

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 5268



Introduced by Representatives Brian Poe PhD, MNSA, Javier Miguel L. Benitez

**AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING MOBILE LEGAL CLINICS AND BARANGAY
LEGAL AID DESKS TO PROVIDE ACCESSIBLE AND FREE LEGAL SERVICES TO
UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES, STRENGTHENING ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE
RESOLUTION, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Equal access to justice is a cornerstone of democracy and the rule of law. Yet for millions of Filipinos, particularly those in rural and underserved communities, legal assistance remains a privilege rather than a right. Many citizens continue to face barriers in seeking legal remedies—whether due to high costs, limited access to lawyers, distance from courts, or lack of awareness of their rights.

This bill seeks to bridge that gap by institutionalizing Mobile Legal Clinics (MLCs) and Barangay Legal Aid Desks (BLADs) nationwide to ensure that free and accessible legal services reach even the most remote communities. Through this measure, the State fulfills its constitutional duty to make justice truly inclusive and responsive to the needs of the poor and marginalized.

The proposed Community Legal Access Act of 2025 aims to deliver legal assistance where it is most needed. The Mobile Legal Clinics, operated by the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Public Attorney's Office (PAO), will bring legal aid directly to far-flung barangays, offering consultations, mediation, and document assistance on-site. Complementing these are Barangay Legal Aid Desks, which will be established in every barangay hall to serve as first points of contact for residents needing legal guidance or help with everyday legal matters.

Beyond providing direct legal aid, the measure also strengthens the country's Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) framework. By promoting mediation and conciliation at the

community level, the bill aims to decongest the courts, encourage amicable settlements, and restore the culture of dialogue and peacebuilding within neighborhoods.

To sustain the initiative, the bill also incentivizes volunteerism within the legal profession. Volunteer lawyers and law students participating in MLCs and BLADs will be entitled to MCLE credits, tax deductions for pro bono service, and internship credits. These incentives recognize public service within the legal community and promote civic engagement among future lawyers.

Furthermore, a Barangay Legal Assistance Council (BLAC) will be created to ensure accountability, standardization, and effective monitoring of the program. It will bring together the DOJ, PAO, DILG, Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP), state law schools, and civil society organizations to continuously improve the quality and reach of legal aid delivery.

Ultimately, this bill envisions a justice system that is not confined to courtrooms or urban centers—but one that travels, listens, and serves. By bringing legal assistance closer to the people, it restores faith in the rule of law and empowers communities to resolve disputes peacefully and equitably.

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



REP. BRIAN POE, PhD, MNSA



REP. JAVIER MIGUEL L. BENITEZ

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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 "Community Legal Access Act of 2025."

Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* - It is the policy of the State to uphold the right of every Filipino to equal access to justice, as guaranteed by the Constitution. The State shall ensure that legal services are available and accessible, especially to marginalized and underserved communities, by establishing Mobile Legal Clinics (MLCs) and Barangay Legal Aid Desks (BLADs) to provide free legal assistance and strengthen alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms at the community level.

Sec. 3. *Objectives.* - This Act aims to:

- a) Provide free and accessible legal services to underserved and remote communities;
- b) Institutionalize Mobile Legal Clinics (MLCs) and Barangay Legal Aid Desks (BLADs) nationwide;
- c) Promote alternative dispute resolution to reduce court congestion and encourage amicable settlement of disputes; and

- d) Foster collaboration among government agencies, local governments, the legal profession, and law schools in delivering legal aid services.

Sec. 4. *Establishment of Mobile Legal Clinics (MLCs).* - The Department of Justice (DOJ), in coordination with the Public Attorney's Office (PAO), shall establish and operate Mobile Legal Clinics (MLCs) nationwide. MLCs shall be fully equipped with vehicles deployed regularly to remote and underserved areas, providing free legal services such as:

- a) Legal consultation and advice;
- b) Mediation and conciliation services;
- c) Assistance in labor disputes, land conflicts, family law cases, consumer protection, and notarization of documents; and
- d) Public legal education sessions.

MLCs shall be staffed by PAO lawyers, paralegals, accredited volunteer lawyers, law student interns, and legal aid volunteers.

Sec. 5. *Establishment of Barangay Legal Aid Desks (BLADs).* - Every barangay hall shall establish a Barangay Legal Aid Desk (BLAD), accessible to all residents, offering free legal guidance, mediation services, and assistance in preparing legal documents such as affidavits, contracts, and simple pleadings. BLADs shall be staffed by trained paralegals, volunteer lawyers, and legal interns. Local Government Units (LGUs) shall likewise provide appropriate space, basic equipment, and operational funds for BLADs within barangay halls.

Sec. 6. *Strengthening Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR).* - MLCs and BLADs shall promote the amicable settlement of disputes through ADR mechanisms such as mediation and conciliation, in accordance with the Alternative Dispute Resolution Act (RA 9285). BLADs shall prioritize the resolution of minor disputes to reduce court caseloads.

Sec. 7. *Volunteer Participation and Incentives.* - Volunteer lawyers shall be entitled to incentives, including:

- a) Mandatory Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) credits;
- b) Tax deductions for pro bono legal services; and

- c) Law internship credits for students in state-run law schools.

The DOJ, in partnership with the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) and state law schools, shall develop a standardized training program for BLAD and MLC volunteers, ensuring continuous professional development and quality of service.

Sec. 8. *Barangay Legal Assistance Council (BLAC)*. - A Barangay Legal Assistance Council (BLAC) is hereby created to oversee the implementation and monitoring of this Act. The BLAC shall be composed of representatives from the DOJ, PAO, Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), IBP, state-run law schools, and relevant civil society organizations. The BLAC shall:

- a) Monitor and evaluate the performance of MLCs and BLADs;
- b) Recommend improvements in legal aid delivery; and
- c) Submit an annual report to Congress.

Sec. 9. *Funding*. – The initial funding for the operation of MLCs and BLADs shall be charged against the current appropriations of the DOJ and PAO. Thereafter, the necessary funds shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA). LGUs shall allocate local funds for the establishment, maintenance, and operation of BLADs within barangay halls.

Sec. 10. *Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR)*. – Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DOJ, in coordination with the PAO, DILG, IBP, state-run law schools, and other stakeholders, shall issue the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

Sec. 11. *Separability Clause*. – If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining provisions shall remain in full force and effect.

Sec. 12. *Repealing Clause*. – All laws, executive orders, rules, and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Sec. 13. *Effectivity*. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,



REP. BRIAN POE, Phd, MNSA



REP. JAVIER MIGUEL L. BENITEZ