Republic of the Philippines

House of Representatives

Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress

First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **4704**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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Introduced by REPRESENTATIVE MARIA CRISTINA C. ANGELES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Filipino family is constitutionally recognized as the foundation of the nation. Family solidarity, mutual support, and peaceful resolution of disputes are values deeply rooted in our traditions and laws. Article 151 of the Family Code provides that no suit between members of the same family shall prosper unless earnest efforts toward a compromise have been made. In practice, however, this requirement has been reduced to a mere formality. Many cases are filed without genuine attempts at conciliation, straining not only family relationships but also judicial resources.

This bill seeks to give real force and structure to the conciliation requirement by:

1. Making conciliation mandatory before any civil suit between family members can prosper;
2. Requiring at least two documented good faith attempts at settlement through barangay mediation, accredited family mediation centers, or court-annexed mediation;
3. Establishing Family Mediation and Conciliation Centers nationwide to provide professional, accessible, and free services, particularly for indigent litigants;
4. Mandating training and accreditation of mediators and barangay officials to ensure competence and fairness in family dispute resolution; and
5. Directing the Supreme Court to promulgate harmonized procedural rules.

Through this measure, we aim to preserve family harmony, decongest our courts, and promote restorative, non-adversarial ways of resolving disputes. By strengthening conciliation, we protect not just the justice system, but also the basic unit of our society — the Filipino family.

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

MARIA CRISTINA C. ANGELES

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HOUSE BILL NO. **4704**

Introduced by REPRESENTATIVE MARIA CRISTINA C. ANGELES

AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE REQUIREMENT OF EARNEST EFFORTS TO CONCILIATE DISPUTES BETWEEN FAMILY MEMBERS BEFORE RESORTING TO JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS, ESTABLISHING FAMILY CONCILIATION AND MEDIATION MECHANISMS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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 "Usap Muna sa Pamilya Bago Demanda Act of 2025."

SECTION 2. ***Declaration of Policy.*** — It is hereby declared the policy of the State to recognize the Filipino family as the foundation of the nation, consistent with the Constitution which upholds the duty of the State to strengthen family solidarity and actively promote its total development.

The State affirms that disputes between family members are best resolved through peaceful, voluntary, and restorative methods rather than through immediate, adversarial litigation. While Article 151 of the Family Code requires earnest efforts at compromise before family members may sue one another, this safeguard has too often been reduced to a mere procedural formality, resulting in cases being filed without genuine attempts at reconciliation.

The consequence has been strained family relations, costly litigation, and congested court dockets, when many of these disputes could have been prevented or settled amicably. This Act therefore seeks to give real force to the principle of family conciliation by requiring documented good faith efforts at settlement, institutionalizing Family Mediation and Conciliation Centers, and ensuring professional standards for mediators. Through this policy, the State aims to:

1. Preserve and restore family harmony by fostering dialogue and mutual understanding;
2. Protect vulnerable family members, particularly women, children, and the elderly, from the destructive effects of prolonged conflict;
3. Promote social justice by providing free and accessible mediation services for indigent families; and
4. Support the justice system by reducing the volume of intra-family suits and promoting restorative justice.

SECTION 3. ***Definition of Family Members.*** — For purposes of this Act, family members shall include:

(a) Spouses;
(b) Parents and children, including adopted children;
(c) Siblings, whether of full or half blood;
(d) Grandparents and grandchildren;
(e) In-laws living in the same household; and
(f) Other relatives within the fourth civil degree of consanguinity.

SECTION 4. ***Coverage.*** — This Act shall apply:

(a) In all civil disputes when both parties are members of the same family as defined in Section 3 hereof;
(b) In criminal actions involving the commission of the following offense by one family member against another as defined by Section 3 herof:

(i) Oral defamation and libel (Arts. 353–355, RPC);
(ii) Simple threats, except grave threats involving serious felonies (Arts. 282–285, RPC);
(iii) Slight physical injuries (Art. 266, RPC);
(iv) Alarms and scandals (Art. 155, RPC);
(v) Malicious mischief involving minor damage (Art. 327, RPC);
(vi) Trespass to dwelling without violence or intimidation (Art. 280, RPC);
(vii) Simple theft or estafa involving property not exceeding ₱10,000, provided restitution is possible; and
(viii) Other light offenses (Art. 9, RPC), which the Department of Justice may, by regulation, include under this Act.

SECTION 5. ***Exclusions.*** — This Act shall not apply to:

(a) Cases incapable of compromise under the Civil Code;
(b) Petitions for protection orders under Republic Act No. 9262 (Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act);
(c) Criminal actions other than those listed under Section 4 hereof; and
(d) Cases requiring urgent judicial relief to prevent irreparable injury or to preserve rights.

SECTION 6. ***Mandatory Conciliation Requirement.*** — No civil or criminal action covered by this Act shall prosper unless the verified complaint or pleading is accompanied by a Certificate of Non-Settlement, issued by:

1. the Barangay Lupon Tagapamayapa;
2. an accredited Family Mediation and Conciliation Center; or
3. a court-annexed mediation unit.

At least three (3) separate and documented good faith efforts at conciliation must be made. The personal presence of the parties shall be required in at least two sessions, unless excused for just cause.

SECTION 7. ***Family Mediation and Conciliation Centers.*** — The Department of Justice (DOJ), in coordination with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the Office of the Court Administrator, shall establish accredited Family Mediation and Conciliation Centers in provinces, highly urbanized cities, and independent component cities. Such Centers shall:

(a) Provide professional mediation services for disputes between family members;
(b) Assist indigent parties without charge; and
(c) Issue certifications of non-settlement where conciliation has failed.

SECTION 8. ***Training & Accreditation.*** — The DOJ, in partnership with the Philippine Judicial Academy, the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, and accredited civil society organizations, shall:

(a) Conduct training programs for mediators and barangay officials in family dispute resolution;
(b) Establish and maintain a roster of accredited family mediators; and
(c) Promulgate standards for ethical and professional practice in mediation.

SECTION 9. ***Rules of Procedure.*** — Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Supreme Court shall promulgate the rules to implement the mandatory conciliation requirement, consistent with the provisions herein.

SECTION 10. ***Appropriations.*** — The amount necessary to implement this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA).

SECTION 11. ***Separability Clause.*** — If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 12. ***Repealing Clause.*** — All laws, decrees, orders, rules, and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 13. ***Effectivity.*** — This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.