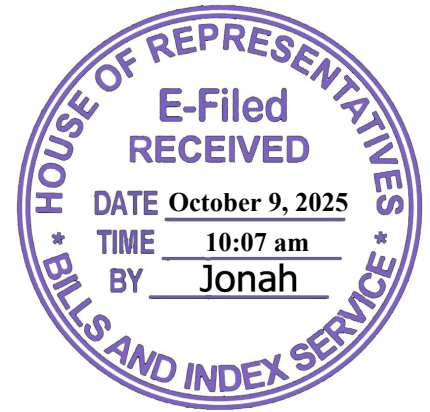


Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 5397



INTRODUCED BY REP. PATRICK MICHAEL “PM” D. VARGAS

AN ACT
PROVIDING TEMPORARY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, PSYCHOSOCIAL
COUNSELLING, LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT, AND PRIORITY ACCESS TO
SOCIAL SERVICES FOR INDIGENT WIDOWED PERSONS AND
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported in the 2020 Census of Housing and Population that widowed persons comprised 4.5% of the total household population, with the proportion reaching 5.5% in certain regions. Of the widowed population, women account for approximately 76% or about 2.9 million female widows compared to the 931,000 male widowers--underscoring pronounced gender disparity in this vulnerable group.

Data from the Longitudinal Study of Aging and Health in the Philippines (LSAHP) reveal that widowhood- especially long-term, correlates strongly with depressive symptoms, with pronounced effects among older women. Many widowed individuals also experience social isolation, reduced access to income, and increased dependency on family members.¹

The 2023 poverty incidence for the country stood at 17.5 million Filipinos, with a higher proportion among elderly-headed households. Pension coverage also remains low, with only 42% elderly Filipinos receiving any pension². This economic gap places many widowed persons, especially women in rural areas, at heightened risk of destitution.

Qualitative studies on Filipino elderly also revealed the emotional, social, and financial vulnerabilities, even while many demonstrate resilience rooted in family, faith, and community ties.³ However, existing social protection programs such as Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) and

¹Population Institute, University of the Philippines (2019)

² Philippine Statistics Authority (2023)

³ ResearchGate (2024)

the Social Pension for Indigent Senior Citizens do not explicitly target widowed persons, resulting in gaps in the assistance coverage.

The proposed “Widowed Persons Assistance Act” seeks to close these gaps by institutionalizing a comprehensive support framework that will provide temporary financial assistance, psychosocial counseling and peer support groups, livelihood and capacity-building support, and priority access to social services.

This measure complements the existing laws, such as the Expanded Senior Citizen Act (RA 9994) and the Universal Health Care Act (RA 11223), by ensuring that widowed persons receive targeted, time-bound, and needs-based assistance, especially when they have lost their breadwinners.

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



REP. PATRICK MICHAEL “PM” VARGAS
Fifth District, Quezon City

Republic of the Philippines

House of Representatives

Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS

First Regular Session

House Bill No. 5397

INTRODUCED BY REP. PATRICK MICHAEL “PM” D. VARGAS

**AN ACT
PROVIDING TEMPORARY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, PSYCHOSOCIAL
COUNSELLING, LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT, AND PRIORITY ACCESS TO
SOCIAL SERVICES FOR INDIGENT WIDOWED PERSONS AND
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

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

SECTION 1. Short Title. - This Act shall be known as the “Widowed Persons Assistance Act”.

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. – It is the policy of the State to ensure the protection of families as the basic foundation of the nation, and as such, it shall promote their development and welfare. In recognition of the unique challenges faced by indigent widowed persons, the State shall provide temporary financial assistance, psychosocial support, livelihood opportunities, and priority access to other social protection programs to help them rebuild their lives.

SECTION 3. Definition of Terms. – As used in this Act, the term:

- a) *Widowed Person* shall refer to a man or a woman whose spouse had died and who has not remarried;
- b) *Financial Assistance* shall refer to a monetary benefit equivalent to at least one (1) month’s prevailing minimum wage in the region where the widowed person is a registered resident, provided monthly during the period of eligibility. For senior citizens already receiving a monthly pension from the National Commission of Senior Citizens (NCSC), Financial Assistance shall, in addition to such benefit;

- c) *Indigent* shall refer to a person with no means of income or whose income is insufficient for the subsistence of their family, as identified by the Department of Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the Local Government Unit (LGU);
- d) *Psychosocial Counselling* shall refer to structured counselling provided by a registered social worker or other trained health professional to help the widowed person cope with grief, trauma, and adjustment issues;
- e) *Skills Training and Livelihood Support* shall refer to capacity-building programs, livelihood starter kits, or microenterprise support aimed at enabling widowed persons to generate sustainable income

SECTION 4. Coverage and Exemption. This Act shall cover all indigent widowed persons as defined under Section 3 of this Act, provided that any widowed person already entitled by existing laws to benefits of the same kind shall not be covered by this Act, except if such benefits are of lesser value, in which case the widowed person shall be entitled to the difference.

SECTION 5. Duration of Assistance. The temporary financial Assistance shall be provided for a maximum period of twelve (12) months from the date of approval of the application, subject to renewal based on reassessment of the widowed person's indigency status by the DSWD or the concerned LGU.

SECTION 6. Amount and Mode of Disbursement.

1. The amount of financial assistance shall be equivalent to at least one(1) month's prevailing minimum wage in the regions where the beneficiary resides;
2. Disbursement shall be made monthly through accessible means such as bank transfers, authorized remittance centers, or LGU cash payout facilities.

SECTION 7. Counselling and Support Services. A registered social worker shall provide psychosocial counselling sessions to the widowed person as needed. The DSWD, in coordination with LGUs, shall also organize community-based support groups for widowed persons to provide peer support and information sharing.

SECTION 8. Skills Training and Livelihood Support. The DSWD, in coordination with the Technical Education Skills and Development Authority (TESDA), the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and other relevant agencies, shall offer free skills training, livelihood starter kits, or microenterprise assistance to qualified widowed persons.

SECTION 9. *Priority in Other Government Programs.* Indigent widowed persons shall be given priority access to other social protection programs, including but not limited to:

- a.) Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps);
- b.) Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation (AICS);
- c.) PhilHealth indigent membership; and
- d.) Socialized housing programs.

SECTION 10. *Documentary Requirements.* A widowed person shall be eligible for assistance under this Act upon submission of the following:

- a.) Residential and indigent certificate, issued by the barangay, indicating that the couple was still living together at the time of death;
- b. Death Certificate of the spouse; and
- c. Marriage certificate by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA)

SECTION 11. *Funding Source.* The amount necessary to implement this Act shall be charged against the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA) under the DSWD, with counterpart funding from LGUs, which allocate at last one percent (1%) of their Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) for programs supporting indigent widowed persons.

SECTION 12. *Monitoring, Accountability, and Penalties.* The DSWD shall maintain a Widowed Persons Assistance Registry to track beneficiaries and monitor program impact.

Any person who willfully misrepresents information to avail of benefits under this Act shall be liable to penalties under this Act shall be liable to penalties under the Revised Penal Code and other relevant laws.

SECTION 13. *Annual Report.* – The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) shall collaborate with the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, shall prescribe the necessary rules and regulations to carry out and enforce the provisions of this Act.

SECTION 14. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DSWD, in collaboration with the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for its implementation.

SECTION 10. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, the same shall not affect the validity and effectivity of the other provisions hereof.

SECTION 11. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, orders, and issuances, or portions thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SECTION 12. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general circulations.

Approved,