

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. **2648**



Introduced by Honorable Ma. Alana Samanta Taliño Santos

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A GRANT PROGRAM TO PROVIDE VISION CARE TO CHILDREN

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Around 80% of a child's learning depends on their ability to see and process visual information.¹ When poor eyesight goes unaddressed, it puts their education, development, and future potential at risk. According to a study by the Philippine Eye Research Institute (PERI) under the National Institutes of Health at the University of the Philippines-Manila, 1 in 10 Filipino kindergarten pupils suffers from visual impairment. This means that in a typical classroom of 40 students, at least four are already struggling with vision problems, hindering their ability to learn and participate fully in school.²

The Constitution mandates that the State shall defend the right of children to assistance, including proper care and nutrition, and special protection from all forms of neglect, abuse, cruelty, exploitation and other conditions prejudicial to their development.³ In addition, the State shall protect and promote the right to health of the people, including children.⁴

Ensuring access to proper eye care is not just a health issue. It is a national priority that directly affects the country's educational outcomes and long-term productivity. This bill aims to expand access to essential eye health services for Filipino children by allocating targeted grants to local government units (LGUs). These funds will enable LGUs to implement school-based and community-level vision screening programs, provide necessary treatments, and ensure timely referrals. The bill also supports nationwide information campaigns to promote awareness of eye care and the importance of early detection, ultimately improving learning outcomes and overall child development.

¹ Vision and Learning Difficulties.

<https://www.optometrists.org/vision-therapy/guide-vision-and-learning-difficulties/vision-and-learning-difficulties/>

² Crisostomo (2019). More Filipino Kids Developing Visual Impairment.

<https://www.onenews.ph/articles/more-filipino-kids-developing-visual-impairment>

³ Section 3(2), Article XV, 1987 Constitution

⁴ Section 15, Article II, 1987 Constitution

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

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MA. ALANA SAMANTHA TALIÑO SANTOS

Representative, 3rd District of Cotabato

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

Section 1. ***Short Title.*** – This act shall be known as the “*Vision Care for Kids Act.*”

Section 2. ***Definition of Terms.*** – The following terms as used in this Act shall be defined as follows:

(1) “**Comprehensive Eye Examination**” refers to an assessment of a patient’s history, general medical observation, external and ophthalmoscopic examination, visual acuity, ocular alignment and motility, refraction, and, as appropriate, binocular vision or gross visual fields, performed by a licensed optometrist or ophthalmologist.

(2) “**LGU**” refers to a local government unit, which may be a province, city or a municipality.

(3) “**Secretary**” refers to the Secretary of Health.

(4) “**Child**” refers to a person below eighteen (18) years of age, or over but unable to fully take care of himself or herself as defined under existing laws. (e) “**Vision Screening**” refers to a brief examination to identify children who may have vision problems and require further assessment.

Section 3. ***Grant Regarding Vision Care for Children.*** – The Secretary shall establish and implement a grant program to award grants to LGUs, based on an established review process, to complement existing government efforts for:

(a) Providing comprehensive eye examinations by a licensed optometrist or ophthalmologist for children identified through vision screening or examination as needing such services, with priority given to children under eight (8) years old;

(b) Providing treatment or services, subsequent to the examinations described above, necessary to correct vision problems;

(c) Developing and disseminating educational materials to parents, teachers, and health care practitioners on recognizing signs of visual impairment in children; Provided, That not more than twenty percent (20%) of the grant may be used for this purpose.

Section 4. ***Criteria and Coordination.*** – The Secretary, in consultation with appropriate professional and consumer organizations, LGUs, and relevant stakeholders, shall develop criteria governing the operation of the grant program under Section 3, including the collection, analysis, and reporting of data related to vision assessment and the utilization of follow-up services. The collection and handling of personal data shall comply with the Data Privacy Act and other relevant laws.

Section 5. ***Application.*** – To be eligible for a grant under Section 3, an LGU shall submit an application to the Secretary in such form and manner as may be prescribed, including:

- (a) Information on existing children's vision programs;
- (b) A plan for the use of grant funds, including how funds will complement existing government efforts and possible partnerships with non-profit entities;
- (c) A plan to identify eligible children as provided in Section 3;
- (d) A description of how funds will be used as a secondary payer to any local government compensation program, insurance policy, or government health benefits program.

Section 6. ***Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting.*** – Each LGU receiving a grant shall submit to the Secretary, not later than one (1) year after initial receipt of funds and annually thereafter, an evaluation of the operations and activities carried out under the grant, including:

- (a) An assessment of the utilization of vision services and the status of children receiving such services;
- (b) The collection, analysis, and reporting of children's vision data in accordance with guidelines prescribed by the Secretary;
- (c) Such other information as may be required by the Secretary. The Secretary shall submit an annual consolidated report to Congress on the implementation of this Act.

Section 7. ***Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Department of Health, in consultation with the Department of the Interior and Local Government, LGUs, and relevant stakeholders, shall promulgate the rules and regulations necessary for the effective implementation of this Act. The IRR shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Section 8. ***Appropriations.*** – The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current appropriations of the Department of Health. Thereafter, such

sums as may be necessary for the continued implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

Section 9. ***Separability Clause.*** – If any portion or provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the remainder of this Act or any provisions hereof not affected thereby shall continue to be in force and effect.

Section 10. ***Repealing Clause.*** –Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order, letter of instruction, rule or regulation inconsistent or contrary to the provision of this Act is hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Section 11. ***Effectivity Clause.*** – This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following its publication in the Official Gazette or a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,