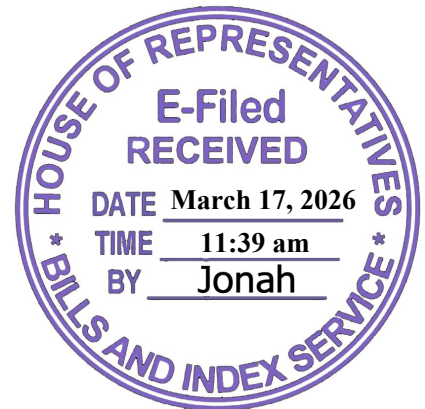


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 8594



Introduced by:

HON. CHRISTOPHERSON "COCO" M. YAP

AN ACT

PROVIDING HAZARD PAY, NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE, AND GROUP ACCIDENT INSURANCE TO ACCREDITED DISASTER RESPONSE RESCUERS AND VOLUNTEERS ENGAGED IN AUTHORIZED DISASTER RESPONSE AND EMERGENCY OPERATIONS DURING FORMALLY DECLARED STATES OF CALAMITY, EMERGENCY, OR IMMINENT DISASTER, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Disasters and emergencies often place communities in sudden danger, from floods, landslides, typhoons, fires, and other hazards. In these critical moments, accredited rescuers and disaster volunteers step forward to save lives, evacuate families, and assist communities in distress. Their work often involves great personal risk, long hours, and difficult conditions.

Yet despite the dangers they face, many volunteers do not always receive clear and timely support for their welfare and protection while performing these vital duties.

The Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010 (Republic Act No. 10121) recognizes the important role of disaster volunteers and provides that those who suffer injury or death while performing disaster response duties are entitled to benefits and insurance protection. More recently, Republic Act No. 12287 strengthened the country's disaster preparedness system by allowing the government to act early through the declaration of a State of Imminent Disaster.

However, in practice, gaps remain in ensuring that rescuers and volunteers consistently receive hazard pay, insurance, and other benefits while responding to officially declared disasters and emergencies.

This bill seeks to strengthen the protection and welfare of accredited rescuers and disaster volunteers. It provides hazard pay during periods of actual deployment in officially declared disasters, ensures access to national health insurance coverage, and guarantees group accident insurance for volunteers who may suffer injury, disability, or death while performing rescue and disaster response operations. It also establishes clear procedures and documentation requirements so that benefits can be given promptly while remaining transparent and compliant with government auditing rules.

By recognizing the sacrifices of those who risk their lives to save others, this measure supports and strengthens the country's disaster response system. Providing clear and reliable protection for rescuers and volunteers will encourage more citizens to serve their communities during times of crisis.

In view of the foregoing, **ug sa ngalan sa SERBISYONG TINUORAY**, the undersigned respectfully requests the immediate passage of this measure.


CHRISTOPHERSON "COCO" M. YAP
Representative, Second District of Southern Leyte

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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 “*Rescuers and Volunteers Protection and Benefits Act.*”

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. — It is the policy of the State to protect and promote the welfare of individuals who, as part of organized disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) operations, expose themselves to hazards and life-threatening conditions to save lives and protect communities. The State shall ensure that accredited rescuers and disaster volunteers engaged in authorized disaster response and emergency operations during formally declared states of calamity, emergency, or imminent disaster are provided with hazard pay, national health insurance coverage, and group accident insurance, subject to transparent standards, proper accreditation, and accountability in the use of public funds.

SECTION 3. Definition of Terms. — As used in this Act:

- (a) **Accredited Rescuers** refer to individuals who are (i) employed, appointed, detailed, or officially designated by a government agency or local government unit (LGU), or (ii) members of organized response teams of duly accredited civil society organizations (CSOs) or non-government organizations (NGOs), and who are mobilized to conduct search, rescue, retrieval, medical first response, evacuation, relief distribution, incident management support, or other emergency response functions, and who are accredited/registered pursuant to Section 4 of this Act.
- (b) **Disaster Volunteers** refer to individuals or organized volunteer groups mobilized to augment government or private sector personnel for DRRM programs and activities, who are accredited/registered through the Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Offices (LDRRMOs) for inclusion in the database of community disaster volunteers maintained by the Office of Civil Defense (OCD), consistent with Republic Act No. 10121.
- (c) **Authorized Operation** refers to an emergency or disaster operation officially activated or directed by the NDRRMC/OCD or the appropriate Regional/Local DRRM Council or LDRRMO, conducted only during the effectivity of a formal declaration of any of the following by the competent authority: (i) State of Calamity; (ii) State of Emergency; or (iii) State of Imminent Disaster under Republic Act No. 12287.
- (d) **Actual Deployment** refers to the period during which an accredited rescuer or disaster volunteer is physically present at, or assigned to, the incident site, staging area, evacuation site, operations center, or other officially designated area of operations, performing duties under an Authorized Operation.
- (e) **Hazard Pay** refers to additional compensation granted under this Act for performing hazardous duties and enduring physical hardships only during periods of actual exposure to danger or occupational risk in the course of an Authorized Operation, as certified in accordance with this Act and its implementing rules and regulations (IRR).
- (f) **Certification of Exposure and Service** refers to the written certification issued by the Incident Commander or authorized supervising official, attesting to (i) the existence of an Authorized Operation and the declaration relied upon, (ii) the accredited rescuer's or disaster volunteer's actual deployment dates

and hours, (iii) duties performed, and (iv) the nature/level of risk exposure, supported by the documentary requirements under this Act and the IRR.

(g) ***National Health Insurance Coverage*** refers to coverage under the National Health Insurance Program (NHIP) administered by PhilHealth, subject to its benefit packages and rules.

(h) ***Group Accident Insurance*** refers to insurance coverage procured or funded under this Act providing benefits for accidental death, dismemberment, and permanent disability, and such other accident-related benefits as may be provided in the IRR, covering accredited rescuers and disaster volunteers during Authorized Operations and for injuries sustained therein.

SECTION 4. Coverage and Accreditation Requirement. —

(a) ***Accreditation/Registration.*** — Only accredited rescuers and disaster volunteers who are duly listed and certified by the appropriate LDRRMO/OCD database or the head of the mobilizing agency, as may be provided in the IRR, shall be entitled to benefits under this Act.

(b) ***Alignment with RA 10121.*** — Accreditation and registration mechanisms shall be aligned with Section 13 of Republic Act No. 10121, including submission of volunteer lists to the OCD through the LDRRMOs for accreditation and inclusion in the database of community disaster volunteers.

SECTION 5. Hazard Pay. —

(a) ***Entitlement. No Blanket Grant.***— Accredited rescuers and disaster volunteers who render actual service in an Authorized Operation shall be entitled to hazard pay only for the period of Actual Deployment and actual exposure to hazard, subject to Certification of Exposure and Service and compliance with documentary requirements. No blanket, across-the-board, or sweeping grant of hazard pay shall be made without showing that the qualifications and conditions under this Act and the IRR have been met.

(b) ***Rate for Government Personnel.*** — For accredited rescuers who receive regular compensation from government, hazard pay shall be computed at a rate of not less than twenty percent (20%) of the monthly basic salary (or its equivalent) for the period of actual exposure, and shall be pro-rated when the deployment

covers less than a full month, in accordance with standards to be prescribed in the IRR based on risk level, nature of assignment, and place of deployment.

- (c) *Rate for Volunteers.* — For disaster volunteers, hazard pay shall be in the form of a daily hazard allowance corresponding to actual days of deployment and exposure. The Department of Budget and Management (DBM), in consultation with the DILG and OCD, shall prescribe standardized daily rates and risk tiers under the IRR.
- (d) *Required Certification.* — Payment of hazard pay shall require Certification of Exposure and Service issued by: (i) the Incident Commander; or (ii) the head of the mobilizing agency/LDRRMO, or a duly authorized representative, stating the formal declaration relied upon (State of Calamity/State of Emergency/State of Imminent Disaster), the authority activating the operation, the inclusive dates and hours of actual deployment, the duties performed, and the assessed level of risk exposure.
- (e) *Minimum Documentary Requirements.* — No disbursement of hazard pay shall be made without the following minimum documents, in addition to those required under existing budgeting, accounting, and auditing rules: (i) a copy of the formal declaration of State of Calamity, State of Emergency, or State of Imminent Disaster; (ii) written activation order, mission order, deployment order, or equivalent instruction issued by competent authority; (iii) attendance log, duty roster, or equivalent record showing Actual Deployment; and (iv) Certification of Exposure and Service.
- (f) *Implementing Standards on “Actual Exposure.”* — The IRR shall define objective indicators of “actual exposure,” adopt risk tiers, and specify reasonable minimum exposure thresholds to ensure that hazard pay is granted only to those who meet the statutory conditions.

SECTION 6. National Health Insurance and Group Accident Insurance. —

- (a) *NHIP Enrollment of Volunteers.* — All disaster volunteers covered by this Act shall be enrolled in the NHIP. Premium contributions for qualified disaster volunteers without employer-shouldered premium shall be subsidized by the National Government, subject to guidelines under the IRR and PhilHealth rules.

- (b) *Group Accident Insurance.* — Accredited rescuers and disaster volunteers covered by this Act shall be provided Group Accident Insurance for the duration of their Authorized Operation and for such reasonable period thereafter as may be necessary to cover injuries suffered during the Authorized Operation, as may be provided in the IRR.
- (c) *Compensatory Benefits.* Consistency with RA 10121. — Any disaster volunteer who incurs death or injury while engaged in DRRM activities defined under Republic Act No. 10121 shall be entitled to compensatory benefits and individual personnel accident insurance as may be defined under the guidelines.
- (d) *Non-Diminution.* Coordination. — Benefits under this Act shall be without prejudice to any existing benefits, insurance, or entitlements under other laws, rules, or valid contracts, subject to coordination and avoidance of double recovery as may be provided in the IRR.

SECTION 7. Funding and Appropriations. —

- (a) *National Funding.* — The amount necessary for the initial and continuing implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA).
- (b) *Local Funding.* — LGUs are authorized to allocate funds from their Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund (LDRRMF) for allowable expenses under this Act, including hazard pay for local deployments and premiums/insurance costs for accredited rescuers and disaster volunteers within their jurisdiction, subject to budgeting, accounting, and auditing rules.

SECTION 8. Implementing Rules and Regulations. — Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), the Office of Civil Defense (OCD), the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), and the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth), in consultation with accredited volunteer organizations and concerned stakeholders, shall promulgate the IRR.

The non-promulgation of the IRR shall not prevent the immediate implementation of this Act upon its effectivity, and the concerned agencies shall issue interim guidelines to operationalize accreditation/registration, enrollment, insurance procurement, and benefit processing.

SECTION 9. Accountability. — Any public official who, without lawful justification, unjustifiably delays, refuses, or fails to process or release benefits under this Act despite complete documentation and availability of funds shall be subject to appropriate administrative liability under existing civil service rules and regulations, and to such other liabilities as may be applicable under existing laws.

SECTION 10. Separability Clause. — If any provision of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 11. Repealing Clause. — All laws, rules, and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

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

Approved,