

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 8620



Introduced by Rep. Ray T. Reyes

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Republic Act 11223, otherwise known as the Universal Health Care aims to provide affordable, quality, and comprehensive health care to Filipinos, including oral health services. Apart from this, the government has also made strides in raising oral health awareness, such as the distribution of dental care kits to children. The imposition of sugar taxes to discourage Filipinos from consuming sugary drinks and to fund more oral care programs and infrastructure has also been put in place.

Despite this, oral and dental health for Filipinos is limited to simple brushing routines with regular toothpaste, with some lower-income households opting to use alternative methods such as saltwater gargles and brushing with baking soda. Data provided by the National Monitoring and Evaluation for Dental Survey (NMEDS) in 2022 indicates that 87.4% of Filipinos suffer from tooth decay or dental cavities. The absence of proper dental and oral health care, coupled with a diet of sugary and processed foods, and the emotional stress that the pandemic has brought has caused incidences of tooth decay to rise, leaving millions of Filipinos susceptible to the development of gum or periodontal disease.

The presence of periodontal disease can give an overview of one's general health. There exists literature that supports the connection between periodontitis and exacerbated insulin resistance. Relevant surveys have found significantly higher prevalence of periodontitis among patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. There are also scientific papers that show the bidirectional relationship between periodontal disease and higher mortality in patients with chronic kidney disease.

Numerous studies have also found links between periodontal disease in populations and its association with systemic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, stroke, and certain cancers. Research published in as early as 2012 has found strong evidence that dental plaque bacteria that escapes into the bloodstream

can cause blood clots, leading to growth in heart valves or the inflammation of blood vessels that can block blood supply to the brain or heart, which can trigger strokes or heart attacks.

This bill seeks to bring oral health care closer to our countrymen by guaranteeing that dentists and oral health practitioners are available even in far-flung and geographically isolated areas. Early detection, management, treatment, and good oral health care are key in ensuring the general health of an individual. Not only does this prevent the development of more debilitating diseases associated with oral disease, this can also minimize the financial burden on the individual, and on public healthcare systems.

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


RAY REYES
Representative, Anakalusugan Party-List


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AN ACT
INSTITUTIONALIZING THE DEPLOYMENT OF DENTISTS TO THE BARRIOS

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This measure shall be known as the “***Dentists to the Barrios Act.***”

SECTION 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 Filipinos.

Towards this end, the State shall give high priority to the allocation of material and institutional resources to protect public health by ensuring that dental services are available to depressed, marginalized, underserved, and geographically isolated areas through the deployment of competent and community-oriented dentists.

SECTION 3. *Dentists to the Barrios Program.* – The Department of Health (DOH) is hereby mandated to create a program wherein select dentists, hereon referred to as *Dentists to the Barrios* shall be deployed to remote, far-flung, geographically isolated and/or generally hard to reach areas to provide dental services to the local residents

SECTION 4. *Dentists to the Barrios Pool.* – The DOH shall maintain a pool of dentists to be deployed at any time to remote, far-flung, geographically isolated, and/or generally hard to reach areas. The minimum requirements for a *Dentist to the Barrios* shall be the following:

- a) A Doctor of Medical Dentistry graduate;
- b) A holder of a Professional Identification Card (PIC) issued by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC);
- c) Physically and mentally fit;

- d) Certified to be of good moral character; and
- e) Willing to work in remote, far-flung, geographically isolated, and/or generally hard to reach areas for a period of one fiscal year.

SECTION 5. *Compensation and Benefits of a Dentist to the Barrios.* – The *Dentists to the Barrios* shall receive a basic salary as determined by the DOH, which shall be no lower than that of an entry level dentist, or Salary Grade 13, whichever is higher. In addition to the basic salary, the *Dentists to the Barrios* shall be entitled to the following benefits:

- a) Representation allowance;
- b) Transportation allowance;
- c) Hazard pay;
- d) Social benefits, including but not limited to PhilHealth, GSIS, Pag-Ibig; and
- e) Option to avail of scholarship benefits for postgraduate studies, provided that the *Dentists to the Barrios* have rendered a minimum of four years of service.

SECTION 6. *Determination of Areas for Deployment.* – The Provincial Health Office (PHO), in coordination with the Local Government Unit (LGU), and the Municipal Health Office (MHO), shall determine the local communities where *Dentists to the Barrios* shall be deployed.

SECTION 7. *Local Government Unit Participation.* – The LGUs may request for the deployment of *Dentists to the Barrios* in the local community or barangay within their jurisdiction. A written letter of request shall be submitted to the PHO by a resolution passed by the *Sangguniang Bayan* and approved by the Local Chief Executive. Upon receipt of the request, a deployment plan must be developed and approved by the PHO and the Provincial Governor.

The LGU may provide appropriate space for dental clinics such as Regional Health Unit (RHU) buildings and barangay halls, or other facilities which may be deemed appropriate.

SECTION 8. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary to carry out the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriations of the DOH.

Thereafter, the amount necessary for the continued implementation of the *Dentists to the Barrios* shall be included and subsumed into the appropriate program as created by the DOH.

SECTION 9. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within sixty (60) days after the effectivity of this Act, the DOH, in coordination with representatives from the League of Provinces of the Philippines, and the League of Municipalities of the Philippines, shall promulgate and issue the implementing rules and regulations for its proper execution.

SECTION 10. *Separability Clause.* – If any part or provision of this Act shall be deemed unconstitutional or invalid, the other parts or provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 11. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations and other issuances or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 12. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,