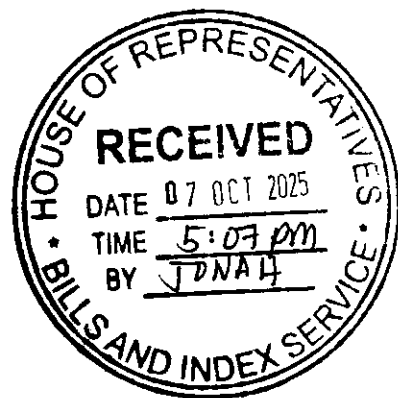




Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila



TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 5273

Introduced by **Representative KATRINA REIKO CHUA - TAI**
1st District, Zamboanga City

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The 1987 Philippine Constitution mandates that the State prioritize health development for the underprivileged, elderly, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and the sick. However, indigent senior citizens and PWDs still face major barriers to essential healthcare, especially in sensory health, which is crucial for basic functioning and dignity.

Sensory functions are vital for daily life, but unaddressed impairments cause significant hardship. Indigent seniors and PWDs often lack affordable access to check-ups or assistive devices. Many remote communities also have limited medical services.

In 2023, about 15.5% of Filipinos lived below the poverty line, with notable poverty among seniors and PWDs. Few have consistent support, and existing health coverage rarely includes specialized sensory assistance.

This bill directly addresses these urgent gaps by establishing a national program that guarantees free annual sensory health examinations and the provision of clinically necessary assistive devices for indigent senior citizens and PWDs. Devices may include eyeglasses, hearing aids, mobility aids, and speech-related equipment.

The bill also encourages private sector participation by offering incentives such as tax deductions and public recognition to those who help deliver these services. This approach aims to maximize resources and extend reach to remote communities.

Ensuring access to sensory health services for indigent senior citizens and PWDs is both a right and a moral obligation of the State, as age and disability can reduce one's capacity to remain productive. Passing this bill affirms the country's commitment to uphold dignity, independence, and inclusive governance for all.

IN VIEW OF THE FOREGOING, immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.

KATRINA REIKO CHUA - TAI



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1 **AN ACT**
2 **GRANTING INDIGENT SENIOR CITIZENS AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**
3 **IN THE PHILIPPINES FREE COMPREHENSIVE SENSORY HEALTH**
4 **EXAMINATION, PROVIDING THEM WITH ASSISTIVE DEVICES,**
5 **INCENTIVIZING PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS THAT SUPPORT THIS ENDEAVOR,**
6 **AND PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR**

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

9 **SECTION 1. *Short Title.*** - This Act shall be known as the “Free Sensory Health and
10 Assistive Devices for Indigent Seniors and PWDs Act.”

11 **SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.*** - It is hereby declared the policy of the State to
12 uphold the right to health and dignity of all Filipinos, particularly indigent senior citizens and
13 persons with disabilities (PWDs). The State shall provide equitable access to sensory health
14 services, promote independence through assistive devices, and support inclusive healthcare
15 delivery by engaging the private sector.

16 **SECTION 3. *Definition of Terms.*** - As used in this Act:

17 **“Indigent Senior Citizens”** shall refer to Filipino citizens aged sixty (60) years and
18 above certified as indigent by the Department of Social Welfare and Development
19 (DSWD) or the local government unit (LGU) concerned.

20 **“Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)”** shall refer to individuals with long-term physical,
21 mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments as defined under Republic Act No. 7277, as
22 amended.

23 **“Sensory Health Examination”** shall refer to a comprehensive medical assessment of
24 the five senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch) to identify impairments and
25 determine necessary interventions.

1 “**Assistive Devices**” shall refer to tools or equipment that aid individuals with sensory
2 impairments in performing daily tasks, including but not limited to eyeglasses, hearing
3 aids, mobility devices, tactile aids, and speech-related equipment.

4 “**Private Institutions**” shall refer to private hospitals, clinics, foundations, corporations,
5 NGOs, and other entities that voluntarily contribute services or resources to the
6 implementation of this Act.

7 **SECTION 4. Coverage and Benefits.** – All qualified indigent senior citizens and persons
8 with disabilities (PWDs) shall be entitled to a package of benefits designed to address their
9 sensory health needs. Each beneficiary shall receive one (1) free annual and (1) free emergency
10 comprehensive sensory health examinations within the same calendar year, which shall be
11 conducted by accredited medical professionals or health facilities. This examination shall assess
12 the individual's vision, hearing, smell, taste, and touch functions.

13 Based on the results of the examination, appropriate assistive devices, such as
14 eyeglasses, hearing aids, mobility aids, and speech-related tools, shall be provided free of
15 charge, tailored to the clinical assessment and specific needs of the beneficiary. Further,
16 beneficiaries shall receive follow-up care, referrals to specialists, and relevant health education
17 to ensure the proper use and maintenance of assistive devices and to promote overall sensory
18 well-being.

19 To ensure inclusivity and reach, especially for individuals in geographically isolated or
20 disadvantaged areas, mobile outreach services shall be deployed. These services shall be
21 designed to deliver examinations, distribute devices, and provide necessary care to residents of
22 remote or underserved communities who may otherwise lack access to these essential health
23 interventions.

24 **SECTION 5. Incentives.** – Donations of equipment, services, facilities, or funds in
25 support of this Act are fully deductible from the donor's gross income under the National
26 Internal Revenue Code. This incentive encourages corporations, foundations, and health
27 institutions to support indigent senior citizens and persons with disabilities.

28 Private entities and government agencies that voluntarily provide assistance or resources
29 will receive official recognition from the Department of Health. Recognition may include
30 certificates of appreciation or public acknowledgment of their Corporate Social Responsibility
31 efforts through media, government websites, and official events.

32 Accredited private institutions and supportive government bodies will be considered for
33 priority inclusion in future health-related partnerships or joint programs led by the DOH,
34 DSWD, and other relevant agencies. These may involve service delivery, community outreach,
35 technological support, or research and development initiatives aligned with this Act.

36 **SECTION 6. Implementing Agencies.** – The Department of Health (DOH) shall lead
37 the implementation of this Act and integrate its provisions into its existing programs. It shall also
38 be responsible for developing program guidelines, accrediting service providers, and monitoring
39 program delivery. The DOH shall collaborate with the Department of Social Welfare and
40 Development (DSWD), which shall be primarily responsible for identifying and validating
41 eligible indigent senior citizens and persons with disabilities (PWDs) under its current year's
42 *Listahan* program, in close coordination with local government units (LGUs). It shall also work
43 with the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and LGUs, which shall
44 support the implementation of local outreach programs and assist in information dissemination
45 and service delivery.

1 **SECTION 7. Appropriations.** – The amount necessary to implement the provisions
2 of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA) and shall be
3 chargeable against the current budget of the Department of Health (DOH) to be supported by
4 PhilHealth, which shall later be specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations.
5 Additional funding may be sourced from grants or donations from private individuals,
6 institutions, or international organizations. Furthermore, funds may also be sourced through
7 partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and philanthropic foundations.

8 **SECTION 8. Monitoring and Evaluation.** – The DOH, in coordination with the
9 DSWD and other concerned agencies, shall submit an annual report to Congress detailing the
10 number of beneficiaries served, assistive devices distributed, participating institutions,
11 challenges encountered, and recommendations for program improvement.

12 **SECTION 9. Implementation and Monitoring.** – Within ninety (90) days from the
13 effectivity of this Act, the DOH, in coordination with the DSWD, DILG, and other relevant
14 stakeholders, shall formulate the implementing rules and regulations necessary to carry out
15 the provisions of this Act.

16 **SECTION 10. Separability Clause.** – If any of the sections or provisions of this Act
17 is held invalid, all other provisions not affected thereby shall remain valid.

18 **SECTION 11. Repealing Clause.** – All laws, decrees, issuances, rules and regulations
19 inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

20 **SECTION 12. Effectivity Clause.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after
21 its complete publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

22 *Approved,*