

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

TWENTIETH (20th) CONGRESS
FIRST REGULAR SESSION

HOUSE BILL NO. 7476



Introduced by
Representative **ARLYN P. AYON**

**AN ACT STRENGTHENING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9439,
OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "AN ACT PROHIBITING THE
DETENTION OF PATIENTS IN HOSPITALS AND MEDICAL CLINICS
ON GROUNDS OF NONPAYMENT OF HOSPITAL BILLS OR
MEDICAL EXPENSES", PROVIDING ENHANCED PENALTIES,
CLEAR ENFORCEMENT MECHANISMS, AND ADDITIONAL
PATIENT REMEDIES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

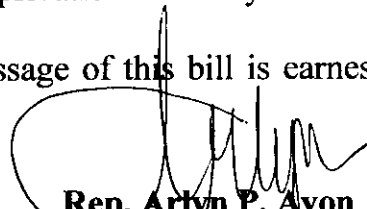
EXPLANATORY NOTE

Republic Act No. 9439 explicitly prohibits the detention of patients in hospitals for nonpayment of medical bills. However, despite its enactment, reports persist of patients— particularly the poor and vulnerable—being unlawfully held after medical clearance through indirect and coercive practices.

This bill seeks to strengthen RA 9439 by clarifying what constitutes detention, creating a presumption of illegality for delayed discharge, and aligning violations with existing offenses under the Revised Penal Code, including arbitrary detention. It further enhances administrative sanctions under the Department of Health and provides clear civil remedies for aggrieved patients.

The measure affirms that hospitals are institutions of care, not detention facilities, and that poverty shall never justify the deprivation of liberty.

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


Rep. Arlyn P. Ayon
Swerte Party-list

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 7476

Introduced by SWERTE Party-list Representative
ARLYN P. AYON

AN ACT
STRENGTHENING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9439, OTHERWISE
KNOWN AS “AN ACT PROHIBITING THE DETENTION OF
PATIENTS IN HOSPITALS AND MEDICAL CLINICS ON GROUNDS
OF NONPAYMENT OF HOSPITAL BILLS OR MEDICAL EXPENSES,”
PROVIDING ENHANCED PENALTIES, CLEAR ENFORCEMENT
MECHANISMS, AND ADDITIONAL PATIENT REMEDIES, 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 “Patient Liberty
and Hospital Accountability Act of 2026.”

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. It is hereby declared the policy of the
State to uphold the constitutional rights to liberty, dignity, and health under
Article II and Article III of the 1987 Constitution. The State recognizes that no
person shall be deprived of liberty by reason of poverty or inability to
immediately pay medical expenses. Hospitals and medical clinics shall not, under
any circumstance, detain patients as a means of enforcing payment of hospital
bills.

SECTION 3. Coverage and Definition of Terms. This Act seeks to:

- a. Hospital or Medical Clinic refers to any public or private hospital,
infirmary, clinic, lying-in, or similar medical facility duly licensed
by the Department of Health (DOH).
- b. Patient refers to any individual who has received medical treatment,

whether admitted, confined, under observation, or treated on an emergency basis.

- c. Medical Clearance or Authorized Discharge refers to a written or electronic determination by the attending physician or authorized medical officer that the patient is medically fit for discharge or transfer.
- d. Detention refers to any act or omission that directly or indirectly prevents, delays, or conditions the release of a patient after medical clearance, including but not limited to:
 - 1. Refusal to issue discharge orders;
 - 2. Withholding of personal belongings, medical records required for continuing care, or identification documents;
 - 3. Locking or restricting exits; or
 - 4. Requiring payment, promissory notes, guarantees, post-dated checks, or collateral as a condition for release.

SECTION 4. *Absolute Prohibition Against Detention for Nonpayment.*

Consistent with Republic Act No. 9439, it shall be unlawful for any hospital or medical clinic, or any of its officers, employees, or agents, to detain or withhold the release of a patient who has been medically cleared, solely or primarily on the ground of nonpayment or partial payment of hospital bills or professional fees. Any agreement, waiver, hospital policy, or contract contrary to this provision shall be void and without legal effect.

SECTION 5. *Mandatory Discharge Obligations.* Upon issuance of medical clearance, the hospital or clinic shall immediately:

- a. Allow the physical release of the patient without delay;
- b. Return all personal belongings and identification documents;
- c. Provide a copy of the statement of account and discharge summary; and
- d. Inform the patient of lawful modes of payment or collection without prejudice to civil remedies. Under no circumstance shall the exercise of civil remedies result in the deprivation of the patient's liberty.

SECTION 6. *Presumption of Illegal Detention.* Failure to release a patient within six (6) hours from issuance of medical clearance shall create a prima facie presumption of illegal detention, unless the hospital proves that the delay was due to valid medical or public safety reasons.

SECTION 7. *Criminal Liability; Relation to the Revised Penal Code.*

- (a) Any hospital officer, administrator, physician, nurse, security personnel, or employee who knowingly participates in or orders the detention of a patient in violation of this Act shall be punished under Article 124 (Arbitrary Detention) or Article 287 (Unjust Vexation) of the Revised Penal Code, as applicable, without prejudice to prosecution under Republic Act No. 9439.
- (b) When the offender is a private individual, the penalty shall be prisión correccional in its minimum to medium period and/or a fine of not less than Fifty thousand pesos (P50,000.00), at the discretion of the court.

SECTION 8. *Administrative Liability.* In addition to criminal liability, the Department of Health may impose the following administrative sanctions:

- a. Fines for each incident of violation;
- b. Suspension or revocation of the hospital's license to operate;
- d. Disqualification of responsible officers from holding administrative positions in healthcare institutions.

Administrative liability shall be independent of criminal of civil liability.

SECTION 9. *Civil Remedies.* Any patient unlawfully detained may institute a civil action to recover:

- a. Actual damages;
- b. Moral and exemplary damages under the Civil Code; and
- c. Attorney's fees and litigation costs.

Indigent patients shall be entitled to assistance from the Public Attorney's

Office (PAO).

SECTION 10. *Prohibition on Retaliation.* No hospital or medical clinic shall deny future treatment, harass, or discriminate against a patient for asserting rights under this Act. Any retaliatory act shall constitute a separate and distinct offense.

SECTION 11. *Enforcement and Oversight.* The Department of Health, in coordination with the Philippine National Police, local government units, and other concerned agencies, shall:

- a. Establish a 24-hour complaint and response mechanism;
- b. Conduct unannounced compliance inspections; and
- c. Submit an annual report to Congress on violations and enforcement actions.

SECTION 12. *Patient Information and Notice Requirement.* All hospitals and clinics shall prominently display, in English, Filipino, and local dialects, a notice stating: "DETAINING PATIENTS FOR NONPAYMENT OF HOSPITAL BILL IS ILLEGAL UNDER PHILIPPINE LAW." Failure to post such notice shall constitute an administrative offense.

SECTION 13. *Separability Clause.* If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining provisions shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 14. *Repealing Clause.* All laws, rules, regulations, or parts thereof inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

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

Approved,