

**Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Batasan Hills, Quezon City**

**Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session**

House Bill No. 6963



**Introduced by Honorable Representatives
DADAH KIRAM ISMULA (Akbayan Partylist)
JOSE MANUEL TADEO "CHEL" I. DIOKNO (Akbayan Partylist)
PERCIVAL V. CENDAÑA (Akbayan Partylist)
KAKA BAG-AO (Dinagat Islands)**

**AN ACT ESTABLISHING UNIVERSAL PRAYER SPACES OR PLACES OF
WORSHIP IN GOVERNMENT OFFICES, FACILITIES, AND OTHER
INFRASTRUCTURES, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article III, Section 5 of the 1987 Constitution ("Constitution") provides that "[n]o law shall be made respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall forever be allowed. . ."

While our Constitution and legal regime prohibit the establishment of a state religion, there is a chartered tradition towards accommodation of secular programs or activities in order to preserve free exercise protections and not infringe on religious liberty. In its Resolution 6/37, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) reaffirmed the recognition by the 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights that "all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, and its appeal to all Governments to take all appropriate measures in compliance with their international obligations and with due regard to their respective legal systems to counter intolerance and related violence based on religion or belief, including practices of discrimination against women and the desecration of religions sites, recognizing that every individual has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, expression and religion."

The UNHRC proceeds to urge States "[t]o exert the utmost efforts, in accordance with their national legislation and in conformity with international human rights and humanitarian law, to ensure that religious places, sites, shrines and symbols are fully respected and protected and to take additional measures in cases where they are vulnerable to desecration or destruction."¹

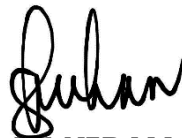
¹ Section 9(e), United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 6/37.

Drawing from these International and Constitutional guarantees, the Government must ensure that universal prayer spaces or places of worship are set up within its premises for the benefit of its officers, employees, clients, guests, and the public in general subject to considerations of security and/or potential disruption of the delivery of its primary services.

A review of Government infrastructures across the country reveals inconsistent provisions of prayer rooms or places of worship. In many government offices, such facilities are absent due to the lack of clear mandate and, in some cases, budgetary constraints. For the same reasons, even in areas where prayer rooms or places of worship are established, they often fall short in terms of inclusivity for various religious practices and do not fully meet basic infrastructure standards.

This proposed legislation aims to reaffirm and promote the right to religious freedom by mandating the establishment of universal prayer spaces or places of worship in Government infrastructures, ensuring that these facilities are inclusive and accessible to all religious faiths, and by providing the necessary funding for their implementation.

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



DADAH KIRAM ISMULA
Akbayan Representative



JOSE MANUEL TADEO
"CHEL" I. DIOKNO
Akbayan Representative



PERCIVAL V. CENDAÑA
Akbayan Representative



KAKA J. BAG-AO
Dinagat Islands Representative

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Batasan Hills, Quezon City

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 6963

Introduced by Honorable Representatives
DADAH KIRAM ISMULA (Akbayan Partylist)
JOSE MANUEL TADEO "CHEL" I. DIOKNO (Akbayan Partylist)
PERCIVAL V. CENDAÑA (Akbayan Partylist)
KAKA BAG-AO (Dinagat Islands)

**AN ACT ESTABLISHING UNIVERSAL PRAYER SPACES OR PLACES OF
WORSHIP IN GOVERNMENT OFFICES, FACILITIES, AND OTHER
INFRASTRUCTURES, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

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

1 **SECTION 1. *Short Title.*** This act shall be known as the "*Universal Prayer Spaces*
2 *Act.*"

3
4 **SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy*** – It is the policy of the State to uphold the
5 constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion and belief. Article III, Section 5 of the
6 Constitution provides that "[n]o law shall be made respecting an establishment of
7 religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. The free exercise and enjoyment of
8 religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall forever
9 be allowed. No religious test shall be required for the exercise of civil or political rights."

10
11 Pursuant to Article II, Section 2 of the Constitution, the Philippines ". . . adopts the
12 generally accepted principles of international law as part of the law of the land and
13 adheres to the policy of peace, equality, justice, freedom, cooperation, and amity with
14 all nations." In line with this policy, the Philippines recognizes the UNHRC's Resolution
15 6/37, which affirms the recognition by the 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human
16 Rights that "all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated,
17 and its appeal to all Governments to take all appropriate measures in compliance with
18 their international obligations and with due regard to their respective legal systems to
19 counter intolerance and related violence based on religion or belief, including practices
20 of discrimination against women and the desecration of religious sites, recognizing
21 that every individual has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, expression and
22 religion."

1 In furtherance of these principles, the State shall undertake measures to promote
2 respect and freedom of religion and belief, including the establishment of universal
3 prayer spaces in government offices and facilities, while ensuring that these facilities
4 are inclusive and accessible to all religious faiths.

5
6 **SEC. 3. *Universal Prayer Spaces and Places of Worship.*** – All Government
7 Agencies including any of its department, bureau, office, or unit, or any of its branches
8 and instrumentalities, or any political subdivision, as well as any government-owned
9 or controlled corporation, including its subsidiaries, or other self-governing branch,
10 commission or council of the Government – including government infrastructures such
11 as airports, seaports, rail terminals, and government hospitals – shall establish, set
12 up, and henceforth maintain at least one (1) universal prayer space or places of
13 worship.

14
15 These facilities shall be made available for the use of government officers and
16 employees, clients, guests, and the public in general subject to considerations of
17 security and/or potential disruption of the delivery of its primary services.

18
19 The universal prayer space or places of worship shall be designed and constructed to
20 conform to religious requirements intended to accommodate multiple faiths and
21 religious persuasions.

22
23 **SEC. 4. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – The Department of Public Works
24 and Highways, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of
25 Transportation, in coordination with other relevant departments, offices, agencies,
26 non-governmental organizations, faith-based or religious organizations, and the
27 academe shall jointly promulgate the implementing rules and regulations of this Act
28 within sixty (60) days from its effectivity.

29
30 The implementing rules and regulations shall include, among others, the structural
31 and design specifications of universal prayer spaces or places of worship, which shall
32 conform to the needs and requirements of multiple faiths, beliefs, and religious
33 persuasions.

34
35 **SEC. 5. *Appropriations*** – This Act shall be implemented initially within the budgetary
36 framework of the government entities enumerated under Section 3 hereof budget for
37 the fiscal year in which it was enacted into law. Thereafter, such amounts as may be
38 necessary for the continued implementation shall be included in the annual General
39 Appropriations Act (GAA) of the government agencies covered under Section 3 of this
40 Act.

1 **SEC. 6. *Repealing Clause.*** - All laws, decrees, executive orders, proclamations, rules
2 and regulations, and other issuances, or parts thereof, inconsistent with the provisions
3 of this Act, are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

4
5 **SEC. 7. *Effectivity.*** - This Act takes effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in at
6 least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,