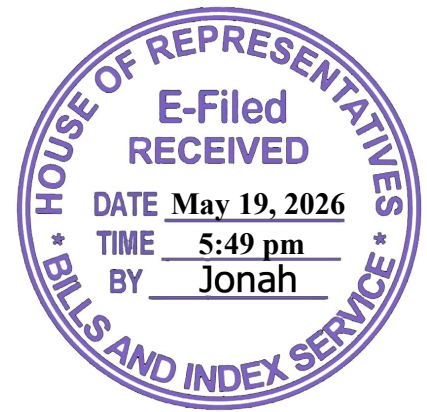


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 9345



Introduced by **Rep. MANUEL “WOWO” L. FORTES, JR.**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Constitution guarantees every Filipino the right to adequate food and mandates the State to uplift the living standards of the poor. Yet despite existing poverty alleviation and social protection programs, many Filipino families continue to experience involuntary hunger brought about by food insecurity, unemployment, inflation, and economic vulnerability. Addressing hunger remains essential not only to national development, but also to the country's commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 2 or “Zero Hunger,” which aims to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.

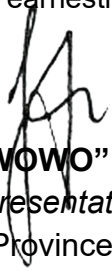
Millions of households struggle daily to provide sufficient and nutritious food for their families, particularly children, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and pregnant or lactating women. Hunger and malnutrition not only threaten physical health and development, but also impair educational outcomes, productivity, and overall quality of life.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has demonstrated that targeted food assistance programs can help address hunger among the country's most vulnerable sectors. By providing food credits that may only be used to purchase nutritious food items through accredited merchants, the program promotes healthier food consumption while ensuring accountability and accessibility in the delivery of assistance.

Therefore, this bill seeks to institutionalize the Walang Gutom Program as a permanent national food assistance initiative that will strengthen the State's efforts to combat involuntary hunger and improve food security among low-income households. Through a more responsive and sustainable system of food assistance, the program aims to protect vulnerable families from the long-term effects of hunger and undernutrition.

Ultimately, this bill affirms that access to adequate food is a basic human right and that no Filipino family should be left to suffer from hunger in a country capable of providing for its people.

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


ATTY. MANUEL “WOWO” L. FORTES, JR.

Representative

Second District, Province of Sorsogon

Twentieth Congress of the
Republic of the Philippines
First Regular Session

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 9345

Introduced by **Rep. MANUEL “WOWO” L. FORTES, JR.**

**AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING THE WALANG GUTOM PROGRAM AS A FOOD
STAMP INITIATIVE TO COMBAT INVOLUNTARY HUNGER, PROVIDING FUNDS
THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

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

SEC. 1. *Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Walang Gutom Act”.

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to promote social justice, reduce poverty, and protect the family as a basic autonomous social institution. The State shall guarantee the right of every Filipino to freedom from hunger and shall ensure adequate food intake, especially for the most vulnerable sectors.

The State affirms its obligations under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights to guarantee the right to adequate food.

SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.* – For purposes of this Act, the following terms shall mean:

- a. Walang Gutom Program – A national food stamp program aimed at addressing involuntary hunger by providing eligible beneficiaries with electronic food credits for the purchase of nutritious food items;
- b. Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) – A system that allows the transfer of food credits through reloadable cards to be used at accredited partner-merchants;
- c. Food Poverty Line – The minimum monthly income required by a family to meet basic food requirements, computed and regularly updated by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), and serving as a basis for benefit levels and eligibility;
- d. Eligible Beneficiaries – Households whose income falls below the food poverty line, with prioritization for families with pregnant or lactating women, children under five, senior citizens, or persons with disabilities; and

- e. Listahan ng mga Pamilyang Nangangailangan (Listahanan) – Also known as the National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction (NHTS-PR), an information management system of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) that identifies who and where the poor are in the Philippines for purposes of establishing a basis for targeting beneficiaries of social protection programs. Inclusion in the Listahanan is determined through nationwide household assessments conducted in cycles, the results of which are periodically updated to reflect changes in household conditions.

SEC. 4. *Establishment of the Walang Gutom Program.* – There is hereby established a Walang Gutom Program under the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), which shall implement and oversee the food stamp initiative nationwide.

SEC. 5. *Program Components.* – The program shall include the following components:

- a. Identification of Beneficiaries;
- b. Distribution of Electronic Benefit Transfer Cards preloaded with monthly food credits equivalent to at least Five Thousand Pesos (Php 5,000) per household;
- c. Accreditation of Partner-Merchants such as grocery stores, wet markets, and cooperatives that will accept food stamps as payment;
- d. Nutrition Education and Counseling to ensure proper food choices and prevent malnutrition;
- e. Regular Monitoring and Evaluation to assess program impact and make evidence-based improvements;
- f. Limitation of food credit use to eligible food items, as defined by the DSWD in consultation with the Department of Health (DOH), which shall not be converted to cash nor used to purchase non-food items; and
- g. Establishment of alternative benefit delivery mechanisms in geographically isolated or disadvantaged areas, with support from LGUs and accredited community-based organizations, ensuring offline accessibility and inclusivity.

SEC. 6. *Beneficiary Identification.* – For purposes of determining eligibility under this Act, the DSWD shall utilize the most recent official results of the Listahanan household assessment cycle and Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) poverty data. The DSWD shall ensure that beneficiary identification is based on updated and validated data to reflect current household conditions. In the event that a new cycle is ongoing or pending validation, the DSWD may provisionally use the latest available official results, subject to immediate updating upon completion of the subsequent cycle.

SEC. 7. *Phased Implementation.* – The Walang Gutom Program shall be implemented in phases, beginning with the bottom one (1) million households nationwide based on the most recent Listahanan and Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) poverty data. Priority shall be given to households with pregnant or lactating women, children under five (5) years old, persons with disabilities, and senior citizens. Expansion to additional households shall be subject to evaluation and availability of funds.

LGUs shall assist in program dissemination, field validation, grievance handling, and beneficiary profiling, in coordination with the DSWD.

SEC. 8. *Local Government Counterpart and Participation.* – Local Government Units (LGUs) shall be encouraged to provide a counterpart fund for the implementation of the Walang Gutom Program within their jurisdictions. The national government may

provide matching grants or incentives to LGUs that commit resources or implement complementary hunger mitigation programs with adjustments for household composition and nutritional vulnerability, including higher allocations for families with pregnant or lactating women, based on Department of Health nutritional standards.

SEC. 9. *Integration with Existing Social Protection Programs.* – The DSWD shall ensure that the Walang Gutom Program complements and integrates with other national programs such as the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), the Department of Education's school-based feeding programs, and the Department of Agriculture's food distribution initiatives to ensure coherence, avoid duplication, and maximize impact.

SEC. 10. *Lead Implementing Agency.* – The DSWD shall be the primary implementing agency and may coordinate with the following:

- a. Department of Health (DOH);
- b. Department of Agriculture (DA);
- c. Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG);
- d. National Nutrition Council (NNC);
- e. Local Government Units (LGUs); and
- f. Non-Government Organizations and Civil Society Partners.

SEC. 11. *Funding.* – The amount necessary to implement the program shall be charged against the annual appropriations of the DSWD. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for its continued implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA).

The DSWD shall be authorized to receive grants, donations, and other forms of assistance from public or private, domestic or international sources.

SEC. 12. *Private Sector Engagement and Alternative Financing.* – The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) is authorized to enter into partnerships with private sector entities for the co-financing, support, or implementation of the Walang Gutom Program. Contributions by private partners may be recognized as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs and may be eligible for tax incentives under existing laws.

Partner merchants shall offer eligible food items that meet the nutritional standards set by the Department of Health (DOH) and the National Nutrition Council (NNC).

SEC. 13. *Monitoring, Evaluation, and Independent Assessment.* – An independent evaluation of the program's effectiveness, efficiency, and impact shall be conducted annually in partnership with recognized institutions such as the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), academic organizations, or civil society networks. Results shall guide subsequent phases and improvements of the program.

SEC. 14. *Penal Clause.* – Any person who commits fraud or misrepresentation to receive or misuse program benefits shall be penalized in accordance with relevant laws, including but not limited to the Revised Penal Code, the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act, and RA 10175 or the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012.

SEC. 15. *Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR)*. – Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DSWD, in consultation with stakeholders, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SEC. 16. *Separability Clause*. – If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the remainder shall not be affected and shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SEC. 17. *Repealing Clause*. – All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

SEC. 18. *Effectivity Clause*. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,