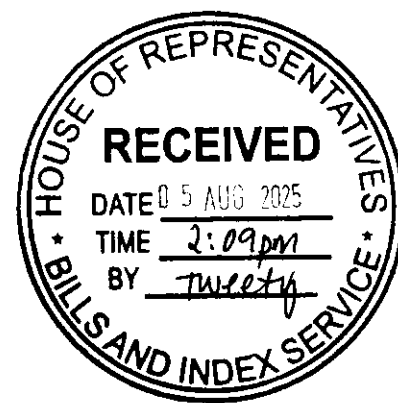


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 3092



Introduced by: Rep. Keith Micah "Atty. Mike" D.L. Tan and
Rep. Iris Marie D. Montes

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL PATIENT NAVIGATION AND REFERRAL SYSTEM FOR
THE PURPOSE OF STRENGTHENING THE PROVISION OF HEALTH CARE DELIVERY
SYSTEM, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Republic Act 11223, otherwise known as the Universal Health Care (UHC) Act, seeks to ensure that every Filipino is healthy, protected from health hazards and risks, and has access to affordable, quality, and readily available health services suitable to their needs. A critical component of UHC is to ensure that patients are navigated properly to access the appropriate care at the appropriate time and health facility. Republic Act 11463, also known as the Malasakit Centers Act has likewise emphasized the crucial role of patient navigation as a component of an integrated people-centered health service delivery by ensuring that health services are responsive to the needs of all Filipinos.

During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have realized the need for a mechanism to navigate patients across the spectrum of care became prominent and paved the way for the establishment of the One Hospital Command System (OHCS). During the pandemic, the OHCS served as a mechanism to facilitate an effective and efficient health facility referral in Metro Manila. Its operational arm, the One Hospital Command Center (OHCC) was established in the Metro Manila Development Authority Arena in Makati City, which serves as the 24/7 national operations center.

The OHCC accepts calls through its dedicated phone lines from patients and healthcare providers in Metro Manila and other provinces and coordinates among hospitals and other health facilities. It guides suspect, probable and confirmed COVID-19 cases to the appropriate hospitals, temporary treatment and monitoring facilities (TTMF), COVID-19 diagnostic laboratories and other health facilities that could provide the appropriate care they require. Through coordination with Local Government Units (LGUs), OHCC also facilitates medical transport and patient pick-up arrangements. Through the mechanism of OHCS, the national health system capacity is strengthened.

Since its establishment, the OHCC receives at least 465 calls on a daily basis.¹ It was able to coordinate with government and private hospitals, local TTMFs, and hotel quarantine facilities throughout the country. The OHCC's assistance and coordination with the LGUs and both public and private health facilities have been instrumental in improving access to quality health services of COVID-19 patients.

In addition, the OHCC was able to facilitate the navigation of non-COVID-19-related calls from patients having difficulty finding and reaching appropriate health facilities or requiring teleconsultations, requests for coordination services during typhoon Ulysses, and queries on laboratories and other health services. The success of the OHCC led the Department of Health (DOH) to establish Regional One Hospital Command Centers (ROHCC) in all regions to help in the coordination among health facilities and ensure COVID and non-COVID patients access to health services.

¹ Philippine Star. (2021, August 17). *One Hospital Command Center receiving more than 400 calls daily*.
<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2021/08/17/2120611-one-hospital-command-center-receiving-more-400-calls-daily>

Indeed, the OHCS has proven to be an effective solution to bridge the current fragmented health system in terms of service delivery across the spectrum of care by gatekeeping and navigating patients. Furthermore, the OHCS has facilitated the effective use of health resources by ensuring that facilities from primary, intermediate, and tertiary levels of care are appropriately utilized and maximized by preventing unnecessary self-referral to higher levels of care.

This bill seeks to institutionalize and broaden the scope of the One Hospital Command System to become the National Patient Navigation and Referral System (NPNRS). Its implementing arm, the National Patient Navigation and Referral Center (NPNRC) and the Regional Patient Navigation and Referral Centers (RPNRC) shall likewise expand its scope to navigate patients through our health systems to reach and access appropriate health facilities. Furthermore, it shall also link with the Malasakit Centers across different health facilities to ensure financial risk protection particularly for the indigent and financially incapacitated patients. With its institutionalization, the NPNRS is geared to re-define and reform the nature of the health delivery system of the Philippines to become more responsive and towards greater equity, accessibility, and quality.

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



KEITH MICAH "ATTY. MIKE" D.L. TAN
4th District, Quezon



IRIS MARIE D. MONTES
Kababaihan Kabalikatan para sa Kapakanan
at Kaunlaran ng Bayan (4K) Party-list

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 3032

Introduced by: Rep. Keith Micah "Atty. Mike" D.L. Tan and
Rep. Iris Marie D. Montes

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL PATIENT NAVIGATION AND REFERRAL SYSTEM FOR
THE PURPOSE OF STRENGTHENING THE PROVISION OF HEALTH CARE DELIVERY
SYSTEM, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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 "National Patient Navigation and Referral System Act".

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policies.* – It is the policy of the State to protect and promote the right to health of all Filipinos and instill health consciousness among them. It is likewise the policy of the State to improve the delivery of health care services to the people, and to ensure efficiency in the process of accessing quality health services and availing medical and financial assistance to fund health services.

Towards this end, the State shall establish an integrated patient navigation and referral system that shall provide coherent and seamless linkages among relevant health facilities and agencies throughout the country.

SEC. 3. *Scope.* - This Act applies to all public and private hospitals, infirmaries, and other health facilities such as primary care, custodial care, diagnostic/therapeutic, specialized out-patient, telehealth service providers, including appropriate national, regional, and local government agencies throughout the country.

SEC. 4. *Definition of Terms.* - For the purposes of this Act, the following terms shall mean:

- (a) *Gatekeeping* refers to the process by which primary care providers, acting as the navigator, coordinator, and initial and continuing point of contact in the health care delivery system, authorizes access to specialty care, hospital care, and diagnostic tests;
- (b) *Health care* refers to the maintenance or improvement of the health of individuals or population through the prevention, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation and chronic management of disease, illness, injury and other physical and mental ailments or impairments of human beings;
- (c) *Health facilities* refers to an institution that has health care as its core service, function or business;
- (d) *Patient navigation* refers to directing and assisting an individual to obtain health care services and overcome barriers for timely, cost-effective, and appropriate medical care;
- (e) *Referral mechanism* refers to the process of coordination in which a health worker at one level of the health system, having insufficient resources (drugs, equipment, skills) to manage a clinical condition, seeks the assistance of a better or differently resourced facility at the same or higher level to assist in, or take over the management of the patient;
- (f) *Telehealth* refers to delivery of health care services, where patients and providers are separated by distance using information and communication technology.

SEC. 5. *Establishment of a National Patient Navigation and Referral System.* – There shall be established a National Patient Navigation and Referral System (NPNRS) to support, strengthen, and facilitate the provision of health services of primary care providers acting as the navigator, coordinator, and initial and continuing point of contact in the health care delivery system pursuant to Republic Act No. 11223, otherwise known as the “Universal Health Care Act”.

SEC. 6. *Purposes.* – The NPNRS shall have the following purposes:

- (a) Support and strengthen the province-wide and city-wide health care provider networks throughout the country;
- (b) Facilitate vertical and horizontal linkages and coordination among local government units, hospitals, infirmaries, other health facilities, telehealth service providers, local and national government agencies to maximize the use of limited health resources and improve access to quality health services for patients;
- (c) Develop and maintain an inventory of existing health services and human resources of both public and private health facilities that shall serve as a guide in directing patients as well as a gatekeeper in ensuring rational and efficient use of existing health resources;
- (d) Interconnect and facilitate communication among hospitals, infirmaries, other health facilities, telehealth service providers, local and national government agencies to improve access to quality health services for patients;
- (e) Develop and implement patient navigation services and referral mechanisms that shall assist patients to identify and reach the appropriate health facility and receive quality health service in a timely manner and consistent with the role of primary care providers in the health systems gatekeeping mechanism;
- (f) Include patient navigation and referral services to Malasakit Centers and other government and non-government organizations that can provide financial health assistance to ensure full range of support services from identifying and reaching appropriate facility to ensuring financial health protection of patients; and
- (g) Ensure patient privacy and confidentiality and that only those involved in patient’s care shall have access to his/her information in compliance with Republic Act No. 10173, otherwise known as the “Data Privacy Act of 2012”.

SEC. 7. *Establishment of a National Patient Navigation and Referral Center (NPNRC).* – There shall be established a National Patient Navigation and Referral Center (NPNRC). The existing One Hospital Command Center shall be expanded to perform the functions of the NPNRC, which shall be created as a unit under Department of Health.

SEC. 8. *Functions and Responsibilities.* – The NPNRC shall have the following powers and functions:

- (a) Serve as the implementing arm of the NPNRS, which shall provide patient navigation assistance services, facilitate coordination and referral within or across health care provider networks, conduct data analytics to ensure efficient utilization of health services, and improve access to healthcare in alignment with the UHC Act;
- (b) Access to health facility information, which may include, but are not limited to, current bed allocation and utilization, current Health Human Resources (HRH), and others as may be deemed necessary by the Secretary of Health;
- (c) Link patients and health facilities to local government units (LGUs) ambulance and patient transport vehicle as necessary;
- (d) Guide patients needing financial assistance to cover the cost of medical expenses beyond what is

covered by the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation by referring them to the Malasakit Centers and other agencies with such mandate;

- (e) Work in close coordination with government and private hospitals, infirmaries, other health facilities, telehealth service providers, local and national government agencies;
- (f) Provide oversight to Regional Patient Navigation and Referral Centers; and
- (g) Coordinate with the Department of Information and Communication Technology (DICT) for connectivity support; and
- (h) Call upon any government office or instrumentality, including government-owned or-controlled corporations, government financial institutions, LGUs, non-government organizations, and the private sector for assistance or as the circumstances may require.

The NPNRC shall be provided a base of operations and the necessary resources, which shall include but are not limited to infrastructure, equipment, and human resources, to fulfill its functions subject to compliance with the usual government auditing and budget rules. It shall also house the Malasakit Program Office for close coordination.

SEC. 9. *Establishment of Regional Patient Navigation and Referral Centers (RPNRCs).* - Regional Patient Navigation and Referral Centers (RPNRCs) shall be established in all administrative regions of the country. The existing Regional One Hospital Command Centers in each region and in Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao shall be expanded to become the RPNRCs, which shall be lodged under the Center for Health Development (CHD) of the respective regions.

SEC. 10. *Functions and Responsibilities of the RPNRCs.* - The RPNRCs shall have the following powers and functions:

- (a) Serve as the implementing arm of the NPNRC at the regional level to improve access to healthcare in alignment with Universal Health Care;
- (b) Perform the roles and function of the NPNRC as stipulated in Section 8 of this Act within their respective jurisdiction; and
- (c) Work in close coordination with NPNRC and other RPNRCs for timely reporting and coordination of inter-regional referrals.

The RPNRC shall be provided a base of operations and the necessary resources, which include but are not limited to infrastructure, equipment, and human resources, to fulfill its functions through the CHDs.

SEC. 11. *Organization.* - The Secretary of Health shall determine the organizational structure and staffing modifications of the NPNRC and the RPNRCs subject to the approval of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) in accordance with the existing civil service laws, rules, and regulations.

SEC. 12. *Appropriations.* - The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 13. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* - The Secretary of Health shall, in consultation with the appropriate government and private agencies, issue the necessary implementing rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act within ninety days (90) from its effectivity.

SECTION 14. *Penal Provision.* - Any person who, by means of fraudulent, false, hoax or imaginary pretenses or other similar deceptions makes a call to NPNRC's phone lines made solely to cause mischief or disrupt the performance of its public functions shall be punished by imprisonment ranging from one (1) month and one (1) day to six (6) months or a fine of not less than Ten thousand pesos (10,000) but not more than Fifty thousand pesos (P50,000) or both, at the discretion of the court.

Any official, medical practitioner or employee of any health facility which refuses to accept a patient referred by NPNRC/RPNRC without a just and reasonable ground shall be punished by imprisonment of not less than six (6) months and one (1) day but not more than two (2) years and four (4) months, or a fine of not less than Twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00), but not more than One hundred thousand pesos (P100,000.00) or both, at the discretion of the court: Provided, however, That if such violation was committed pursuant to an established policy of the hospital or clinic or upon instruction of its management, the director or officer of such hospital or clinic responsible for the formulation and implementation of such policy shall, upon conviction by final judgment, suffer imprisonment of four (4) to six (6) years, or a fine of not less than One hundred thousand pesos (P100,000.00), but not more than Five hundred thousand pesos (P500,000.00) or both, at the discretion of the court.

SECTION 15. *Separability Clause.* - If any provision of this Act shall be declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not otherwise affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 16. *Repealing Clause.* - All laws, decrees, orders, issuances, orders and regulations or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 17. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,