

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 7386



Introduced by **Representative RAYMOND ADRIAN SALCEDA**

AN ACT
INSTITUTING A COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL HEALTH PROGRAM TO COMBAT
SYSTEMIC LUPUS ERYTHEMATOSUS (LUPUS) DISEASE, ESTABLISHING A
NATIONAL LUPUS AWARENESS, PREVENTION, AND TREATMENT PROGRAM,
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE), commonly known as lupus, is a chronic autoimmune disease that can affect any part of the body, including the skin, joints, kidneys, heart, lungs, blood vessels, and brain. In lupus, the immune system produces antibodies that attack the body's own healthy tissues, causing inflammation, pain, and damage to various organs.

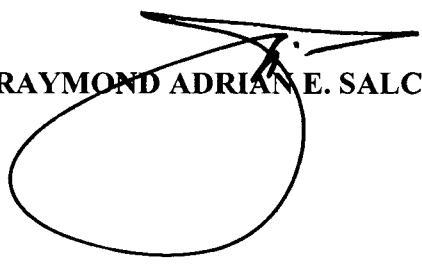
Lupus disproportionately affects women, with nine out of ten patients being female, particularly those of childbearing age. The disease often goes undiagnosed or misdiagnosed because its symptoms mimic those of other illnesses, earning it the moniker "the great imitator" or "the disease with a thousand faces." This delay in diagnosis leads to more severe organ damage and poorer health outcomes.

In the Philippines, there are no comprehensive statistics on lupus prevalence, largely due to underdiagnosis and lack of a national registry. However, the increasing number of Filipinos seeking support from organizations such as the Lupus Support Group Philippines and the Hope for Lupus Foundation underscores the urgent need for government intervention.

The burden of lupus extends beyond health concerns. Many patients face significant economic challenges due to the high cost of medications, laboratory tests, and specialist consultations. Out-of-pocket expenses remain the primary mode of healthcare financing for lupus patients, making treatment inaccessible for many low-income families. The disease also affects patients' ability to work, further compounding their financial difficulties.

This bill seeks to address these challenges by establishing a comprehensive national program for lupus awareness, prevention, early detection, and treatment. It mandates the Department of Health to implement epidemiological surveillance, establish screening programs, and develop support systems for persons with lupus. The bill also directs the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation to include lupus screening and treatment in its benefit packages, thereby reducing the financial burden on affected families.

The approval of this bill is earnestly sought.



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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 "Comprehensive Lupus Prevention Act."

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to protect and promote the right to health of the people, including the rights of persons with systemic lupus erythematosus (lupus) disease to full, healthy, and holistic development and the right to self-determination. As such, the State shall promote an environment conducive to the development of persons with lupus disease to become, to the best of their potentials, independent, self-reliant, and productive members of society.

SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.* – For purposes of this Act, the following terms shall be defined as follows:

- (a) "Systemic Lupus Erythematosus" or "Lupus" refers to a chronic, inflammatory autoimmune disease that can affect multiple organ systems, including the skin, joints, kidneys, heart, lungs, nervous system, and blood vessels;
- (b) "Person with Lupus" refers to any individual diagnosed with systemic lupus erythematosus or any of its variants;
- (c) "Flare" refers to the sudden onset or worsening of lupus symptoms;

(d) "Remission" refers to the period when lupus symptoms are minimal or absent.

SEC. 4. *Epidemiological Surveillance Programs.* – The National Institutes of Health (NIH) of the Department of Health (DOH) is hereby mandated to conduct an annual epidemiological surveillance program to determine the prevalence and incidence of lupus in the Philippines. The NIH shall maintain a national database of persons with lupus for purposes of research, policy formulation, and program development.

SEC. 5. *National Program for Lupus Awareness, Prevention, and Treatment.* – The Department of Health (DOH) is hereby mandated to implement a comprehensive and integrated national program for lupus awareness, prevention, early detection, and treatment. The program shall include, but not be limited to:

(a) Public education and information dissemination on the nature, symptoms, and management of lupus;

(b) Early identification, screening, and detection programs for persons at risk of developing lupus;

(c) Establishment of support networks for persons with lupus and their families;

(d) Training programs for healthcare providers on the diagnosis and management of lupus;

(e) Research and development on lupus prevention, diagnosis, and treatment.

SEC. 6. *Lupus Early Detection and Screening.* – The DOH is hereby mandated to establish a program for early identification, screening, and detection of persons with lupus disease. The fees for such early detection and screening shall be covered by the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) as part of its benefit packages.

SEC. 7. *National Lupus Awareness Week.* – The first week of May of every year is hereby declared as "National Lupus Awareness Week." This week shall be celebrated nationwide to increase public awareness on the prevalence, symptoms, and management of lupus. The week-long activity shall be spearheaded by the Department of Health (DOH), in coordination with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Department of Education (DepEd), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and the Philippine Information Agency (PIA).

SEC. 8. *Creation of a National Website for Persons with Lupus.* – The DOH is hereby mandated to establish a national website on lupus. The website shall highlight the various programs, interventions, services, and advocacy channels being provided by the Government so that persons with lupus and their families can avail of the information and services provided by the State. The website shall contain information on DOH-accredited health service providers who can provide therapy and treatment to patients.

SEC. 9. *PhilHealth Coverage.* – The Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) shall include in its benefit packages the coverage of lupus screening, diagnosis, treatment, and maintenance medications, subject to the guidelines to be issued by PhilHealth.

SEC. 10. *Training of Service Providers.* – All DOH staff and health providers providing various health services to persons with lupus disease are mandated to undergo a continuing education and training program to sensitize and empower them to become effective frontliners in the delivery of health services to patients.

SEC. 11. *Protection of Patient Rights.* – The DOH shall formulate the necessary guidelines, standards, and procedures to protect the rights of patients to informed consent and the right to self-determination. The DOH shall promulgate guidelines and standards to ensure that the interventions and programs being provided by the government towards patients with lupus disease do not violate their basic constitutional and human rights.

SEC. 12. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act shall be included and incorporated in the annual General Appropriations Act of the Department of Health (DOH).

SEC. 13. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DOH, upon recommendation of PhilHealth, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to implement this Act.

SEC. 14. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 15. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, orders, rules and regulations, or parts thereof, inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 16. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,