



Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL No. 5481



Introduced by HONORABLE ERNESTO “ERNIX” M. DIONISIO, JR.

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL PATIENT NAVIGATION AND REFERRAL SYSTEM
FOR THE PURPOSE OF STRENGTHENING THE PROVISION OF HEALTH CARE
DELIVERY SYSTEM, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

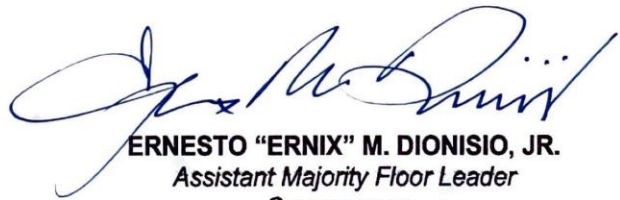
EXPLANATORY NOTE

Section 15, Article II of the 1987 Constitution states: “The State shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them.”

Likewise, Section 11, Article XIII of the 1987 Constitution states: “The State shall adopt an integrated and comprehensive approach to health development which shall endeavor to make essential goods, health and other social services available to all the people at affordable cost. There shall be a priority for the needs of the underprivileged sick, elderly, disabled, women, and children. The State shall endeavor to provide free medical care to paupers.”

In line with the aforementioned Constitutional provisions, this bill seeks to introduce mechanisms that will provide linkages amongst healthcare providers, with the goal of providing real-time, efficient updates on available resources to the general public. With the advent of the pandemic, as well as evolving health predicaments, the passage of this bill will save lives.

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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ernesto M. Dionisio, Jr.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

ERNESTO "ERNIX" M. DIONISIO, JR.

Assistant Majority Floor Leader

Congressman

First Congressional District of Manila



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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 "National Patient Navigation and Referral System Act"

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policies. – It is the policy of the State to protect and promote the right to health of all Filipinos and instill health consciousness among them. It is likewise the policy of the State to improve the delivery of health care services to the people and to ensure efficiency in the process of accessing quality health services and availing medical and financial assistance to fund health services. Towards this end, the State shall establish an integrated patient navigation and referral system that shall provide coherent and seamless linkages among relevant health facilities and agencies throughout the country.

SEC. 3. Scope. - This Act applies to all public and private hospitals, infirmaries, and other health facilities such as primary care, custodial care, diagnostic/therapeutic, specialized out-patient, and telehealth service providers, including appropriate national, regional, and local government agencies throughout the country.

SEC. 4. Definition of Terms. – For the purposes of this Act, the following terms shall mean:

- a) *Gatekeeping* refers to the process by which primary care providers, acting as the navigator, coordinator, and initial and continuing point of contact in the health care delivery system, authorize access to specialty care, hospital care, and diagnostic tests;

- b) Health care refers to the maintenance or improvement of the health of individuals or population through the prevention, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation, and chronic management of disease, illness, injury and other physical and mental ailments or impairments of human beings;
- c) Health facilities refer to an institution that has health care as its core service, function or business;
- d) Patient navigation refers to directing and assisting an individual to obtain health care services and overcome barriers for timely, cost-effective, and appropriate medical care;
- e) Referral mechanism refers to the process of coordination in which a health worker at one level of the health system, has insufficient resources (drugs, equipment, skills) to manage a clinical condition seeks the assistance of a better or differently resourced facility at the same or higher level to assist in, or take over the management of the patient;
- f) Telehealth refers to the delivery of health care services, where patients and providers are separated by distance using information and communication technology.

SEC. 5. Establishment of a National Patient Navigation and Referral System. - There shall be established a National Patient Navigation and Referral System to support, strengthen, and facilitate the provision of health services of primary care providers acting as the navigator, coordinator, and initial and continuing point of contact in the health care delivery system pursuant to Republic Act No. 11223, otherwise known as the "Universal Health Care Act"

SEC. 6. Purposes. – The NPNRS Shall have the following purposes:

- a) Support and strengthen the province-wide and city-wide health care provider networks throughout the country;
- b) Facilitate vertical and horizontal linkages and coordination among local government units, hospitals, infirmaries, other health facilities, telehealth service providers, local and national government agencies to maximize the use of limited health resources and improve access to quality health services for patients;
- c) Develop and maintain an inventory of existing health services and human resources of both public and private health facilities that shall serve as a guide in directing patients as well as a gatekeeper in ensuring rational and efficient use of existing health resources;
- d) Interconnect and facilitate communication among hospitals, infirmaries, other health facilities, telehealth service providers, and local and national government agencies to improve access to quality health services for patients;
- e) Develop and implement patient navigation services and referral mechanisms that shall assist patients to identify and reach the appropriate health facility and receive quality health service in a timely manner and consistent with the role of primary care providers in the health systems gatekeeping mechanism;
- f) Include patient navigation and referral services to Malasakit Centers and other government and non-government organizations that can provide financial health assistance to ensure full range of support services from

identifying and reaching appropriate facility to ensuring financial health protection of patients; and

- g) Ensure patient privacy and confidentiality and that only those involved in patient's care shall have access to his/her information in compliance with Republic Act No. 10173, otherwise known as the "Data Privacy Act of 2012".

SEC. 7. Establishment of a National Patient Navigation and Referral Center (NPNRC). — There shall be established a National Patient Navigation and Referral Center (NPNRC). The existing One Hospital Command Center shall be expanded to perform the functions of the NPNRC, which shall be created as a unit under the Department of Health.

SEC. 8. Functions and Responsibilities. – The NPNRC shall have the following powers and functions:

- (a) Serve as the implementing arm of the NPNRS, which shall provide patient navigation assistance services, facilitate coordination and referral within or across health care provider networks, conduct data analytics to ensure efficient utilization of health services, and improve access to healthcare in alignment with the UHC Act;
- (b) Access to health facility information, which may include, but are not limited to, current bed allocation and utilization, current Health Human Resources (HRH), and others as may be deemed necessary by the Secretary of Health;
- (c) Link patients and health facilities to local government units (LGUS) ambulances and patient transport vehicles as necessary;
- (d) Guide patients needing financial assistance to cover the cost of medical expenses beyond what is covered by the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation by referring them to the Malasakit Centers and other agencies with such mandate;
- (e) Work in close coordination with government and private hospitals, infirmaries, other health facilities, telehealth service providers, local and national government agencies;
- (f) Provide oversight to Regional Patient Navigation and Referral Centers;
- (g) Coordinate with the Department of Information and Communication Technology (DICT) for connectivity support; and
- (h) Call upon any government office or instrumentality, including government-owned or-controlled corporations, government financial institutions, LGUS, non-government organizations, and the private sector for assistance or as the circumstances may require.

The NPNRC shall be provided a base of operations and the necessary resources, which shall include but are not limited to infrastructure, equipment, and human resources, to fulfill functions subject to compliance with the usual government auditing and budget rules. It shall also house the Malasakit Program Office for close coordination.

SEC. 9. Establishment of Regional Patient Navigation and Referral Centers (RPNRCS). – Regional Patient Navigation and Referral Centers (RPNRCS) shall be established in all administrative regions of the country. The existing Regional One Hospital Command Centers in each region and in Bangsamoro Autonomous

Region of Muslim Mindanao shall be expanded to become the RPNRCS, which shall be lodged under the Center for Health Development (CHD) of the respective regions.

SEC. 10. Functions and Responsibilities of the RPNRCS. -- The RPNRCS shall have the following powers and functions:

- a) Serve as the implementing arm of the NPNRC at the regional level to improve access to healthcare in alignment with Universal Health Care;
- b) Perform the roles and functions of the NPNRC as stipulated in Section 8 of this Act within their respective jurisdiction; and
- c) Work in close coordination with NPNRC and other RPNRCS for timely reporting and coordination of inter-regional referrals.

The RPNRC shall be provided a base of operations and the necessary resources, which include but are not limited to infrastructure, equipment, and human resources, to fulfill its functions through the CHDS.

SEC. 11. Organization. – The Secretary of Health shall determine the organizational structure and staffing modifications of the NPNRC and the RPNRCS Subject to the approval of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) in accordance with the existing civil service laws, rules, and regulations.

SEC. 12. Penalty. – It shall be prohibited for any official, medical practitioner or employee of any health facility to refuse to accept a patient referred by the National Patient Navigation and Referral Center or Regional Patient Navigation and Referral Unit without a just and reasonable ground.

The penalty for refusal to accept a patient referred to them shall be prescribed in the Implementing Rules and Regulations to be formulated by the Department of Health and relevant stakeholders.

SEC. 13. Appropriations. - The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 14. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – The Secretary of Health shall, in consultation with the appropriate government and private agencies, issue the necessary implementing rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act within ninety days (90) from its effectivity.

SECTION 15. Separability Clause. – If any provision of this Act shall be declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not otherwise affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION. 16. Repealing Clause. – All laws, decrees, orders, issuances, orders and regulations or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 17. Effectivity. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,