shall appoint officers and employees of the VIP following the civil services laws, rules, and regulations.

For this purpose, the Institute shall draw up the necessary position qualifications and standards for its personnel following the Civil Service Law, rules and regulations, in consultation with the DBM.

SECTION 9. The Governing Board. – The Governing Board shall be the principal policy-making body for scientific and technological activities of the Institute. It shall be composed of the following:

- 1 (a) Chair, Secretary of DOST
- 2 (b) Co-chair, Undersecretary for R&D, DOST
- 3 (c) Members:
- 4 i. Undersecretary of the Department of Health (DOH)
- 5 ii. Undersecretary of Department of Agriculture (DA)
- 6 iii. Director of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Philippines (CDC
- 7 PHL)
- 8 iv. Executive Director of Philippine Council for Health Research &
- 9 Development (PCHRD)
- 10 v. Executive Director of Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic, and
- 11 Natural Resources Research and Development (PCAARRD)
- 12 vi. Executive Director of Philippine Council for Industry, Energy and
- 13 Emerging Technology Research & Development (PCIEERD)
- 14 vii. Director of Philippine Virology Science and Technology Institute (VIP)
- 15 viii. Director of University of the Philippines-National Institutes of Health (UP-
- 16 NIH)
- 17 ix. Three (3) representatives from the Private Sector elected by the ex-
- 18 officio Board Members
- 19

20 **SECTION 10. *Transfer of offices and units.*** – All offices and units under the
21 DOST system that are handling matters related to virology shall be transferred to
22 the VIP.

23
24 The transfer of an office or unit shall include the functions, appropriations,
25 funds, records, equipment, facilities, choses in action, rights, other assets, and
26 liabilities, if any, of the transferred office or unit as well as the personnel thereof,
27 as may be necessary.

28
29 **SECTION 11. *Engagement of Balik Scientists and Foreign Experts.*** – The
30 Institute may engage Balik Scientists and Foreign Experts following the terms of
31 reference and compensation structure of the Balik Scientist Program.

32
33 **SECTION 12. *International Cooperation.*** – The VIP may enter into a
34 memorandum of agreement or memorandum of understanding with international
35 partners, upon the approval of its Governing Board.

36
37 **SECTION 13. *Interagency contribution of the VIP.*** – The findings of the VIP
38 shall be integrated in plans made by Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging
39 Infectious Diseases, as created by Executive Order No. 168, for the management
40 of public health emergencies relating to infectious diseases.

41
42 The findings of the VIP shall also be integrated in other plans relating to
43 disease control and prevention.

44
45 **SECTION 14. *Official Site of VIP.*** – The A lot with an area equivalent to at least
46 five (5) hectares under the administration of the Bases Conversion and
47 Development Authority (BCDA) within the New Clark Economic Zone in Tarlac-
48 shall be allocated exclusively for the Institute, its research facilities, and
49 laboratories. The biosafety infrastructure shall be designed based on risk
50 assessment for handling specific pathogens following the World Health
51 Organization (WHO) guidelines on the establishment of a virology laboratory in
52 developing countries.

53
54 **SECTION 15. *Entitlement to Magna Carta Benefits.*** – Qualified employees of
55 VIP and its attached units shall be covered by Republic Act No. 8439, otherwise
56 known as “Magna Carta for Scientists, Engineers, Researchers and Other Science
57 and Technology Personnel in Government”.

1 **SECTION 16. *Annual Report.*** – The VIP shall submit to the President and the
2 Committee on Science and Technology in both Chambers of the Congress not
3 later than the 30th of March of every year of the following the effectivity of this Act.
4 The report shall provide a detailed account of the status of the implementation of
5 this Act and recommended legislation, where applicable and necessary.
6

7 **SECTION 17. *Virology Research Fund.*** – There is hereby created a Virology
8 Research Fund to be used exclusively for the Implementation of the Virology
9 Institute Strategic Plan, which shall be administered by the VIP following, existing
10 government budgeting, accounting, and auditing rules and regulations. The fund
11 shall be sourced from the following:
12

- 13 (a) The initial amount of Two Billion Pesos (P 2,000,000,000.00) to be taken
14 from the current fiscal year's appropriation, in case the General
15 Appropriation Act (GAA) was approved before this law enacted.
- 16 (b) The income produced from its operations, technology transfer, and
17 licensing agreements.
- 18 (c) Loans, contributions, grants, bequests, gifts, and donations whether local
19 or foreign sources. Provided, that acceptance of grants, bequests,
20 contributions, and donations from foreign governments shall be subject to
21 the approval of the President upon the recommendation of the Secretary
22 of the DOST and Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), the
23 Secretary of DOST, with the approval of NEDA and subsequently, the
24 Department of Finance (DOF), is hereby granted the authority to enter into
25 loan agreements with foreign financial institutions.
26

27 **SECTION 18 *Use of Income.*** – The VIP shall be authorized to use all of the
28 income generated from its operations, as well as donations, bequests, grants for
29 the upgrading of its physical and human resources, and for the augmentation of its
30 budget, in case of a shortfall.
31

32 **SECTION 19 *Appropriations.*** – The sum of Two Billion Pesos (P
33 2,000,000,000,000.00) is hereby appropriated as an initial operating fund for the
34 operation of the Institute, taken from the current fiscal year's appropriation.
35 Thereafter, the amount needed for its operation shall be included in the General
36 Appropriation Act.
37

38 **SECTION 20 *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – Within one hundred
39 twenty (120) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DOST in coordination with
40 DBM, Civil Service Commission, and other relevant government agencies, shall
41 promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of
42 this Act.
43

44 **SECTION 21. *Separability Clause*** – Any portion or provision of this Act that may
45 be declared unconstitutional or invalid shall not have the effect of nullifying the
46 other portions or provisions hereof as long as such remaining portion or provision
47 can still subsist and be given effect in their entirety.
48

49 **SECTION 22. *Repealing Clause*** – All laws, decrees, orders, rules, and
50 regulations or other issuances or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of
51 this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.
52

53 **SECTION 23. *Effectivity*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
54 publication in the Official Gazette or any two (2) newspapers of general circulation
55 in the Philippines.
56

57 *Approved,*