



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

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **817**



Introduced by Representative LORDAN G. SUAN

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING THE VIROLOGY AND VACCINE INSTITUTE OF THE
PHILIPPINES AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

In June 2025, the Department of Health (DOH) raised serious concerns over the sharp increase in Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) cases, urging the government to declare it a National Public Health Emergency. Alarming data revealed a 500% surge in infections among individuals aged 15 to 25, a deeply troubling trend, especially in the absence of a definitive vaccine or cure.

At the same time, the country is contending with the resurgence of Mpox (Monkeypox). From January 2024 to May 2025, the DOH confirmed 911 cases nationwide. The situation is particularly concerning in Mindanao, where three regions reported more than a dozen cases each in May 2025 alone, signaling growing challenges in controlling the spread of the virus.

Adding to these concerns is the alarming rise in dengue cases. From January to May 10, 2025, the DOH recorded over 110,000 cases across the country. In Metro Manila alone, more than 19,000 cases were logged as of May 17, an astounding 224% increase compared to the same period in 2024. This dramatic uptick reflects the persistent threat posed by dengue, especially during the rainy season, and further exposes the vulnerabilities in our current public health system.

Recently, the Philippines, like many other countries, suffered the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which severely impacted our healthcare system, economy, and the lives of countless Filipinos. This experience underscored the urgent need for better preparedness and stronger health measures and infrastructure.

These unfolding public health threats highlight the critical need to strengthen the country's capacity for disease surveillance, research, and rapid response. The establishment of a Virology Institute of the Philippines will be a key step in this direction. It will enable the country to conduct advanced studies on viruses, anticipate and mitigate potential outbreaks, and enhance our overall pandemic preparedness.

In view of the foregoing and the urgency of this matter, the immediate passage of this measure is earnestly sought.



LORDAN G. SUAR

Cagayan de Oro City – 1st District



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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
2 Institute of the Philippines (VIP) act”.

3 **SEC. 2.** Declaration of policy. – It is the policy of the state to protect and
4 promote the right to health of the people, and instill health consciousness
5 among them. The state also recognizes that science and technology are essential
6 for national development and progress. To this end, the state shall adopt a one
7 health approach, recognizing the interconnectedness of humans, animals,
8 plants, and their shared environment. The state shall formulate and implement
9 policies to address one health issues, prioritizing research and development,
10 promoting innovations in both technology and services, ensuring the quality
11 and adequacy of human resources, strengthening biosafety standards, and
12 promoting the use and appropriate utilization of safe and indigenous practices.
13 In this regard, the state shall prioritize the establishment of an institute to lead
14 in-depth studies on pathogens and potential disease-causing agents affecting
15 people, plants, animals, and the environment. This institute shall provide the
16 scientific basis for the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of diseases, as well
17 as for the development of policy recommendations. It shall conduct research
18 and development on disease-causing pathogens, including diagnostics,

therapeutics, and vaccines, from discovery to the pre-clinical phase of development.

SEC. 3. Objectives. – This act seeks to establish a virology institute that shall focus on research and development to address pathogens and potential disease-causing agents affecting plants, animals, and humans. Its mandate shall include, but is not limited to, the following:

(a) Undertaking discovery programs in the field of virology and related disciplines, including molecular biology, bioinformatics, and other related fields of research;

(b) Conducting vaccine research from discovery to the pre-clinical phase of development;

(c) Conducting research and development of prototype diagnostics and therapeutics on viruses and other pathogens;

(d) Collaborating, coordinating, and disseminating evidence-based policies on virology and vaccine science to stakeholders;

(e) Establishing linkages with local and international networks through cooperation and collaboration with institutions engaged in virus and pathogen research and development;

(f) Training and engaging with experts for capacity building of virology and vaccine research;

(g) Investing on virology infrastructure, including high-containment facilities, biobanks, and genome laboratories, for the research of potential emerging and re-emerging outbreaks; and

(h) Providing technical assistance and laboratory use to support research communities.

SEC. 4. Definition of terms. – As used in this act:

(a) *Bacteriophage* refers to any group of viruses that infect specific bacteria, usually causing their disintegration or dissolution;

(b) *Biosafety* refers to containment principles, technologies, and practices that are implemented to prevent unintentional exposure to biological agents or their inadvertent release;

(c) *Diagnostics* refers to the development of tools such as medical devices, techniques, and procedures used for the identification of viruses and other pathogens that cause diseases in plants, animals, and humans;

(d) *Discovery programs* refer to the first stage of research focused on identifying and developing new vaccine candidates by exploring novel

antigens, immune targets, and technologies to combat infectious diseases;

- (e) *High-containment* facilities refer to facilities that are necessary for carrying out research activities involving high-risk pathogens, such as avian influenza and other hemorrhagic diseases that pose a serious public health burden;
- (f) *One Health* is a collaborative, multisectoral, and transdisciplinary approach – working at the local, regional, national, and global levels – with the goal of achieving interconnectedness among people, animals, plants, and their shared environment;
- (g) *Pathogen* refers to any microorganism, such as but not limited to a virus, bacterium, fungus, or protozoan that can cause diseases in a host;
- (h) *Pre-clinical stages and/or phases* refer to the stage of research and development that occur before a drug or vaccine is tested on humans, which aim to assess the safety, efficacy, and biological mechanism of a candidate drug or vaccine in controlled laboratory settings;
- (i) *Therapeutics* refer to bacteriophages, nanotechnology treatment approach, nucleic acid-based treatment, remedial agents, or drugs for the treatment of viral diseases and infections in plants, animals, and humans;
- (j) *Vaccine* refers to a product that induces or stimulates active acquired immunity by producing antibodies for a specific infectious agent. it helps the body's immune system to recognize and fight pathogens like viruses or bacteria; and
- (k) *Virology* refers to the scientific discipline concerned with the study of the biology of viruses and viral diseases in plants, animals, and humans, with medical importance and pandemic potential, including the distribution, pathogenicity, viral cytopathicity, biochemistry, physiology, molecular biology, biotechnology, ecology, tropism, spill over or interspecies transmission, evolution, and clinical aspects of viruses.

SEC. 5. Creation of the virology institute of the Philippines. – The Virology Institute of the Philippines (VIP) is hereby created and shall be an attached agency of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) for purposes of policy and program coordination to ensure alignment in national policies and priorities. The VIP shall serve as the lead convenor for research and development in the field of virology, encompassing all kinds of viruses and other pathogens in plants,

1 animals, and humans. It shall be a venue for scientists, researchers,
2 government agencies, research institutes, and other organizations in
3 the Philippines and abroad, to work collaboratively in studying viruses
4 and other pathogens of agricultural, industrial, clinical, and
5 environmental importance.

6 **SEC. 6. Powers, Functions, and Duties.** – To accomplish its mandate,
7 the vip shall have the following powers, functions, and duties:

- 8 (a) Serve as the lead convener for the formulation of the national
9 virology research agenda, which shall encompass researches
10 involving viruses and other pathogens of plants, animals, and
11 humans;
- 12 (b) Undertake research and development in the field of virology;
- 13 (c) Conduct product research and development in the areas of
14 diagnostics, therapeutics, and vaccines, in cooperation with
15 concerned government agencies and the private sector;
- 16 (d) promote and undertake the transfer of the results of scientific
17 research and development through collaboration with government
18 agencies, industry, and the academe;
- 19 (e) Promote, advocate, and oversee virology research ethics, biosafety,
20 and biosecurity;
- 21 (f) Develop and maintain information systems on virology science and
22 technology for use by both the public and the private sectors;
- 23 (g) Develop and implement, together with concerned government
24 agencies and the private sector, programs for strengthening scientific
25 and technological capabilities in virology and relevant disciplines
26 through human resource development, infrastructure, and
27 institution and capability building;
- 28 (h) Undertake policy research and other policy-related studies on
29 virology;
- 30 (i) Provide laboratory and technical services on virology;
- 31 (j) Promote and advocate for national programs on virology science
32 and technology;
- 33 (k) establish linkages with local and international partners;
- 34 (l) Foster linkage and alignment with the private sector for public-
35 private partnership, in accordance with existing laws and
36 regulations;

- 1 (m) Establish joint research programs and share expertise and
2 resources with the Research Institute For Tropical Medicine (RITM)
3 and other relevant institutions;
- 4 (n) Ensure seamless collaboration with RITM and other pertinent
5 research bodies to delineate specific roles and responsibilities,
6 ensuring that the research agenda is complementary rather than
7 duplicative;
- 8 (o) Foster an environment of equity in research and development by
9 prioritizing collaborative projects that advance scientific progress
10 for the mutual benefit of all involved institutions; and
- 11 (p) Perform such other powers and functions such as, but not limited
12 to, clinical research and clinical trials, as may be deemed necessary
13 and incidental for the effective implementation of this act.

14 **SEC. 7.** Director and deputy directors. – The VIP shall be headed by a
15 director assisted by two (2) deputy directors: one (1) for research and
16 development, and one (1) for support, policy, and linkages. The deputy
17 director for research and development shall oversee the operations of the
18 virus research, diagnostics and therapeutics research, vaccines research and
19 technical services and training for virology. The deputy director for
20 support, policy, and linkages shall oversee the operations of the policy,
21 planning, linkages, and finance and administration. Upon the
22 recommendation of the VIP board, as provided in section 8 of this act, the
23 president of the Philippines shall appoint the director who must possess a
24 bachelor's degree in the field of microbiology or biology, a Doctorate degree
25 in virology or other related specialization, and have at least five (5) years of
26 experience in the field of virology. The director shall have the rank of director
27 IV, Salary Grade(sg) 28, and shall exercise overall responsibility over the
28 activities of the VIP. The director shall report the results of research and
29 development studies to the VIP board. The deputy directors shall have a rank
30 of director III, sg-27. The deputy director for research and development must
31 possess a bachelor's degree in the field of microbiology or biology, at least a
32 Master's degree in virology or other related specialization, and have at least
33 three (3) years of experience in the field of virology; while the deputy director
34 for support, policy, and linkages must possess at least a master's degree and
35 at least three (3) years of experience relevant to the position.

36 **SEC. 8.** The VIP board. – There is hereby created a VIP board that shall be
37 the policy-making body for the scientific and technological activities of the VIP.
38 The VIP board shall be chaired by the secretary of the DOST and co-chaired by

1 the secretary of the Department of Health (DOH) and the secretary of the
2 Department of Agriculture (DA). The members shall be composed of the
3 following:

4 (a) Undersecretary of the department of environment and natural
5 resources (DENR);

6 (b) Undersecretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA);

7 (c) Chairperson of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED);

8 (d) Directorgeneral of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA);

9 (e) Director of the RITM;

10 (f) Director of VIP;

11 (g) Executive Director of the University of the Philippines-National
12 Institute of Health (UP-NIH);

13 (h) President of the National Academy of Science and Technology;

14 (i) Executive Director of the National Research Council of the
15 Philippines; and

16 (j) Two (2) representatives from the private sector appointed by the
17 president of the Philippines, as nominated by the VIP Board. They must
18 be Filipino citizens with recognized competence in the fields of medical
19 virology, genomics, plant virology, animal virology, epidemiology, genetic
20 engineering, or other related disciplines. The chairperson, co-
21 chairpersons, and members shall each designate a permanent
22 representative in the board, who must possess sufficient and relevant
23 experience. The permanent representative shall be duly authorized to act
24 on behalf of his/her principal, in the principal's absence. The chairperson
25 of the VIP board shall have voting rights in case of a tie.

26 **SEC. 9.** Secretariat. – There is hereby created a secretariat to support the
27 vip in carrying out its functions. The VIP board shall provide for the institutional
28 setup, qualifications, and compensation of employees composing the
29 secretariat, in accordance with existing laws, rules, and regulations.

30 **SEC. 10.** Salary, Staffing Pattern, and Qualifications. – Subject to the
31 approval of the Department Of Budget and Management (DBM), the VIP shall
32 determine its organizational structure, create divisions or units, as it may deem
33 necessary, and appoint its officers and employees, in accordance with existing

1 Civil Service Commission (CSC) laws, rules, and regulations. The VIP shall have
2 technical and administrative support staff and consultants. the consultants may
3 be hired from the public and the private sectors on a consultancy or
4 contractual basis.

5 **SEC. 11.** Inter-Agency Cooperation. – The VIP shall collaborate with the
6 DOH, RITM, FDA, DA, DENR, DFA, CHED, UP-NIH, Department of Finance, and
7 other relevant government agencies, in accessing and mobilizing available
8 information, reports, technical expertise, equipment, materials, and supplies as
9 may be required to implement this act. The RITM shall retain its current
10 functions under the DOH and shall collaborate with the VIP. It shall continue to
11 provide expertise in the detection and identification of emerging infectious
12 diseases and laboratory support. In line with its current mandate and in close
13 collaboration with the VIP, the RITM shall conduct research, surveillance, and
14 diagnostics for newly identified pathogens to formulate effective strategies for
15 the prevention and control of emerging diseases. The scientific findings of the
16 VIP, RITM, and other concerned agencies shall be integrated in the plans
17 relating to disease control and prevention of the Inter-Agency Task Force on
18 emerging infectious diseases, as created by executive order no. 168 s. 2014, and
19 the National Task Force to prevent the entry of animal-borne diseases, as
20 created by Executive Order no. 105, s. 2020, or its successor body, for the
21 management of public health emergencies relating to infectious diseases.

22 **SEC. 12.** Engagement of Balik scientists and foreign experts. – The VIP
23 may engage the services of Balik scientists and foreign experts, who shall work
24 together with local scientists and experts, following the terms of reference and
25 compensation structure in accordance with Republic Act no. 11035 or the “balik
26 scientist act” and other existing laws.

27 **SEC. 13.** International cooperation. – The VIP shall establish strategic
28 partnerships with the world’s leading scientists, Virology centers and institutes,
29 international organizations, and non-government organizations, and conduct
30 innovative and pioneering research that will advance the frontiers of virology
31 and vaccine research and development in the country. It may enter into a
32 memorandum of agreement or understanding with international partners
33 including, but not limited to, the World Health Organization (WHO) and World
34 Organization for Animal Health (WOAH), upon the approval of its VIP board,
35 and in compliance with existing laws, rules, regulations, and issuances of the
36 DFA. The DFA shall provide legal and other forms of assistance related to
37 international cooperation with the VIP.

1 **SEC. 14.** Promotion of the Virology Industry. – The VIP, in partnership
2 with the DOH, RITM, DA, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and other
3 concerned agencies, shall jointly develop an industry roadmap for products and
4 services that can be created and improved by research from the VIP. This
5 roadmap shall include an outline of how the research and development
6 activities of the VIP will contribute to achieving vaccine self-reliance. As far as
7 practicable, the industry roadmap shall include the use of local materials in the
8 development of new products and services. The developed or established
9 industry resulting from the VIP research shall be included in the national
10 government’s priority industries for incentives.

11 **SEC. 15.** Private-Public Partnerships. – The VIP, DTI, and Public-Private
12 Partnership Center shall collaborate in seeking Private-Public Partnerships
13 (PPPs) for the development of new industries, products, and services, including
14 the clinical phase of vaccine production. The VIP may also request the
15 assistance of other national and local government agencies in seeking PPPs.

16 **SEC. 16.** Promotion of Virology in the Academe. – The VIP shall assist
17 State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in the creation of virology courses and
18 programs, and in opening internships and scholarships for qualified students of
19 Higher Education Institutions (HEIS). It shall also collaborate with HEIS in the
20 creation of Virology Research Hubs and Centers.

21 **SEC. 17.** Protection of VIP-Developed Intellectual Property. – The VIP
22 board shall ensure that all technologies developed exclusively by the vip shall
23 be protected by intellectual property laws, in accordance with Republic Act No.
24 10055 or the “Philippine Technology Transfer act of 2009”, Republic Act No.
25 8293 or the “Intellectual Property code of the Philippines”, and other applicable
26 laws.

27 **SEC. 18.** Procurement of specialized materials, equipment, and
28 services. – The VIP shall undertake the procurement of specialized materials,
29 equipment, and services to be used in its operation and administration, in
30 accordance with republic act no. 12009 or the “new government procurement
31 act”, and other existing Laws, Rules, and Regulations.

32 **SEC. 19.** Official Site of VIP. – A lot with an area equivalent to at least five
33 (5) hectares under the administration of the Bases Conversion and
34 Development Authority (BCDA) within the new Clark Economic Zone in Tarlac
35 province shall be allocated exclusively for the VIP, its research facilities, and
36 laboratories. The biosafety infrastructure shall be designed based on risk
37 assessment standards and guidelines of the WHO and the WOAHA for handling

1 specific pathogens and the establishment of Virology laboratories in developing
2 countries. To safeguard the well-being and security of the human, plant, and
3 animal populations within the VIP facilities area, the VIP shall coordinate
4 with the Department of National Defense (DND) regarding the establishment
5 and security of the said facilities.

6 **SEC. 20.** Entitlement to Magna Carta Benefits. – Qualified employees of
7 the VIP shall be covered by Republic Act No. 8439 otherwise known as the
8 “Magna Carta for Scientists, Engineers, Researchers and other science and
9 technology personnel in government”, as amended, and other rules and
10 regulations issued by appropriate government agencies.

11 **SEC. 21.** Authority to negotiate, receive donations, grants, gifts, legacies,
12 endowments, and contributions. – The VIP may negotiate with and receive
13 from, any public or private domestic or foreign sources, donations, grants, gifts,
14 legacies, endowments, contributions, or other transfers of ownership and/or
15 possession of real or personal properties of all kinds in favor and for the benefit
16 of the VIP.

17 **SEC. 22.** Virology research fund. – All donations, grants, gifts, legacies,
18 endowments, contributions, and bequests, in cash or in kind, received by the
19 VIP from various sources, shall be placed into a fund, to be known as the
20 virology research fund, in accordance with accounting and auditing standards,
21 rules, and regulations:

22 Provided, that acceptance of donations, grants, gifts, legacies,
23 endowments, contributions, and bequests from foreign governments shall
24 be subject to the approval of the President of the Philippines, upon the
25 recommendation of the VIP board.

26 **SEC. 23.** Tax exemptions. – Donations, grants, gifts, endowments, and
27 contributions actually, directly, and exclusively used for the purpose of the VIP
28 shall be exempt from donor’s tax and considered as allowable deduction from
29 gross income for purposes of computing the taxable income of the donor, in
30 accordance with section 34(h) (2) (a) of Republic Act No. 8424 or the National
31 Internal Revenue Code of 1997, as amended. Such other transfers of ownership
32 and/or possession of real or personal properties of all kinds shall be exempt
33 from all taxes.

34 **SEC. 24.** Annual Report. – The VIP shall submit its annual report to the
35 president and to the committees on science and technology of both houses of
36 congress, not later than the 30th of March of every year. The annual report shall

1 provide a full and detailed account of the status of the implementation of this
2 act and policy recommendations.

3 **SEC. 25. Appropriations.** – The initial amount for the implementation of
4 this act shall be charged against the current year’s appropriations of the DOST.
5 Thereafter, such funding shall be included in the Annual General Appropriations
6 Act.

7 **SEC. 26. Transitory Provisions.** –

8 (a) All offices and units under the DOST system whose functions are
9 related to virology research programs shall be absorbed by the VIP and
10 transferred accordingly within three (3) years. It shall include all functions,
11 assets, capital, records, funds, receivables, equipment, and facilities of the
12 concerned dost offices and units. The DOST shall conduct an audit and
13 inventory of assets, liabilities, and human resources of the transferred offices
14 and units under the DOST system to the VIP. To the greatest extent possible and
15 in accordance with Republic Act No. 6656 or “An Act to Protect the Security of
16 Tenure of Civil Service Officers and Employees in the Implementation of
17 Government Reorganization” and other existing laws, all employees of the
18 affected offices and units shall be absorbed by the VIP. Personnel hired on a
19 permanent basis and with appointments attested by the CSC who may be
20 affected by the transition of DOST offices and units to the VIP, or who will not
21 be absorbed in the new staffing pattern of the different offices and units in the
22 VIP, shall have the option to:

23 (1) Be transferred to other offices or units within the DOST in
24 accordance with Civil Service Law, Rules, and Regulations; or

25 (2) Avail of the applicable retirement benefits and separation
26 incentives as provided under Republic Act No. 6656 and other
27 relevant laws.

28 (b) Incumbent dost officials and employees may be considered to assume
29 positions in the VIP, subject to competency evaluation and CSC regulations. All
30 project-based personnel of the DOST doing virology-related research and
31 development shall be subject to the qualification standards provided in the
32 laws, rules, and regulations of the CSC.

33 (c) Research grants acquired during the transition of DOST offices and
34 units transferred to VIP shall be utilized solely for the grants’ intended purposes
35 for each of the affected offices and units.

1 (d) Existing contracts and agreements entered into by the affected
2 personnel with third parties prior to the enactment of this act shall remain
3 valid.

4 **SEC. 27.** Implementing Rules and Regulations. – The DOST Secretary, in
5 consultation with DOH, RITM, DA, DBM, CSC, and other relevant government
6 agencies, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations within ninety
7 (90) days from effectivity of this Act. Failure to promulgate the rules and
8 regulations of this act shall not prevent its implementation upon effectivity.

9 **SEC. 28.** Separability clause. – If any portion of this Act is declared invalid
10 or unconstitutional, other provisions hereof shall remain in full force and effect.

11 **SEC. 29.** Repealing clause. – All laws, decrees, orders, rules, regulations,
12 or other issuances or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this act
13 are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

14 **SEC. 30.** Effectivity. – This act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
15 publication in the official gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

16
17 *Approved,*