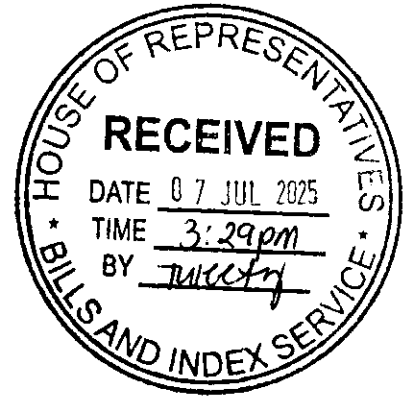




Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **1473**



Introduced by Representative Crispin Diego "Ping" D. Remulla

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A PANDEMIC AND OTHER PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS PLAN, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR,
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed many weaknesses in the Philippine public health system. Even with the dedication and hard work of our healthcare workers, the country faced difficulties in coordinating efforts, distributing resources, and responding quickly. These problems highlighted the importance of having a clear and organized system in place to prepare for and manage public health emergencies.

As a developing country, the Philippines struggled with the wide-ranging effects of the pandemic, not just on people's health, but also on the economy and the everyday lives of Filipinos. Hospitals were overwhelmed, frontline workers were at risk, and many essential services were interrupted. These challenges revealed serious gaps in our system that need long-term solutions.

Recently, there has also been a rise in MPOX and COVID-19 cases, reminding us that both new and existing diseases continue to pose a threat to public safety. This makes it even more urgent to strengthen our ability to respond to health emergencies.

This bill proposes the creation of a Pandemic and Public Health Emergency Preparedness Plan to help the country better prepare for, respond to, and recover from future health crises. It aims to build a stronger and more flexible health system that can reduce the impact of pandemics and similar emergencies.

The proposed measure focuses on using science and coordination between national and local governments to ensure a faster, more organized, and more effective response to any public health threat.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ping D. Remulla', with a stylized, cursive script.

CRISPIN DIEGO “PING” D. REMULLA



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

1 **SECTION 1.** This Act shall be known as the "Pandemic and Other Public Health
2 Emergency Preparedness Act".

3 **SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy.** - The State shall endeavor to efficiently and
4 immediately address all potential and actual public health emergencies for the protection of the
5 health and safety of the people.

6 While considering national sovereignty, territorial integrity, national interest, and the
7 right to self-determination, paramount in its relations with other states, the State shall, at all
8 times, give utmost importance to the health of its citizens, whether in the country or overseas,
9 including Filipino migrant workers.

10 **SEC. 3. Definition of Terms.** - For the purposes of this Act, the following shall mean:

11 (a) "*Public Health Emergency*" refers to an occurrence or imminent threat of an illness
12 or health condition, caused by bioterrorism, epidemic or pandemic disease or a
13 novel and highly infectious agent or biological toxin, that poses a substantial risk
14 of a significant number of human fatalities or incident or permanent or long-term
15 disability.

- 1 (b) “*Pandemic*” refers to an epidemic occurring worldwide, or over a very wide area,
2 crossing international boundaries, affecting a large number of people.
- 3 (c) “*Quarantine*” refers to separation or restriction of movement of persons who are
4 exposed or may be infected to protect the public from disease. Quarantine may be
5 practiced by individuals in their homes.
- 6 (d) “*Isolation*” refers to separation or restriction of movement of an ill person from
7 healthy persons by way of seclusion in hospitals or designated health care facility.
- 8 (e) “*Social distancing*” also called physical distancing in which space of at least two
9 (2) meters is maintained between and among persons in a public place. It also refers
10 to a prohibition of mass gatherings of fifty (50) persons or more and avoidance of
11 crowded places.
- 12 (f) “*Health Care Facility*” refers to any institution, building or agency or portion
13 thereof that is used, operated or designated to provide health services, medical
14 treatment, or nursing, rehabilitative or preventive care to any person or persons.
- 15 (g) “*Health Care Provider*” refers to any person or entity providing health care services
16 including, but not limited to, hospitals, medical clinics and offices, special care
17 facilities, medical laboratories, physicians, pharmacists, physician assistants, nurse
18 practitioners, registered and other nurses, paramedics, medical and laboratory
19 technicians, and ambulance and emergency medical workers.
- 20 (h) “*Frontline Worker*” refers to any worker who performs any task essential to keep
21 vital services in motion during a public health emergency despite great risk to
22 themselves and their families.

23 **SEC. 4. *Pandemic Emergency Council.*** - The Pandemic and Other Health Emergency
24 Council (Council) is hereby established and composed of the following: the Secretary of
25 Health, as ex-officio Chairman of the Council, with the Secretaries of the Interior and Local
26 Government, Labor and Employment, Foreign Affairs, Justice, Tourism, Transportation, Trade
27 and Industry, Agriculture, and Budget and Management, Administrator of the Philippine
28 Overseas Employment Association (POEA), President of the Philippine Health Insurance
29 Corporation (PhilHealth) as ex-officio members, and three representatives from private and
30 health sectors.

31 The Council shall convene within thirty (30) days following the approval of the
32 Implementing Rules and Regulations of this Act. Upon organization of the Council, It shall
33 draw a National Pandemic and Other Health Emergency Plan. And conduct a briefing for all
34 local government units and health care workers In the government sector.

1
2 The Council shall recommend to the President of the Republic of the Philippines the
3 declaration of a public health emergency in accordance with medical guidelines and protocols.

4 **SEC. 5. *Creation of the National Pandemic and Other Public Health Emergency***

5 **Plan.** - The Council shall create a National Pandemic and Other Public Health Emergency Plan.
6 This strategy shall provide for the integrated policy coordination and strategic direction with
7 respect to all matters related to national public health and medical preparedness and execution
8 and deployment of national response, guidelines, and protocols before, during, and following
9 a pandemic, epidemic, or public health emergency.

10 **SEC. 6. *Components of a National Pandemic and Other Public Health Emergency***

11 **Plan.** - The National Pandemic and Other Public Health Emergency Plan shall include:

- 12 (a) Provisions for increasing the preparedness, response capabilities, and surge
13 capacity of ambulatory care facilities, dental health facilities, and critical care
14 service systems;
15 (b) Plans for optimizing a coordinated and flexible approach to the medical surge
16 capacity of hospitals, other health care facilities, critical care, and trauma care and
17 emergency medical systems;
18 (c) Provisions taking into account the unique needs of individuals with disabilities in a
19 pandemic or public health emergency; and
20 (d) Strategic initiatives to advance counter measures to diagnose, mitigate, prevent or
21 treat harm from any biological agent or toxin or any chemical, radiological or
22 nuclear agents, whether naturally occurring, unintentional or deliberate.

23 **SEC. 7. *Health Care Facilities and Services.*** - The Council, in coordination with local
24 government units and concerned government agencies, shall set up health care facilities, testing
25 offices and laboratories, quarantine sites and isolation centers which shall undertake pandemic
26 prevention and preparedness services and activities, and shall respond to any public health
27 emergency.

28 **SEC. 8. *Isolation or Quarantine of Individuals or Groups.*** - The Council may, in
29 cooperation with the concerned local chief executive, authorize the lockdown, isolation or
30 quarantine of individuals or groups of individuals during a public health emergency, in
31 accordance with existing rules and regulations.

32 Restrictions on the movement of persons in and out of the initially affected area by the
33 Council shall likewise be permitted under this Act. If evidence indicates amplified transmission
34 or dispersion of the infection into the wider community, the Council shall be authorized to

1 adapt social distancing measures, which may include the closing of schools or cancellation of
2 mass gatherings.

3 **SEC. 9. *Privately-owned Health Care Facilities.*** - The Council may require privately
4 owned health care facilities to provide services of its facility in the event of a pandemic or
5 public health emergency If government institutions are unable to cope with the pandemic or
6 public health emergency.

7 **SEC. 10. *Control of Pharmaceutical Agents and Medical Supplies.*** – The Council
8 shall purchase, store or distribute sufficient quantity or anti-viral agents for respiratory diseases
9 and other highly communicable diseases, anti-toxins, serums, vaccines and other
10 pharmaceutical agents or medical supplies that it considers advisable in the interest of preparing
11 for or controlling pandemic or any kind of public health emergency.

12 **SEC. 11. *Monitoring Program.*** - A comprehensive pandemic or public health
13 emergency monitoring program shall be established by the Council to determine and monitor
14 the presence, magnitude, and progression of any infection or a new strain thereof in the country,
15 and for the purpose of evaluating the adequacy and efficacy of countermeasures being
16 employed.

17 **SEC. 12. *Reporting Procedures.*** - All hospitals, clinics, laboratories, and testing
18 centers for any infection or a new strain thereof shall adopt measures to ensure the reporting
19 and confidentiality of any medical record, personal data, and other files. The Council, through
20 its monitoring programs, shall receive, collate, and evaluate all related medical reports. The
21 Council monitoring database shall utilize a coding system that promotes anonymity.

22 **SEC. 13. *Vaccination of Healthcare Workers.*** - Healthcare workers involved in the
23 care of patients shall be vaccinated with the most recent vaccine for respiratory diseases and
24 other appropriate vaccines as may be determined by the Council.

25 **SEC. 14. *Wearing of Surgical Masks and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).*** -
26 For their protection, healthcare workers and first responders shall be provided with N95
27 respiratory masks and well-fitting surgical masks and PPE. Patients are likewise required to
28 wear surgical masks.

29 **SEC. 15. *Surveillance and Monitoring of Healthcare and Frontline Workers.*** -
30 Healthcare workers shall be vigilant of the development of fever, respiratory systems and/or
31 other symptoms after exposure to infected patients. Healthcare workers who become ill should
32 seek medical care and should be quarantined for fourteen (14) days in accordance with existing
33 protocols unless an alternative diagnosis is established, or diagnostic tests are negative for the
34 strain subject to the pandemic or public health emergency.

1 **SEC. 16. Hazard Pay for Healthcare and Frontline Workers.** - In addition to existing
2 benefits provided for by law, healthcare and frontline workers who render actual service during
3 a pandemic or public health emergency shall be given hazard pay to be determined by the
4 Council.

5 **SEC. 17. Creation of Task Force on Public Health Emergencies.** - A task force under
6 the control of the Secretary of Health shall be established in order to conduct research necessary
7 for the creation of National Pandemic and Other Public Health Emergency Plan. The Task
8 Force shall be composed of representatives from:

- 9 (1) The Department of Health (DOH);
- 10 (2) The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council
- 11 (3) The Department of Interior and Local Government
- 12 (4) The National Security Adviser; and
- 13 (5) The Philippine National Red Cross.

14 **SEC. 18. Functions of the Task Force on Public Health Emergencies.** -The Task
15 Force shall:

- 16 (a) Monitor emerging issues and concerns as they relate to medical and public health
17 preparedness and response for at-risk individuals in the event of a pandemic or
18 public health emergency;
- 19 (b) Identify and minimize gaps, duplication, and other inefficiencies in medical and
20 public health preparedness and response activities, and the actions necessary to
21 overcome these obstacles;
- 22 (c) Disseminate and update novel and best practices of outreach to and care of at-risk
23 individuals before, during, and following public health emergencies in as timely a
24 manner as is practicable, including from the time a public health threat is identified;
25 and
- 26 (d) Ensure that public health and medical Information distributed by the government
27 during a pandemic or public health emergency is delivered in a manner that takes
28 into account the range of the communication needs of the intended recipients,
29 including at-risk individuals.

30 **SEC. 19. Creation of Medical Reserve Corps.** - The Secretary of Health shall establish
31 a medical reserve corps composed of volunteer health professionals. The Medical Reserve
32 Corps shall be called into duty if needed during a pandemic or public health emergency.

33 **SEC. 20. Duty of Heads of Families, Persons-in-Charge of Places.** – Where a person
34 living in a building used for human habitation is suffering from infection, the head of the family

1 or the relatives shall immediately send notice of the same to the nearest city or municipal health
2 office.

3 If it is a child attending a school, orphanage or other such situation or a person residing
4 in any hotel, boarding house or other such institution, the person in charge of such a place shall
5 send notice of the infectious disease to the nearest city or municipal health officer and give the
6 officer a list of students or residents together with their addresses.

7 **SEC. 21. *Duty of Medical Practitioners and other Healthcare Providers.*** - Every
8 medical practitioner who attends to a patient suffering from a respiratory illness shall send to
9 the nearest city or municipal health office a report stating the name of the patient and the
10 situation of the building.

11 Any medical practitioner who becomes aware, by post-mortems or other means, that
12 any person had died of an infectious disease shall immediately give to the nearest city or
13 municipal health office a certificate of such disease and inform the head of the household,
14 person in charge of school, orphanage, hotel and so on, on the infectious nature of the disease
15 and the precautions to be taken to prevent its conveyance in others.

16 **SEC. 22. *Power of the City or Municipal Health Officers.*** - A city or municipal health
17 officer may at any time enter and inspect premises in which he has reason to believe that
18 someone is suffering from or has recently suffered from any infectious disease. The city or
19 municipal health officer may medically examine any person in such premises for the purpose
20 of ascertaining whether such person is suffering or has recently suffered from any infectious
21 disease. He may also order the confinement of infected individuals to prevent the transmission
22 or spread of suspected infectious disease.

23 **SEC. 23. *Duty of the City or Municipal Health Officers.*** - If a city or municipal health
24 officer is of the opinion that the cleansing and disinfecting of any building or any part of the
25 building, and any articles in the building which are likely to retain infection or would tend to
26 prevent or check infectious diseases, it shall be his/her duty to give notice in writing to the
27 owner or occupant of the building specifying the steps to be taken to cleanse and disinfect the
28 building and articles within a specified time.

29 **SEC. 24. *Capacity Building for LGUs.*** – The DOH, in coordination with the DILG,
30 shall develop and implement mandatory training, simulation drills, and technical assistance for
31 LGUs to ensure readiness to implement this Act at the local level.

32 **SEC. 25. *Mental Health and Psychosocial Support.*** – The Council shall ensure the
33 inclusion of mental health and psychosocial support services in pandemic preparedness and

response plans, including the deployment of mental health professionals, hotlines, and community-based support.

SEC. 26. Medical Examination and Treatment of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). - The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), in coordination with the PhilHealth, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), and the Council, shall undertake the medical examination and treatment of returning OFWs in cases of a pandemic or similar event locally or abroad. All costs attendant to the medical examination and treatment of returning OFWs shall be borne by the Phil Health.

SEC. 27. Creation of Emergency Fund. - There is hereby created and established an emergency fund for the medical examination and treatment of OFWs under the administration, control and supervision of the PhilHealth initially to consist of Fifty Million Pesos (Php50,000,000.00) which shall be taken from the existing fund in trust by the PhilHealth for the benefit of OFWs.

SEC. 28. Authority of Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA). — The functions and responsibilities of OWWA shall include the following:

- (a) The formulation and implementation of measures and programs, in consultation with appropriate agencies, to safeguard the health of OFWs and their families abroad; and
- (b) The forging of a memorandum of agreement with the POEA, the DOH, the DFA, the PhilHealth, and other appropriate international organizations in connection with the purpose of this Act.

SEC. 29. Penalties. –

- (a) Penalty for individuals who Refuse or Violate Isolation, Quarantine, Testing, Vaccination under Section 8. - Any person who refuses treatment, testing, examination for diagnosis or treatment or isolation and quarantine in accordance with existing laws, rules and regulations and to the detriment of general public shall suffer the penalty of imprisonment of not more than six (6) months or a fine of not more than One Hundred Thousand Pesos (Php 100,000.00) or both upon the discretion of the court,
- (b) Penalty for Refusal to Provide Health Services under Section 9 of this Act. - The owner, manager or administrator of a private health care facility who refuses to give services or allow the use of its facility during a pandemic or public health emergency shall suffer the penalty of imprisonment of not more than one (1) year

1 of a fine of not more than Two Hundred Thousand Pesos (Php200,000.00) or both
2 upon the discretion of the Court.

3 (c) Penalty for Breach of Duty under Sections 20, 21, and 23 of this Act. - All persons,
4 under a duty to inform the nearest city or municipal health office of the infectious
5 disease, who fail to neglect to inform the same shall be sentenced to an
6 imprisonment of not more than six (6) months or a fine of not more than One
7 Hundred Thousand Pesos (Php 100,000) or both upon the discretion of the court.

8 **SEC. 30. Authorization of Appropriations.** — To carry out the provisions of this Act,
9 an initial fund of One billion pesos (Php 1,000,000,000.00) shall be appropriated and such sums
10 as may be necessary for the succeeding fiscal year.

11 **SEC. 31. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** — Within thirty (30) days from
12 promulgation of this Act, the DOH, in collaboration with OWWA, the POEA, PhilHealth,
13 Department of Justice, and the DFA and representatives from the private health sector shall
14 issue the necessary rules and regulations.

15 **SEC. 32. Separability Clause.** - Should any provision herein be declared
16 unconstitutional, the same shall not affect the validity of the other provisions of this Act.

17 **SEC. 33. Repealing Clause.** - All laws, decrees, orders, and issuances, or portions
18 thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, are hereby repealed, amended
19 or modified accordingly.

20 **SEC. 34. Effectivity Clause.** - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
21 complete publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,