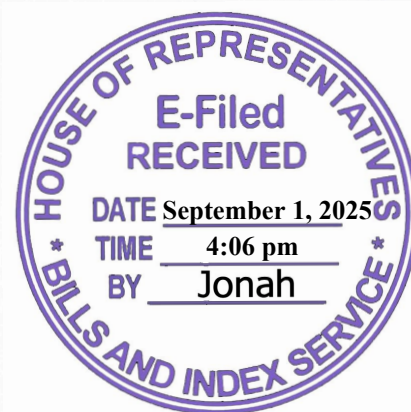


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

20th CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 4276



Introduced by REP. JUAN CARLOS "ARJO" C. ATAYDE

AN ACT MANDATING THE PHILIPPINE HEALTH INSURANCE
CORPORATION (PHILHEALTH) TO PROVIDE FREE 2D
ECHOCARDIOGRAPHY PROCEDURE FOR INFANTS DIAGNOSED WITH
DOWN SYNDROME

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Down Syndrome, also known as Trisomy 21, is a genetic condition caused by the presence of an extra copy of chromosome 21. This chromosomal anomaly occurs during cell division and is typically not inherited. It affects physical growth, facial features, and intellectual development. The condition is usually identified at birth or shortly thereafter through physical signs and confirmed via genetic testing.

In the Philippines, Down Syndrome affects approximately 1 in every 800 live births, with over 100,000 Filipino households caring for a family with the condition.¹ Despite its prevalence, individuals with Down Syndrome face significant barriers in accessing timely and adequate healthcare services, particularly for congenital heart defects, which are among the most common complications.

Approximately half of infants with Down Syndrome are born with congenital heart defects such as atrioventricular septal defects, ventricular septal defects, and patent ductus arteriosus.² These conditions, if undetected and untreated, can lead to serious health consequences including heart failure, delayed growth, and increased mortality.

2D Echocardiography is a non-invasive imaging procedure that allows for the detailed visualization of the heart's structure and function. It is the standard diagnostic tool for identifying congenital heart anomalies in infants. Early detection

¹ Special Olympics Pilipinas. How Can We Better Support Individuals with Down Syndrome in the Philippines? Retrieved <https://specialolympicspilipinas.org/blog/how-can-we-better-support-individuals-with-down-syndrome-in-the-philippines/>.

² National Down Syndrome Society. The Heart & Down Syndrome. Retrieved <https://ndss.org/resources/the-heart-down-syndrome>.

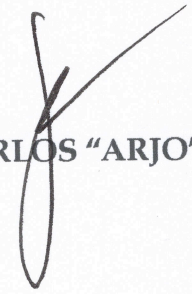
through echocardiography is critical for planning appropriate medical or surgical interventions, especially for those diagnosed with Down Syndrome.

However, access to this procedure remains limited, especially for families from low-income backgrounds. The cost of a 2D echocardiogram can range from ₱2,000 to ₱5,000, which poses a financial burden for many Filipino families.

This bill seeks to mandate the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) to cover the full cost of 2D echocardiography procedures for infants diagnosed with Down Syndrome, ensuring early detection and management of congenital heart defects. This initiative aligns with the government's commitment to inclusive healthcare and the protection of vulnerable populations.

By institutionalizing free 2D echocardiography for infants with Down Syndrome, the government affirms its commitment to the health and well-being of children with special needs. This measure is a step toward a more inclusive and compassionate healthcare system that leaves no Filipino child behind.

As such, the approval of this Bill is earnestly sought.



REP. JUAN CARLOS "ARJO" C. ATAYDE

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

3 **SECTION 1. Title.** – This Act shall be known as “Free 2D Echo for Infants with
4 Down Syndrome Act”.

5 **SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy.** – It is the policy of the State to protect and
6 promote the right of all individuals to live a full, healthy, holistic, and quality life. This
7 includes individuals who are suffering from Down syndrome or any kind of
8 developmental disability. To this end, the State shall promote and protect the rights
9 of individuals with Down syndrome by providing them adequate support through
10 easy access to health care.

11 **SECTION 3. Definition of Terms.** –

- 12 a. *Down Syndrome.* Down Syndrome, also known as Trisomy 21, is a congenital
13 genetic disorder caused by the presence of an extra copy of chromosome 21.
14 This additional genetic material results in characteristic physical features,
15 intellectual and developmental delays, and a higher risk of certain medical
16 conditions.
- 17 b. *2D echocardiography.* 2D Echocardiography is a non-invasive procedure which
18 is used to see the actual motion of the heart structures.
- 19 c. *Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth).* PhilHealth is a tax-exempt
20 government corporation attached to the Department of Health that was

1 established to provide health insurance coverage and ensure affordable and
2 accessible health care services for all Filipinos.

3 **SECTION 4. *Free 2D Echocardiography Procedure.*** – The PhilHealth shall
4 provide coverage of 2D echocardiography procedure to infants diagnosed with Down
5 Syndrome.

6 **SECTION 5. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – Within ninety (90) days
7 from the effectivity of this Act, PhilHealth, in coordination with the Department of
8 Health (DOH), shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective
9 implementation of this Act.

10 **SECTION 6. *Appropriations.*** – The funds necessary for the implementation of
11 this Act shall be included in the annual budget of PhilHealth.

12 **SECTION 7. *Separability Clause.*** – If any provision of this Act is declared
13 unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining provisions not affected thereby shall
14 continue to be in full force and effect.

15 **SECTION 8. *Repealing Clause.*** – All laws, decrees, orders, rules, and
16 regulations or parts thereof inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified
17 accordingly.

18 **SECTION 9. *Effectivity.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
19 publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,