



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



Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 2461

Introduced by Representatives Dante S. Garcia and Kenneth Paolo C. Tereng

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The ancient Roman proverb, "Healthy mind in a healthy body" holds true even in these modern times, with our body and health condition affecting not just our mood and emotions, but our overall day-to-day activities and functions.

Thus, the right to adequate food and proper nutrition is a basic human right enshrined in the 1987 Constitution. It is, after all, the duty of the State to address - and ultimately end - malnutrition and provide the citizenry access to nutritious food.

The newly created program of the Department of Social Welfare and Development, whose target is to address the nutrition needs of the poor families, as well as pregnant and lactating women, dubbed *Walang Gutom 2027: The Philippine Food Stamp Program*, is in line with the President's Philippine Development Agenda aimed at addressing involuntary hunger among the poorest of the poor families.

Also mentioned during the President's SONA 2023 and 2024, the program will also employ a whole-of-nation approach by espousing inter-agency partnership to contribute to the different components of the program which aim to train, capacitate, and eventually employ beneficiaries.

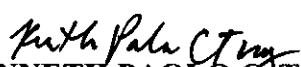
Its implementation is patterned after World Food Program's SCOPE Platform to gather beneficiaries' pertinent data, monitor the program's progress, transfer the benefits, and designed to build the family's capacity to become productive members of the society.

For this purpose, this bill seeks to institutionalize the Food Stamp Program of the DSWD to decrease involuntary hunger incidence in the short and medium term, and end poverty and malnutrition altogether in the long term.

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



DANTE S. GARCIA
2ND DISTRICT LA UNION



KENNETH PAOLO COTERENG
KM Ngayon Na Party-List

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AN ACT
STRENGTHENING THE WALANG GUTOM: FOOD STAMP
PROGRAM OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND
DEVELOPMENT AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “*Walang Gutom: Food Stamp Act.*”

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to value the dignity of every human person and guarantee full respect for human rights. Towards this end, the State shall provide its citizenry with access to adequate nutritious food through projects, programs and other services to uplift the socio and economic rights of the marginalized and indigent persons.

SEC. 3. *“Walang Gutom Assistance (WGA).* – There is hereby established a program to mitigate involuntary hunger experienced by low-income households identified as “*Walang Gutom Households*” and make them productive citizens of the country to be known as the “*Walang Gutom Assistance (WGA)*” hereinafter referred to as the Walang Gutom Assistance Program. Under the WGA Program, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) shall, after careful assessment and evaluation, provide a cash-based assistance in the form of an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Card and other modalities that will be loaded with a specific amount to purchase a select list of healthy and nutritious food commodities from partner merchant store/s. The WGA highlights a mechanism for the delivery of social protection interventions through the use of digital platforms to access food.

For purposes of this Act, “*Walang Gutom Households*” refer to persons who are indigent and financially incapacitated beneficiaries. Beneficiaries shall be selected on a per household in which at least one member of the family is of

working age or presence of a pregnant or lactating woman. The list of beneficiaries shall be taken from the bottom one (1) million households from the Listahanan 3 generated through the National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction or any targeting system adopted by the National Government.

SEC. 4. ***Identification and Selection of Beneficiaries.*** -The following are the steps for the identification of beneficiaries, to wit: (1) Uploading of potential beneficiaries to SCOPE Registration Module or other DSWD authorized platform, using the Listahanan 3 data or any targeting system adopted by the National Government, based on the criteria under the WGA Program; (2) Pre-generation of list of potential beneficiaries for field verification and validation; and (3) Identified beneficiaries will be enrolled in the WGA Program.

SEC. 5. ***WGA Program Components.*** - The following are the components of the WGA Program:

a. **Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) or Other Modalities**

The FSA Program will make use of EBT cards as digital means or other modalities as may be used by the DSWD for the provision of food to beneficiaries through cash-based assistance, in collaboration with partner merchants such as Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), supermarkets, and Kadiwa, among others. The EBT cards or other modalities can be used to purchase various food items as recommended by the Food and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI).

EBT or other modality will be distributed to either of the identified primary and secondary holders in each of the households.

For the initial implementation of the WGA Program, the DSWD will adopt the SCOPE platform, a web-based application developed by the United Nations-World Food Program or other DSWD authorized platform used for beneficiary registrations, intervention setups, distribution planning, transfers, and distribution reporting.

The EBT or other modality shall include the following sub-components, to wit:

a.1. Retailer Management

Active participation of the partner merchants in the program implementation is paramount to ensure that household beneficiaries have access to food. To be able to do this, inventory of merchants has to be updated on a regular basis which shall be monitored through SCOPE platform or other DSWD authorized platform. An inventory of merchants in the target program areas shall be done for possible partnership in the FSA Program implementation.

a.2. Beneficiary Data Management

A beneficiary list will be generated based on the process of beneficiary information management through the SCOPE Platform or other DSWD authorized platform. The National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction (NHTS-PR) or Listahanan shall be utilized by the DSWD to validate pre-identified household beneficiaries based on the standard targeting system for purposes of beneficiary eligibility and deduplication process.

a.3. Compliance Monitoring

Qualified household beneficiaries need to comply with the following, to wit:

1. Attendance to ladderized nutrition education and productivity enhancement sessions.
2. Participation in job facilitation/livelihood activities.

a.4. Benefit Transfer and Reconciliation

The SCOPE or DSWD authorized platform will be used to send necessary information between the DSWD and local merchants to facilitate the monetary-based assistance transfers and documents for reporting. In a scenario where there are no available internet connections, the SCOPE or DSWD platform can be deployed in combination with WFP-built electronic voucher delivery mechanism. Beneficiaries may use the EBT cards or other modalities to purchase food in select retail locations, and top-ups to the cards can be made for new distribution cycles. When retailers sync their devices to the platform, the information can be used for the reconciliation and payment process. Data can also be used for monitoring and reporting. Fingerprints are stored on the cards and retailers can verify the beneficiary identity through the biometric at the time of purchase to ensure the intended person is the one using the card. The steps on verification, validation and deduplication process will be reflected in the methodology.

SEC. 6. *Enabling of EBT Cards or Other Modalities.* - Upon compliance of the required attendance to the Nutrition Education session, the distributed EBT cards or other modalities will be enabled once a month with a monetary value amounting to Php 3,000.00 to be used for the purchase of food commodities from partner merchants/retailers.

SEC. 7. *Identification and Selection of Partner Merchants/Vendors.* - The following will be conducted for the identification of partner merchants, to wit: (1) Mapping of local merchants; (2) Identification and evaluation of potential merchant/vendors using the criteria under the WGA Program; (3) Partnership with eligible merchants: (a) Partnership through Memorandum of Agreement with the Department of Agriculture for the KADIWA market; (b) Partnership with select private merchants/vendor; and (c) Registration of accredited merchants/vendors.

SEC. 8. ***Capacity Building.*** - The target beneficiaries are required to regularly attend community sessions and assemblies as a condition for the continuous electronic benefit transfers. The DSWD shall conduct case monitoring and home visits to ensure compliance with the WGA Program.

Community sessions and assemblies are aimed toward the achievement of individual behavior and social behavior change. A ladderised approach shall be utilized focusing on the following key areas, to wit: (a) Nutrition Education; (b) Productivity Enhancement; and (c) Coaching and Mentoring to complement the nutrition education and productivity enhancement sessions.

SEC. 9. ***Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) Strategy And Action.*** - To achieve a positive behavioral change among program beneficiaries and stakeholders, the program will implement SBCC as an intervention that targets the program's stakeholders and beneficiaries.

SEC. 10. ***Job Network Services and/or Employment Promotion.*** - Opportunities shall be created under the program to ensure job facilitation and self employment for all household beneficiaries. Necessary support may be provided to the beneficiaries through partnerships with the following concerned agencies such as the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

Similar assistance shall be provided to aid in the processing of requirements of the household beneficiaries during the job-seeking period. The WGA Program may provide certain exceptions to this condition on a case-to-case basis to be assessed by the respective field offices where the beneficiaries are located.

As part of the exit strategy, the beneficiaries may also be referred to the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) and other existing relevant programs and services of various line agencies to ensure program sustainability.

SEC. 11. ***Grievance Redress Management.*** - A feedback system will be developed as a means of gathering suggestions, recommendations, and inputs in order to improve the WGA Program. The feedback shall include a grievance mechanism that promotes transparency, fairness, and accountability in the implementation.

SEC. 12. ***Establishment of a National Program Management Office (NPMO).*** – There shall be established a National Program Management Office (NPMO) to operationalize the WGA Program. The NPMO in coordination with the development partners and stakeholders in the national and regional level

shall implement the WGA Program activities. Likewise, Regional Program Management Offices (RPMOs) shall be established in each region for the implementation of the WGA Program.

Various departments in the local government units composed of multidisciplinary units from social welfare, health, nutrition and other stakeholders will be tapped at the local level.

DSWD shall adopt adequate and efficient modes to expeditiously and effectively deliver the support needed by the target beneficiaries. The DSWD may procure or construct a secure office system, information and communication technology equipment, and all necessary capital outlay expenditures needed to efficiently and effectively implement the WGA Program.

SEC. 13. Creation of An Inter-Agency Council ("IAC") To Monitor WGA Program. - There is hereby established an Inter-Agency Council to monitor and ensure compliance with the mandates of the WGA Program, hereinafter known as the Council, which shall be composed of the following agencies:

- (a) Department of Social Welfare and Development;
- (b) Department of Labor and Employment;
- (c) Department of Interior and Local Government;
- (d) Department of Health;
- (e) Department of Trade and Industry;
- (f) Department of Agriculture;
- (g) Technology and Skills Development Authority;
- (h) Philippine Statistics Authority; and
- (i) National Economic and Development Authority.

These agencies are tasked to formulate programs to eliminate food poor families based on their mandates as well as provide employment and skills enhancement opportunities. The Council will also serve as the monitoring body as regards WGA Program initiatives.

The Council members may designate their duly authorized representative who shall have the rank of not lower than an assistant secretary or its equivalent. These representatives shall attend Council meetings in their behalf, and shall receive emoluments as may be determined by the Council in accordance with existing budget and accounting rules and regulations.

The Office of the Undersecretary for Innovations shall act as the Secretariat of the Council.

SEC. 14. *Program Coordination With The Department of Agriculture.* - The DSWD shall coordinate the WGA Program with the Department of Agriculture for the purpose of, among others, helping the local farmers to sell their farm products.

SEC. 15. ***Personnel Complement.*** – The DSWD may create the required plantilla and staffing pattern necessary for the implementation of this Act in coordination with the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) and the Civil Service Commission (CSC). The DSWD shall include in their budgetary submission to the DBM the required budget for personnel services and miscellaneous and other operating expenses. Such budgetary requirements shall be included in the General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 16. ***Joint Congressional Oversight Committee.*** – A congressional oversight committee is constituted to monitor, set the overall framework, and review the implementation of this Act.

The oversight committee shall be composed of five (5) Senators and five (5) Members of the House of Representatives to be appointed by the Senate President and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, respectively, and co-chaired by the chairpersons of the Committee on Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development of the Senate and the Committee on Social Services of the House of Representatives.

For purposes of determining remedial legislation, the oversight committee shall, within three (3) years after the effectivity of this Act, conduct a review of the impact, accomplishment and performance of the implementing agencies.

SEC. 17. ***Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – Within six (6) months from the effectivity of this Act, the Secretary of Social Welfare and Development, in consultation with the Secretaries of Labor and Employment, Health, Agriculture, and the Trade and Industry, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SEC. 18. ***Appropriations.*** – The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriations of DSWD. Thereafter, such sum as may be necessary for the continued implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 19. ***Separability Clause.*** – If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the remainder of this Act or any provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 20. ***Repealing Clause.*** – All laws, presidential decrees or issuances, executive orders, letter of instructions, administrative orders, rules, and regulations or parts thereof contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this act are amended, repealed, or modified accordingly.

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

Approved,