

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 9476



Introduced by **HON. BRIAN RAYMUND S. YAMSUAN**

AN ACT
INSTITUTIONALIZING MOBILE LEGAL CLINICS AND BARANGAY LEGAL AID
DESKS TO PROVIDE ACCESSIBLE AND FREE LEGAL SERVICES TO
UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES, STRENGTHENING ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE
RESOLUTION, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The 1987 Constitution expressly recognizes the right of all persons to free access to adequate legal assistance. Yet, for millions of Filipinos, this promise of accessible justice remains a distant ideal. In reality, ordinary citizens are effectively locked out of our justice system because legal services are time-consuming, physically inaccessible, and expensive. This is especially true in densely populated urban centers, which are often burdened by a critical shortage of Public Attorney's Office (PAO) lawyers and severely clogged court dockets. In these communities, everyday disputes involving unpaid debts, property boundaries, family disagreements, small financial claims, and neighborhood conflicts frequently escalate simply because residents lack immediate, accessible legal guidance.

This measure seeks to address this and make good the Constitutional promise of adequate legal assistance. It establishes a mechanism for free legal advice, basic legal assistance, and mediation at the community level through the creation and operation of Mobile Legal Clinics (MLC) and Barangay Legal Aid Desks (BLAD). The MLCs, operated by the Department of Justice (DOJ) and PAO, will bring legal aid "on-wheels" directly to far-flung communities, and will be fully-equipped to provide legal consultation, mediation and conciliation services, simple legal document assistance, and legal education sessions. Strengthening the MLCs' initiatives are the BLADs in every barangay, which shall likewise be staffed by trained paralegals, volunteer lawyers, and legal interns.

In many cases, people do not immediately need a courtroom battle to assert their right; they simply need guidance and a fair opportunity to be heard. By placing capable legal volunteers within communities, this bill would enable residents to receive immediate assistance without the burden of engaging a private counsel or spending time and money travelling to city centers or courts for free legal assistance. More importantly, it would strengthen our system of mediation and amicable settlement, which has long been part of the Filipino tradition of resolving conflicts within the community.

In view of the foregoing, the approval of this measure is earnestly sought.



BRIAN RAYMUND S. YAMSUAN

Representative

2nd District, Parañaque City

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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 “*Community Legal Access Act of 2026*”.

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy. — It is hereby declared the policy of the State to uphold the right of every Filipino to equal access to justice, as guaranteed by the Constitution. The State shall ensure that legal services are available and accessible, especially to marginalized and underserved communities, by establishing Mobile Legal Clinics (MLCs) and Barangay Legal Aid Desks (BLADs) to provide free legal assistance and strengthen alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms at the community level.

SEC. 3. Objectives. — This Act aims to:

- a. Provide free and accessible legal services to underserved and remote communities;
- b. Institutionalize Mobile Legal Clinics (MLCs) and Barangay Legal Aid Desks (BLADs) nationwide;
- c. Promote alternative dispute resolution to reduce court congestion and encourage amicable settlement of disputes; and

d. Foster collaboration among government agencies, local governments, the legal profession, and law schools in delivering legal aid services.

SEC. 4. Establishment of Mobile Legal Clinics. — The Department of Justice (DOJ), in coordination with the Public Attorney’s Office (PAO), shall establish and operate Mobile Legal Clinics (MLCs) nationwide. MLCs shall be fully equipped with vehicles deployed regularly to remote and underserved areas, providing free legal services such as:

- a. Legal consultation and advice;
- b. Mediation and conciliation services;
- c. Assistance in labor disputes, land conflicts, family law cases, consumer protection, and notarization of documents; and
- d. Public legal education sessions.

MLCs shall be staffed by PAO lawyers, paralegals, accredited volunteer lawyers, law student interns, and legal aid volunteers.

SEC. 5. Establishment of Barangay Legal Aid Desks. — Every barangay hall shall establish a Barangay Legal Aid Desk (BLAD), accessible to all residents, offering free legal guidance, mediation services, and assistance in preparing legal documents such as affidavits, contracts, and simple pleadings. BLADs shall be staffed by trained paralegals, volunteer lawyers, and legal interns. Local Government Units (LGUs) shall likewise provide appropriate space, basic equipment, and operational funds for BLADs within barangay halls.

SEC. 6. Strengthening Alternative Dispute Resolution. — MLCs and BLADs shall promote the amicable settlement of disputes through alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms such as mediation and conciliation, in accordance with Republic Act No. 9285, otherwise known as the “*Alternative Dispute Resolution Act of 2004*”. BLADs shall prioritize the resolution of minor disputes to reduce court caseloads.

SEC. 7. Volunteer Participation and Incentives. — Volunteer lawyers shall be entitled to incentives, including:

- a. Mandatory Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) credits;
- b. Tax deductions for pro bono legal services; and
- c. Law internship credits for students in state-run law schools.

The DOJ, in partnership with the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) and state law schools, shall develop a standardized training program for BLAD and MLC

volunteers, ensuring continuous professional development and quality of service.

SEC. 8. Barangay Legal Assistance Council. — A Barangay Legal Assistance Council (BLAC) is hereby created to oversee the implementation and monitoring of this Act. The BLAC shall be composed of representatives from the DOJ, PAO, Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), IBP, state-run law schools, and relevant civil society organizations. The BLAC shall:

- a. Monitor and evaluate the performance of MLCs and BLADs;
- b. Recommend improvements in legal aid delivery; and
- c. Submit an annual report to Congress.

SEC. 9. Funding. — The initial funding for the operation of MLCs and BLADs shall be charged against the current appropriations of the DOJ and PAO. Thereafter, the necessary funds shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA). LGUs shall allocate local funds for the establishment, maintenance, and operation of BLADs within barangay halls.

SEC. 10. Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR). — Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DOJ, in coordination with the PAO, DILG, IBP, state-run law schools, and other stakeholders, shall issue the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SEC. 11. Separability Clause. — If any portion or provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, other provisions hereof shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 12. Repealing Clause. — All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

SEC. 13. Effectivity. — This Act shall take effect fifteen days (15) after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a national newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,