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**Republic of the Philippines**  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**Quezon City**

**First Regular Session**  
**TWENTIETH CONGRESS**

**House Bill No. 846**



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Introduced by REP. JESUS MANUEL “BONG” C. SUNTAY

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**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

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Section 5, Article II of the 1987 Constitution declares that “The maintenance of peace and order, the protection of life, liberty, and property, and the promotion of the general welfare are essential for the enjoyment by all the people of the blessings of democracy.” Furthermore, Section 9 of the same Article mandates the State to “promote a just and dynamic social order that will ensure the prosperity and independence of the nation and free the people from poverty through policies that provide adequate social services, promote full employment, a rising standard of living, and an improved quality of life for all.”

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In line with these constitutional directives, the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation (AICS) program has served as a critical safety net, helping millions of marginalized Filipinos avoid deeper poverty when faced with emergencies such as illness, accidents, or other crises. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) reported reaching over 1.2 million beneficiaries in 2020 alone, underscoring the program’s necessity.

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However, the current implementation of AICS, governed largely by internal administrative guidelines rather than a clear statutory mandate, has created vulnerabilities to misuse, politicization, and inefficiencies. Critics and stakeholders alike have pointed to instances where assistance is distributed as a form of political payola, particularly during election periods, undermining the program’s integrity and the people’s trust in government.

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To address these critical gaps, this bill institutionalizes AICS as a permanent, statutory function of the DSWD and introduces robust safeguards to prevent abuse, promote transparency, and ensure accountability. Among its salient features:

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1. Direct-to-Provider Disbursement — Financial assistance shall be disbursed directly to service providers through guarantee letters or digital payments, minimizing cash handling and the risk of funds being used for unintended purposes.

2. Prohibition of Election-Period Distribution — To prevent the program from being used as a tool for electoral patronage, distribution of assistance within 120 days prior to any election is expressly prohibited, aligning with the Omnibus Election Code and relevant Commission on Elections (COMELEC) regulations.
3. Objective and Transparent Beneficiary Assessment — Assistance shall be based on a standardized, verifiable scoring system developed by the DSWD and grounded in documented need, ensuring that help reaches those who truly require it, not those favored by local political figures.
4. Beneficiary Compliance Obligations — To promote empowerment over dependency, able-bodied beneficiaries are required to attend financial literacy or livelihood training, or participate in community service, reinforcing their responsibility and fostering self-reliance.
5. Oversight and Accountability Measures — The bill mandates annual publication of aggregated beneficiary data, random audits by the Commission on Audit, and the integration of AICS records with the National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction (NHTS-PR). Furthermore, it expressly bars local officials, members of Congress, or any political figures from influencing or selecting individual beneficiaries, thereby insulating the program from patronage politics.
6. Legal and Fiscal Sustainability — By institutionalizing AICS through this Act, the program's funding and implementation will enjoy stability beyond changes in political leadership or administrative priorities, ensuring that assistance to the most vulnerable Filipinos continues without disruption.

Through these reforms, this measure seeks not only to protect the integrity of public funds but also to restore the dignity of those in need by ensuring that assistance is provided fairly, objectively, and free from political influence. By enshrining transparency, accountability, and beneficiary participation at the core of AICS, this bill transforms the program from a transactional form of relief to a rights-based, sustainable social protection mechanism.

On behalf of the Filipino people, especially the most marginalized sectors of society, the immediate approval of this measure is earnestly sought.



**REP. JESUS MANUEL "BONG" C. SUNTAY**



d) Financial Assistance — Provision of monetary support in the form of direct payments or guarantee letters to service providers, to augment the resources of the client for medical, transportation, burial, educational, or other justifiable needs.

Section 4. Assistance To Individuals In Crisis Situation (AICS). — Each qualified target beneficiary shall receive financial assistance equivalent to at least Five Thousand Pesos (P5,000.00) and, in extremely justifiable cases, the amount of assistance shall not exceed One Hundred Thousand Pesos (P100,000.00).

Financial assistance shall be disbursed directly to service providers through guarantee letters or digital payment platforms whenever practicable to minimize opportunities for misuse and patronage.

AICS assistance shall not be distributed in cash during or within one hundred twenty (120) days before any national or local election, consistent with the Omnibus Election Code and relevant COMELEC regulations.

Section 5. Type, Kind, and Amount of Financial Assistance. — The type, kind, and amount of financial assistance shall be determined based on the assessment and recommendation of licensed social workers, using a standardized and objective scoring system anchored on verifiable documentation of need, and duly approved by authorized officials of the DSWD.

A database of beneficiaries shall be maintained, integrated with the NHTS-PR, and updated regularly to detect and prevent duplicate or ineligible claims.

Section 5-A. Beneficiary Obligations and Compliance.

a) Qualified beneficiaries, except those who are permanently disabled or incapacitated, shall undertake any of the following as a condition for receiving assistance:

1. Attendance in a DSWD-approved financial literacy, livelihood, or skills training session; or
2. Participation in community service or local government-identified volunteer activities for at least two (2) days.

b) Beneficiaries shall sign a written agreement outlining their obligations, including truthful disclosure of household circumstances. Willful misrepresentation or fraud shall result in disqualification from receiving AICS benefits for a period of one (1) year, subject to appeal and reassessment by the DSWD.

c) Failure to comply with agreed obligations without justifiable cause shall likewise result in suspension of assistance for one (1) year.

Section 6. Oversight, Transparency, and Accountability.

1 a) The DSWD shall publish an annual report containing aggregated data on the number  
2 of beneficiaries served, total funds disbursed, regional distribution, and beneficiary  
3 compliance rates. Personally identifiable information shall be excluded but sufficient  
4 details must be provided to ensure transparency.

5 b) Disbursement of AICS funds shall be subject to random annual audits by the  
6 Commission on Audit (COA). The COA shall publish audit findings and recommend  
7 corrective measures.

8 c) Local government units, members of Congress, or any political official shall not have  
9 discretion or authority in selecting or endorsing individual beneficiaries, to safeguard  
10 against the use of the program as a tool for patronage.

11 Section 7. Implementing Rules and Regulations. — Within six (6) months of the  
12 effectivity of this Act, the Secretary of the DSWD shall promulgate the necessary rules  
13 and regulations for its implementation.

14 Section 8. Appropriations. — The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of this  
15 Act shall be charged against the appropriations of the DSWD for the fiscal year following  
16 its enactment into law and thereafter included in the General Appropriations Act.

17 Section 9. Separability Clause. — If any part or provision of this Act is declared invalid  
18 or unconstitutional, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force  
19 and effect.

20 Section 10. Repealing Clause. — All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, rules,  
21 and regulations, or parts thereof inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or  
22 modified accordingly.

23 Section 11. Effectivity. — This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication  
24 in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

25 Approved,