Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Constitution Hills, Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 10230



Introduced by 2nd District of Agusan del Norte Representative
HON. DALE B. CORVERA

AN ACT
PROVIDING MONTHLY SUPPORT TO SENIOR CITIZENS OF PRESCRIBED MAINTENANCE MEDICINES, FOOD SUPPLEMENTS, AND VITAMINS, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article XIII, Section 11 of the Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines provides that 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 priority for the needs of the underprivileged, sick, elderly, disabled, women and children.

Artticle XV, Section 4 of the Constitution further declares that it is the duty of the family to take care of its elderly members while the State may design programs of social security for them.

To fulfill these constitutional policies, the government enacted Republic Act No. 7432, otherwise known as "An Act to Maximize the Contribution of Senior Citizens to Nation Building, Grant Benefits and Special Privileges and for Other Purposes", which was expanded by Republic Act No. 9994, otherwise known as the "Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010", granting benefits and privileges to our senior citizens which are largely characterized by discounts and a monthly stipend for indigent senior citizens.

Although the intention of the law is laudable, the grant of discounts is largely dependent on a senior citizen's disposable income or capacity to buy. For poorer senior citizens who have no extra money to buy leisure goods or those that live below the poverty threshold, the discount benefits become illusory.

In a recent study about policies and programs for senior citizens in the Philippines (Reyes, Arboneda and Asis, 2019)[1], it was estimated that about 13.2% of senior citizens were members of households classified as income poor while 4.3% were members of households classified as subsistence poor. Based on the 2020 Census of Population and Housing, there are 9,222,872 senior citizens in the country or about 8.5% of the country's total population

It is a known fact that senior citizens, because of advanced age, often suffer from several health conditions which require the regular intake of maintenance medicines.

Time and again, we hear stories of senior citizens resorting to pitiful practices in taking their maintenance medicines. Short of funds, they take medications in alternating days. Some cut their tablets in half to prolong their supply, not knowing that a lower dosage might not have any effect at all. While those least fortunate are compelled to rely on divine intervention. For lack of funds to spend on the purchase of necessary maintenance medicines, a manageable illness becomes a serious threat to our senior citizens because of the complications triggered by improper intake amount.

Further complicating this challenge to our senior citizens, the Philippines is among countries with the highest price of medicines in Southeast Asia. The cost of medicines, especially those that are prescribed to be taken as maintenance, are largely borne by households. Based on the 2022 Philippine Statistical Yearbook, 45% of the total current health expenditure in 2020 came from out-of-pocket expenses of families. Surprisingly, the combined share of the general government, which includes DOH, LGUs, PHIC, GSIS and SSS among others, is also 45%.

To alleviate the miserable plight of our senior citizens and in recognition of their contribution to society, especially during their prime years, this measure proposes to provide support to our senior citizens by shouldering their prescribed monthly maintenance medicines, food supplements and vitamins up to One Thousand Pesos (P1,000.00). It will utilize the database and registration system of Local Government Units through their Office for Senior Citizens' Affairs. Regional Offices of the DOH, with which the budget for the procurement of the consolidated maintenance medicines will be lodged, will utilize the consolidated data for the purchase of the medicines. Rural health units in municipalities and city health offices in cities will aid in verifying the correctness of the requested medicines by the OSCAs and the accurate distribution of the purchased medicines to the OSCAs that requested them.

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

DALE B. CORVERA
Representative
2nd District of Agusan del Norte

[1] Reyes, C., Arboneda, A. and Asis, R. (2019). *Silver Lingings for the Elderly in the Philippines: Policies and Programs for Senior Citizens.* PIDS Discussion Paper Series No. 2019-09. Available at https://pidswebs.pids.gov.ph/CDN/PUBLICATIONS/pidsdps1909.pdf (Accessed: 20 January 2024).

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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 "Monthly Maintenance Support for Senior Citizens Act".

Section 2. *Declaration of Policies.* – As provided under Article XIII, Section 11 of the Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, it is a declared policy that 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 priority for the needs of the underprivileged, sick, elderly, disabled, women and children.

Artticle XV, Section 4 of the Constitution further declares that it is the duty of the family to take care of its elderly members while the State may design programs of social security for them.

Section 3. *Objectives.* – This Act shall serve the following objectives:

(a) To give full support to the improvement of the total well-being of the elderly and their full participation in society, considering that senior citizens are integral part of the Philippine society;

(b) To provide a healthcare support system for senior citizens to foster their capacity to attain a more meaningful and productive ageing.

Section 4. *Monthly Maintenance Support.* – The Department of Health, in coordination with the National Commission of Senior Citizens and Local Government Units, shall provide all registered senior citizens with prescribed maintenance medications, food supplements, and vitamins worth not more than One Thousand Pesos (P1,000.00) monthly.

Section 5. *Registration of Senior Citizens.* – Local Government Units, through their Office for Senior Citizens' Affairs (OSCA), shall maintain, regularly update, and provide a registry of all senior citizens residing within their territorial jurisdiction.

Section 6. *Duty of Senior Citizens.* – It shall be the duty of senior citizens to register and update their records, including most recent valid prescriptions, with the OSCA to be included in the free monthly maintenance support program. For purposes of this Act, a medical prescription is considered valid until six (6) months from the date of its issuance.

In conjunction with this duty, Local Government Units shall adopt mechanisms that will allow easy, fast, convenient, and accessible registration for senior citizens.

Section 7. *Role of Rural Health Units and City Health Offices.* – OSCAs shall submit the list of their respective registered senior citizens and requested medicines to the Rural Health Units (RHUs) in municipalities and City Health Offices (CHOs) in cities for consolidation, verification, and removal of duplicate registrations. RHUs and CHOs shall ensure the appropriate distribution of purchased maintenance medicines to senior citizens.

Section 8. *Role of DOH Regional Offices.* – To expedite the implementation of the Monthly Maintenance Support Program, the budget for the program shall be placed in the DOH Regional Offices. DOH Regional Offices shall have the capacity to purchase medicines for this program, guided by the list of requested medicines and subject to existing laws, rules and

regulations. Maintenance medicines purchased by the DOH Regional Offices shall be immediately released to the RHUs and CHOs upon delivery.

Section 9. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be sourced from the current budget of the DOH. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the continued implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

Section 10. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days from the approval of this Act, the DOH, NCSC, DILG and other relevant government agencies, shall formulate the rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

Section 11. *Separability Clause.* – If, for any reason, any section, clause or term of this Act is held to be illegal, invalid, or unconstitutional, such parts not affected by such declaration shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 12. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, presidential decrees, issuances, executive orders, letters of instruction, rules, and regulations inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Section 13. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,