

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

**TWENTIETH CONGRESS**  
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 3989



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**INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVE PM VARGAS**

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**AN ACT**  
**CREATING THE NATIONAL EYE CENTER**  
**AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

Blindness and poor vision have a tremendous impact on one's quality of life, particularly for those living in poverty. Eye diseases usually lead to the loss of productivity, which in turn leads to the loss of income and low standards of living. This then limits the patient's access to quality healthcare services and deprives their families of educational and other opportunities. Therefore, blindness leads to shortened life span and loss of economic productivity of a nation as a whole.

An estimated 2.2 billion people around the world suffer from vision impairment. Yet the first World Report on Vision by the World Health Organization (WHO) reveals that half, or about 1.1 billion do not receive the care they need for conditions like near and farsightedness, glaucoma, and cataracts<sup>1</sup>.

The Philippines' National Prevention of Blindness Program envisioned that all Filipinos would enjoy the right to sight by 2020. While this goal has yet to be fully achieved, the State remains committed to providing access to quality eye care services, strengthening partnerships with stakeholders to eliminate avoidable blindness, empowering communities to promote eye health, and working towards the preservation and restoration of the sight of indigent Filipinos as a strategy in poverty alleviation.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization. 2019. "World Report on Vision"

<sup>2</sup> Department of Health (DOH) Administrative Order 2013-0010.

In the efforts of providing the people with quality eye care, this bill seeks to create the National Eye Center. The proposed institution will specialize in preventing, treating, and rehabilitating people with eyesight problems and will undertake research and training on the cure and prevention of eye diseases. This initiative will help the State in achieving its goal to reduce the prevalence of avoidable blindness.

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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'PM VARGAS', is positioned above the printed name.

**REP. PM VARGAS**

Fifth District, Quezon City

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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 “*National Eye Center Act*.”

**SECTION 2. The National Eye Center.** – There is hereby created a National Eye Center, hereinafter referred to as ‘the Center’, which is a quasi-government institution attached to the Office of the President.

The Center shall have its principal office in Metro Manila, and may have such branch offices, hospitals, clinics or subsidiaries in other areas in the Philippines as it may deem proper and necessary.

**SECTION 3. Purpose and Objectives.** – The Center shall have the following purpose and objectives:

- (a) To specialize in the prevention, diagnosis, treatment, care, rehabilitation and/or relief of eye and allied diseases;
- (b) To promote medical and scientific research relative to the prevention and treatment of eye and aimed diseases, and to encourage planning, invention and development of artificial means of eye support and transplantation;
- (c) To conduct fact finding investigations on eye diseases, and related fields throughout the country or elsewhere, and to report, publish and disseminate information on eye and other related diseases;

- (d) To finance, sponsor, hold or participate in congresses, conventions, conferences, seminars, workshops and training programs on eye diseases and/or related field in the Philippines or abroad; and
- (e) To stimulate the formation of other organizations on the national, provincial, city, and/or local levels, and to coordinate the various efforts and activities of each organization for the purpose of achieving a more effective approach to the common problem relative to the purposes and objectives enumerated herein.

**SECTION 4. Powers and Functions.** – For the attainment and/or furtherance of the above-enumerated purpose and objectives, the Center as a corporate body acting through its Board of Trustees, shall have the following powers and functions.

- (a) To adopt and use a corporate seal;
- (b) To sue and be sued in its corporate name;
- (c) To adopt its by-laws rules and regulations as it may deem proper and necessary for the implementation of the purposes and objectives of this Act;
- (d) To succeed by its corporate name, and to acquire and possess properties, rights and interests of whatever kind and nature, and mortgage, pledge, alienate, encumber or otherwise dispose of the same;
- (e) To award, enter into, make, execute, perform and carry out domestic or foreign contracts of whatever kind and nature;
- (f) To invest in, and purchase or otherwise acquire, own, hold, use, lease, grant, mortgage, pledge, sell, assign, convey, transfer, exchange or otherwise deal with, real and/or personal properties of every kind and nature, including share of stock, bonds, notes, securities and other evidences of indebtedness or obligations of other corporations, whether domestic or foreign and whether go government or private;
- (g) To obtain loans, borrow funds and/or arrange financing or credit assistance of whatever kind and nature from all sources, Whether domestic or foreign and whatever government or private, and mortgage, pledge or otherwise encumber any of its properties and assets for the purpose of securing or guaranteeing the performance of any obligation it may undertake for itself or for other entities in which it may be interested;

- (h) To levy, assess and collect such fees, charges and assessments as may be necessary or proper to support, finance and maintain its operations; and
- (i) To exercise such other powers and functions as may be incidental or necessary to carry out the purposes and objectives of this Act.

**SECTION 5. *Board of Trustees.*** – The Center shall be governed, and its activities and properties shall be directed, controlled and managed by a Board of Trustees, hereinafter referred to as the Board, which shall be composed of a Chairperson and ten (10) members, all of whom shall be appointed by the President of the Philippines. The Chief Executive Officer of the Center, who shall be appointed front among the members of the Board in accordance hereof, shall be the ex-officio Vice Chairperson of the Board.

The members of the Board shall serve for a term of three (3) years, with a right to hold-over until their respective successors shall have been duly appointed and qualified. The President of the Philippines may, however, remove any member of the Board for cause. Whenever a vacancy shall occur in the Board, the person appointed to fill the vacancy shall hold office for the unexpired term of the member replaced.

**SECTION 6. *Powers and Functions of the Board.*** – The Board shall have the following powers and functions:

- (a) To formulate policies, guide lines and programs to effectively implement and carry out the purposes and objectives of this Act;
- (b) To prescribe, review and revise the amount of the fees, charges, and assessments levied and collected for the support and maintenance of the operations of the Center;
- (c) To control the management, operation and administration of the Center;
- (d) To promulgate such rules and regulations as may be necessary or proper for the effective exercise of power and functions as well as the discharge of the duties, responsibilities of the Center, its officers and employees;
- (e) To authorize such expenditures of the Center as may be necessary or proper for the effective management, operation and administration of the Center;
- (f) To determine and organize the Center's organizational and administrative structure or pattern, and to establish and fix, review, revise and adjust the appropriate compensation scheme of the officers and employees of the Center, with reason able allowances, bonuses and other incentives;

- (g) To adopt the annual and supplemental budget of receipts and expenditures of the Center;
- (h) To appoint, remove, suspend or otherwise discipline officers of the Center occupying executive and senior management positions;
- (i) To exercise all the general powers necessary or incidental to the attainment of the purposes and objectives of this Act, and
- (j) To do any and all acts as may be necessary or proper for the attainment of the powers and functions of the Center.

**SECTION 7. Seeking Assistance.** – The Center may call upon any Department, Bureau, Office, Agency or instrumentality of the Government, including government-owned or controlled corporations, for such assistance as it may need in the pursuit of the purposes and objectives of this Act.

**SECTION 8. Authorization for Grants.** – The Center is hereby authorized to solicit and receive donations, grants, contribution, gifts or endowments from all sources whether foreign or domestic, and whether government or private, without the need of securing a permit, approval or registration from any government agency.

**SECTION 9. Books and Accounts.** – The books and accounts of the Center shall be under the charge of a Resident Auditor, subject to periodic auditing by the Chairman of the Commission on Audit, or his duly authorized representative.

**SECTION 10. Civil Service.** – The Center and its officers and employees shall be covered by the Civil Service Law, rules and regulations.

**SECTION 11. Annual Report.** – The Center shall render to the President of the Philippines an annual report on its operations and accomplishments.

**SECTION 12. General Corporation.** – The provisions of the general corporation law, insofar as they are not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act or with the purposes and objectives for which the Center is formed, shall apply to the Center.

**SECTION 13. Effect of Dissolution of the Center.** – If for any reason, the Center is dissolved, properties and assets shall revert to the National Government for disposition in accordance with law.

**SECTION 14. Appropriations.** – The amount of One Hundred Million Pesos (P100,000,000.00) is hereby appropriated for the necessary initial operating expenses and maintenance of the National Eye Center. Thereafter such sum as maybe necessary for the continued operation of the Center shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

**SECTION 15. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Secretary of the Department of Health, and other appropriate government agencies, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, shall promulgate the rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

**SECTION 16. *Separability Clause.*** – If any provision or part thereof is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

**SECTION 17. *Repealing Clause.*** – All laws, presidential decree or issuance, executive orders, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule and regulation contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, modified, or amended accordingly.

**SECTION 18. *Effectivity.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

*Approved,*