



Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City



TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 4869

Introduced by Representative Nelson S. Legacion
Third Congressional District, Camarines Sur

Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE) is a chronic autoimmune disease that impacts millions globally, including Filipinos. Despite its prevalence, Lupus is often misunderstood and misdiagnosed, leading to delays in treatment and increased rates of morbidity and mortality. While there is no definitive cure for SLE at present, effective management can be achieved through medical interventions and lifestyle modifications.

Research shows that the lack of national data registries, combined with an over-reliance on available institutional records, complicates efforts to gauge the true burden of SLE in the Philippines. Additionally, there is a noticeable absence of local clinical practice guidelines. The management of SLE within the Philippine healthcare system mirrors broader systemic issues, with diagnosis, treatment, and ongoing care often proving to be prohibitively expensive for many individuals.

Clearly, there is a pressing need for further research into the diagnosis, treatment, and prognosis of SLE within the Philippine context. A comprehensive understanding of the true burden of the disease will pave the way for targeted, population-based interventions, in consonance with the State's policy to protect and provide the health rights of its citizens while fostering health awareness under Article II, Section 15, 1987 Constitution.

The proposed legislative measure aims to enhance public awareness and disseminate information regarding SLE, alongside fortifying research and development efforts to support the management and treatment of this condition. Increased awareness is anticipated to foster understanding, facilitate early detection, and promote timely intervention, which are crucial in mitigating its symptoms. This initiative seeks to establish safe, equitable, and effective strategies to address the burden of lupus in the Philippines.

This proposed measure is a refiled version of the bills filed by Senators Mark Villar in the 19th and 20th Congress, Maria Lourdes Nancy Binay in the 17th and 18th Congress, Manuel "Lito" Lapid in the 15th and 16th Congress.

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


NELSON S. LEGACION
Representative, Third District, Camarines Sur



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**AN ACT INSTITUTING A NATIONAL HEALTH PROGRAM TO COMBAT
SYSTEMIC LUPUS ERYTHEMATOSUS (SLE) DISEASE 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 "*Comprehensive
Lupus Management and Treatment Act.*"

SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.* - It is the policy of the State to protect and
promote the right to health of the people. As such, the State shall promote
awareness of the health programs focusing on Systemic Lupus Erythematosus
(SLE) to empower citizens suffering therefrom to become, to the best of their
potential, independent, self-reliant, and productive members of society.

SECTION 3. *Definition of Terms.* - For the purpose of this Act,

Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE) or "Lupus" shall be construed to
mean a chronic autoimmune disease where the immune system attacks the
body's cells and tissue, resulting in inflammation and tissue damage in
different parts of the body, but most often affecting the heart, joints, skin,
lungs, blood vessels, liver, kidneys, and nervous system, as diagnosed by a
competent medical practitioner.

SECTION 4. *National Survey and Research.* - The National Institute of Health
(NIH) of the Department of Health (DOH) shall conduct an annual survey to
determine the extent and total incidence and prevalence of persons with SLE in
the Philippines for the government to provide the necessary health interventions to
address the needs faced by persons with lupus.

SECTION 5. *Integrated Approach to Research in Cooperation with Concerned Research Agencies.* - Within six (6) months from the date of effectivity of this Act, the DOH shall ensure that there is no conflict of interest between the NIH's research agenda and that of pharmaceutical corporations or other government agencies addressing the issue of lupus.

SECTION 6. *National Program for Lupus Management and Treatment* - The DOH shall implement a comprehensive and nationwide program on lupus management and treatment with the following objectives:

- a) to promote and provide mechanisms for early identification, screening, and diagnosis of persons suffering from lupus;
- b) to promote public awareness, education, and information on issues concerning lupus;
- c) to establish sustainable support network for families of persons diagnosed with lupus;
- d) to provide referral services to patients for appropriate educational and medical expertise and to identify appropriate education or medical facilities suited to the needs of patients;
- e) to undertake research and collaborate with other institutions for the conduct of research activities pertaining to the disease;
- f) to promote an advocacy discouraging bias against and stereotyping of afflicted persons;
- g) to provide an avenue for the sharing of best practices on issues relating to early detection, treatment, and rehabilitation of persons diagnosed with lupus; and
- h) to network with other organizations, institutions, and professionals working on public programs for persons diagnosed with lupus.

SECTION 7. *Programs and Service for Lupus Management and Treatment* - The programs and services that will be provided by the DOH shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- a) orientation and counseling services for families of newly diagnosed persons;
- b) establishment of national and regional referral services where the DOH shall maintain an updated list of health care institutions and practitioners concerned with the treatment of lupus;
- c) publish a newsletter on current developments and research on lupus, as well as other reading materials on the early detection, management, and treatment of lupus, and best practices for the care of diagnosed persons;

d) conduct of continuing education and training programs on the proper care of diagnosed persons; and

e) establishment of a databank and an information and monitoring system on country-specific statistics pertaining to lupus.

SECTION 8. *Lupus Early Detection and Screening Fees.* - The Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) shall include the cost of early detection and screening programs for lupus as one of the available benefits to its members. The early detection and screening test fees shall be applied to, among others, testing cost, education, follow up, and readable overhead expenses.

SECTION 9. *Donations and Grants.* - The DOH, NIH, and other departments of the DOH that may thereafter be tasked with the implementation of this Act shall have the power to receive donations and grants from local and international donor institutions, foundations, and foreign donor agencies, provided that pertinent laws and rules on the receipt, accounting, and disbursement thereof shall be complied with.

SECTION 10. *National Lupus Awareness Week.* - In order to grow national interest and participation in the issues and concerns of lupus patients, the first week of May shall annually be celebrated as "Lupus Awareness Week." This week-long activity will be spearheaded by the DOH, in coordination with other concerned agencies, institutions, and stakeholders.

SECTION 11. *Continuing Education and Training of Health Personnel and Service Providers on Lupus Management and Treatment* - All DOH staff and health providers providing health services to persons diagnosed with lupus shall undergo a mandatory continuing education and training program to ensure the delivery of up-to-date and relevant services.

SECTION 12. *Protection Against Forcible Administration of Medical Treatment or Enrollment in Programs.* - All persons administering treatment, counseling, or medication as well as all persons involved in the implementation of the DOH programs as mandated in this Act shall respect the right of each patient to determine for himself or herself the medical treatment to be administered as well as the programs wherein, he or she will participate, if any.

SECTION 13. *Appropriations.* - The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act shall be included and incorporated in the annual general appropriations of the DOH.

SECTION 14. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* - Within six (6) months from the date of effectivity of this Act, the DOH shall promulgate the necessary implementing rules and regulations to carry out the provisions of this Act.

SECTION 15. *Repealing Clause* - All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations or parts thereof inconsistent with provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

SECTION 16. *Separability Clause.* - If any provision or part of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the remainder of this Act or any provision not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 17. *Effectivity Clause.* -This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,