

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 2496



Introduced by Honorable EULOGIO "LEO" R. RODRIGUEZ

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Section 15, Article II of the 1987 Constitution guarantees that "the State shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them." Moreover, Section 11, Article XIII mandates the State to "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."


This bill seeks to convert the Eastern Bicol Medical Center (EBMC), in the Municipality of Virac, Province of Catanduanes, into a tertiary-level hospital under the direct control, supervision, and management of the Department of Health (DOH).

While Republic Act No. 7160, otherwise known as the Local Government Code of 1991, sought to decentralize public services and empower local governments, the devolution of healthcare services has led to serious institutional and operational impairments. In the case of EBMC, decades of chronic underfunding, personnel limitations, and administrative constraints have adversely impacted EBMC's ability to meet licensing standards set by the DOH-Health Facilities and Services Regulatory Bureau. This has even resulted in the reduction of its authorized bed capacity, to the detriment of public health in the province.

As a geographically isolated island province frequently battered by typhoons, Catanduanes faces accessibility challenges to more advanced medical facilities. The proposed conversion of EBMC into a DOH-managed tertiary-level hospital is a crucial step toward health consciousness, equity, and accessibility. A fully equipped, adequately funded, and sufficiently staffed tertiary-level hospital underscores the State's commitment to ensuring access to specialized and life-saving healthcare services for the Catandunganons.

Furthermore, this measure will enable the Provincial Government of Catanduanes to redirect the considerable resources currently used for EBMC's operations toward other pressing development needs. It is also expected to spur economic activity in the province by creating jobs, enhancing healthcare delivery, and attracting skilled health professionals to serve in the island.

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


EULOGIO "LEO" R. RODRIGUEZ

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AN ACT
UPGRADING THE EASTERN BICOL MEDICAL CENTR (EBMC) IN VIRAC,
CATANDUANES TO A TERTIARY LEVEL HOSPITAL ATTACHED TO THE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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

SECTION 1. The Eastern Bicol Medical Center (EBMC) in the Municipality of Virac, in the island province of Catanduanes is hereby upgraded into a tertiary level hospital.

SEC. 2. The upgrading shall provide the provincial hospital in Virac, Catanduanes with the capability of a tertiary level hospital without increasing the hospital's bed capacity.

SEC. 3. Upon its upgrading, the EBMC shall be under the direct control, supervision, and management of the Department of Health.

SEC. 4. The Secretary of Health shall issue such rules and regulations as may be necessary to carry out the purpose of the Act.

SEC. 5. The amount necessary for the initial implementation of the Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriations for the Organization Adjustment Fund. Thereafter, such sums as may be needed for the continued operation of the hospital shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 6. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,