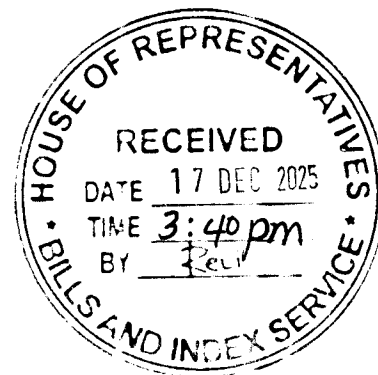




Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City



TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 6953

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

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The State's fundamental obligation to safeguard its citizens' welfare and promote a sustainable environment is explicitly anchored in the 1987 Philippine Constitution, specifically in Article II, Section 15 (Right to Health) and Section 16 (Right to a Healthful Ecology). The pervasive and often unregulated urbanization throughout the Philippines has critically exacerbated the effects of the climate crisis, resulting in severe urban heat islands, chronic air pollution, and catastrophic flood events, thereby posing a direct and persistent threat to public safety and health.

The urgency of this measure is underscored by recent national disasters. The Philippines faced a devastating, back-to-back catastrophe in November 2025, starting with Typhoon Tino (International Name: Kalmaegi) and immediately followed by the more powerful Super Typhoon Uwan (International Name: Fung-wong), prompting a national state of calamity. Typhoon Tino primarily ravaged the Visayas region, making multiple landfalls and causing massive flooding across Southern Leyte, Cebu, Negros Occidental, Iloilo City, and Palawan. Cebu province was one of the hardest-hit areas, reporting over a hundred fatalities and widespread urban flooding, while Dinagat Islands, Leyte, and Biliran also suffered extensive destruction, leaving over 2.4 million people affected in eight regions, with the death toll climbing past 200. Just as relief operations began, Super Typhoon Uwan struck, impacting a vast swath of Luzon. Uwan made landfall over Aurora Province, and its destructive path traversed northern Luzon, with areas like Catanduanes, Isabela, and the Bicol Region bearing the brunt of the storm's catastrophic winds, storm surges, and torrential rainfall. The massive scale of Uwan's threat forced preemptive evacuations of nearly 1.5 million people and caused widespread damage, including power outages in 168 cities and municipalities, compounding the humanitarian crisis across the central and northern parts of the country.

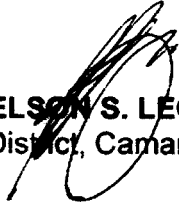
In October 2023, while serving as the Naga City Mayor, this Representation, alongside the City Government, introduced Ordinance No. 2023-110, which institutionalized the original Forest-in-Our-Midst Program. This local initiative successfully established a localized, adaptable, and cost-effective model for transforming densely built urban landscapes into resilient ecological assets, a strategy this proposed national measure seeks to immediately nationalize. The program's replicability and success are further proven by the recent launch of the Fiom in Canaman, a municipality in the Third District of Camarines Sur, in October 2025. This expansion was a strong collaborative effort involving the Local Government Unit (LGU), the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), the Department of Agriculture (DA), and the Metropolitan Naga Water District (MNWD), with critical manpower provided by beneficiaries of the DOLE's Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (TUPAD) Program through mass tree planting efforts.

This proposed measure, the "Forest-in-Our-Midst" (FIOM) Act, is designed to establish a comprehensive, nationwide program for urban forestry and green infrastructure. It provides a crucial, dedicated, and sustained policy focus that complements existing legal frameworks. The FIOM Act serves as the essential Urban Component of the existing National Greening Program and structurally supports all Local Government Units (LGUs) in fulfilling their environmental management mandates under Republic Act No. 7160 - *Local Government Code of 1991*. The program mandates mass tree planting, native species prioritization, and the integration of green infrastructure into all urban planning and public works. Furthermore, this strategic approach extends beyond ground-level parks to address dense urban cores by mandating vertical greening, including green roofs and walls for condominiums and high-density housing, thereby ensuring the program is effective across all urban typologies.

The institutionalization of the FIOM Program yields profound and interconnected ecological, economic, and social benefits for all urban residents. It directly addresses Disaster Risk Reduction by significantly increasing soil permeability to absorb stormwater runoff, allowing tree canopies to intercept rainfall, and stabilizing soil with root systems to diminish flash flooding and erosion risks. It also builds Climate Resilience by utilizing trees for evaporative cooling and shade, directly mitigating the urban heat island effect and conserving energy. It significantly enhances Environmental Protection by improving air quality through the filtration of particulate matter, thereby supporting the objectives of Republic Act No. 8749 - *Philippine Clean Air Act of 1999*. Finally, the program delivers clear socio-economic benefits by providing accessible public green spaces that promote physical activity and reduce psychological stress, leading to a marked improvement in overall public health and quality of life.

The collaborative inclusion of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD) ensure mandatory LGU compliance, effective resource allocation, and strict accountability in both local planning and building regulation nationwide.

Given the escalating urgency of the climate crisis and the clear public health dividend, the immediate passage of this measure is earnestly sought.


NELSON S. LEGACION
Representative, Third District, Camarines Sur



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TWENTIETH CONGRESS
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House Bill No. **6953**

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

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE NATIONAL URBAN FORESTRY AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM, TO BE KNOWN AS THE "FOREST-IN-OUR-MIDST" (FIOM) ACT, INSTITUTIONALIZING URBAN GREENING AND CLIMATE ADAPTATION IN CITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES, PROVIDING FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNDING, 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 "*Forest-in-Our-Midst (FIOM) Act*".

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. It is the policy of the State to prioritize climate change adaptation and mitigation through the institutionalization of urban forestry and green infrastructure. The State shall mandate all cities and municipalities to establish, maintain, and expand green spaces to enhance environmental resilience, reduce the urban heat island effect, improve public health, and conserve biodiversity, consistent with the mandates of the Local Government Code and the National Greening Program.

SECTION 3. Establishment of the Forest-in-Our-Midst (FIOM) Program. There is hereby established the National Urban Forestry and Green Infrastructure Program, to be known as the "Forest-in-Our-Midst" (FIOM) Program. The program shall be jointly implemented by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), and all Local Government Units (LGUs), with the assistance of the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD).

SECTION 4. Program Goals and Targets. The FIOM Program shall aim for the following national targets, to be achieved within ten (10) years of the Act's effectivity, with specific, locally adapted targets to be set by the LGUs in their

Comprehensive Land Use Plans (CLUPs):

- a. **Canopy Cover:** Achieve a minimum urban tree canopy cover of twenty percent (20%) in major urban centers.
- b. **Green Spaces:** Establish at least one (1) new accessible public green space (park, urban garden, or forest park) per city or municipal district every five (5) years.
- c. **Native Species Prioritization:** Ensure that at least seventy percent (70%) of all planted trees are climate-resilient, non-invasive, and native Philippine species.

SECTION 5. *Key Components of the FIOM Program.* The FIOM Program shall include:

- a. **Mandatory Urban Tree Planting** where LGUs shall identify and secure public lands, including road setbacks, easements, idle government properties, and school grounds, for mandatory tree-planting initiatives.
- b. **Green Infrastructure Integration** where LGUs shall integrate the principles of green infrastructure (e.g., permeable pavements, bioswales, rain gardens) into all new infrastructure and public works projects to manage stormwater and reduce flooding.
- c. **Urban Forest Zoning** where LGUs shall create specific Urban Forest Zones in their CLUPs, defining areas where maximum tree canopy retention and expansion are legally mandated.
- d. **Mandatory Vertical and High-Density Greening** where the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR), in coordination with the DHSUD, shall mandate specific green infrastructure requirements for all new and major redevelopment projects for condominiums, vertical housing, and high-density commercial structures. These requirements shall include:
 - i. **Green Roofs and Walls** through mandatory integration of living roofs, vegetated facades, or vertical gardens to reduce the urban heat island effect, manage rainwater, and conserve energy.
 - ii. **Micro-Parks and Plazas** through reservation of a minimum prescribed percentage of the total lot area for accessible, permeable, and maintained ground-level communal green spaces.
 - iii. **Water Recycling for Irrigation** through implementation of rainwater harvesting and/or gray water recycling systems dedicated to sustaining the building's green infrastructure and landscaping.
- e. **Community and Educational Engagement** where LGUs shall organize annual community planting drives and integrate urban forestry and climate literacy into local school curricula.

SECTION 6. *Role of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources*

(DENR). The DENR shall be the Lead Implementing Agency, responsible for:

- a. Providing technical expertise in species selection, nursery development, and urban forest management standards;
- b. Establishing a National Urban Tree Species Database prioritizing native, climate-resilient species; and
- c. Monitoring and evaluating the overall national canopy cover and green space expansion.

SECTION 7. *Role of the Local Government Units (LGUs).* All LGUs (City and Municipal) shall be primarily responsible for the local implementation of the Fiom Program, in fulfillment of their devolved environmental functions under the Local Government Code. This includes:

- a. Designating a dedicated Urban Greening Officer within the City/Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Office (C/MENRO);
- b. Identifying, securing, and maintaining all designated planting sites and urban green spaces; and
- c. Allocating adequate local funds for the long-term maintenance, watering, and protection of urban trees.

SECTION 8. *Role of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG).* The DILG shall be responsible for ensuring mandatory compliance of all LGUs with the provisions of this Act, including the allocation of local funds, and shall incorporate Fiom performance metrics into the Seal of Good Local Governance (SGLG) criteria.

SECTION 9. *Appropriations.* The initial amount necessary to carry out the implementation of the Fiom Program shall be included in the annual appropriations of the DENR. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the continued operation and maintenance of the Program shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA). LGUs shall likewise allocate funds from their respective Internal Revenue Allotments (IRA) for local program operations and long-term maintenance.

SECTION 10. *Incentives and Penalties.*

- a. **Incentives** - LGUs that demonstrably meet or exceed the Fiom targets shall be prioritized for environmental and climate resilience funding and shall receive special recognition under the SGLG.
- b. **Penalties** - The DILG may impose administrative sanctions on LGU officials responsible for non-compliance or failure to allocate necessary funds for the mandated Fiom Program components, following due process.

SECTION 11. *Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).* Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DENR, in coordination with the DILG, the

Climate Change Commission, and representatives from the League of Cities and the League of Municipalities, shall jointly formulate and promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to effectively implement the provisions of this Act.

SECTION 12. *Separability Clause.* If any provision of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SECTION 13. *Repealing Clause.* All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, local ordinances, rules and regulations, or parts thereof, inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SECTION 14. *Effectivity.* This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,