

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. **3412**



INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVE PM VARGAS

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING THE WOMEN'S HEALTH RESEARCH CENTER,
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

It is the policy of the State to protect and promote the right to health of every Filipino. Given the dynamic and vital roles that Filipino women play in society and the numerous risks to their health and well-being, we must adopt the best practices of developed countries and find ways to address these vital issues in health.

In 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that maternal death in the Philippines is high at 121 per 100,000 live births.¹ Although this figure is a huge decline since the year 2000, trends show that maternal death in the country is dropping by only about 2% per year. This means that the number of Filipino pregnant women who die every year remains alarmingly high.

Other indicators of women's health related to motherhood, nutrition, and reproductive health, among others, have also been exacerbated by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, which greatly challenged the health system, especially the developing countries like the Philippines.

In a developed country like the United States of America, a remarkable

¹ Gavira, Bea Andrea et al. 2020, Measuring Maternal Mortality Using Civil Registration Data. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/11_Measuring_Maternal_Mortality_Using_Civil_Registration_Philippines.pdf (Accessed on October 26, 2022)

move to address women's health is the establishment of the Women's Health Research Center (ORWH) at the National Institute of Health in September 1990 in order "to strengthen, develop, and increase research on diseases, disorders, and conditions that are unique to, more prevalent among, or more serious in women, or for which there are different risk factors for women than for men."²

The research undertaken by the OWRH has found that sex and gender identity play crucial roles in health, wellness, and disease progression. Hence, a research center focused on the nuances and specifics tailored to women's health is important.

This bill seeks to establish our very own research center to be called the Women's Health Research Center in the hope of improving the overall health of Filipino women across the lifespan, and by extension, improve the health and wellbeing of their families and communities.

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



REP. PM VARGAS

Fifth District, Quezon City

² Pinn, V.M. (1994) "The Role of the NIH's Women's Health Research Center." *Academic Medicine: Journal of the Association of American Medical Colleges* 69(9): 698-702.

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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 "*Women's Health Research Center Act*".

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. – It is the policy of the State to give priority to the needs of women. Taking into account the inherent disparity between men and women, the State shall undertake a research focusing on women's health which shall be responsive to the needs of every Filipino woman.

SECTION 3. Definition of Terms. – For purposes of this Act, the term:

- a) "Center" shall refer to the Women's Health Research Center;
- b) "Committee" shall refer to the Advisory Committee on Women's Health;
- c) "Secretary" shall refer to the Secretary of Health;
- d) "Women's health condition" shall refer to all diseases, disorders, and conditions –
 - i. Unique to serious, or more prevalent to women;
 - ii. For which the factors of medical risk or types of medical intervention are different for women, or which it is unknown whether such factors or types are different for women; or

- iii. With respect to which there has been insufficient clinical research involving women as subjects or insufficient clinical data on women; and
- e) "Women's health research" shall mean women's health research conditions, including research on preventing such conditions.

SECTION 4. *Establishment of the Women's Health Research Center.* – The Research Center shall be headed by the Secretary with the following functions:

- a) To identify projects of research on women's or supported by both the government and non-government agencies;
- b) To promote coordination and collaboration among entities conducting research identified under paragraph A;
- c) To recommend an agenda for conducting and supporting such research; and
- d) To encourage the conduct of such research.

SECTION 5. *Advisory Committee on Women's Health.* – In carrying out the provision of Section 4, the Secretary shall establish a Committee to be known as the "Advisory Committee on Women's Health."

SECTION 6. *Composition.* – The Committee shall be composed of nine (9) members which shall include the following:

- a) Two (2) representatives from the Department;
- b) Four (4) physicians, practitioners and other health personnel;
- c) Two (2) representatives from a non-governmental organization which conducts research on women'
- d) One (1) representative from the general public;
- e) Majority of the members of the Committee shall be women.

SECTION 7. *Meetings.* – The Advisory Committee shall determine the number, time, place and conduct of meetings, except that it shall hold at least one (1) public meeting each year at which the general public is given an opportunity to express views concerning the conduct of Women's Health Research by the Center.

SECTION 8. *Term of Office.* – Members shall be appointed by the Secretary for a term of three (3) years. Of those first appointed, three (3) members shall serve for three (3) years, three (3) members for two (2) years, and last three (3) members for one (1) year.

Any vacancy in the membership of the committee shall be filled in the manner as the original appointment. Any member of the Committee be removed for cause in accordance with procedures established by the Committee.

SECTION 9. *Functions.* - The Committee shall have the following functions:

- a) Advise the Secretary on appropriate research activities to the Center with respect to - .
 - i. Research of women's health;
 - ii. Research on gender differences in clinical drugs trials, including responses;
 - iii. Research to gender differences in disease etiology, course and treatment;
 - iv. Research on obstetrical gynecological health conditions, diseases and treatment; and
 - v. Women's Health Research conditions which require a multidisciplinary approach.
- b) Report to the Secretary on such research;
- c) Provide recommendation to the Secretary regarding activities of the Center; and
- d) Prepare a report regarding the activities of the Committee.

SECTION 10. *Appropriations.* - To carry out the provisions of this Act, such amount as may be necessary is hereby authorized to be appropriated from the National Treasury. Thereafter, the amount necessary for the continuous operation of the Women's Health Research Center shall be included in the annual appropriations of the Department of Health.

SECTION 11. *Non-Impairment Clause.* - Nothing in this Act shall be construed as to diminish, impair, or repeal rights recognized, granted, or made available to disadvantaged, marginalized, or specific sectors under existing laws.

SECTION 12. *Repealing Clause.* - All laws, decrees, orders, rules and regulations or other issuances or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 13. *Separability Clause.* - If any portion or provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the remainder of this Act or any provision not affected thereby shall remain in force and effect.

SECTION 14. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following the completion of its publication either in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,