

Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
Quezon City  
TWENTIETH CONGRESS  
First Regular Session  
HOUSE BILL NO. **10030**



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**Introduced by HON. PHILIP CONRAD "DOK BONG" M. ACOP**

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**AN ACT**  
**INSTITUTIONALIZING THE DIGITAL HEALTH AND TELEMEDICINE NETWORK**  
**IN GEOGRAPHICALLY ISOLATED AND DISADVANTAGED AREAS (GIDAs),**  
**MANDATING INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT, AND APPROPRIATING**  
**FUNDS THEREFOR**

**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

The proposed bill is a legislative measure designed to bridge the severe healthcare gap in the Philippines' most remote and underserved areas, legally known as Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDAs). Recognizing that the country's archipelagic geography cuts off millions from specialized medical care, the proposed bill transforms telehealth from a temporary pandemic-era fix into a permanent, nationally funded pillar of the national health system.

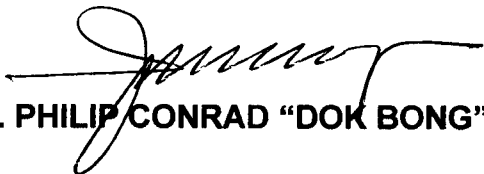
By mandating a dedicated digital framework, the bill shifts the healthcare paradigm so that instead of requiring critically ill patients to travel long distances for care, modern medicine travels digitally to them. To achieve this, the bill requires the Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) to establish a robust infrastructure network within three years.

Every isolated Rural Health Unit (RHU) will be required to be equipped with a "Telehealth Kit" featuring high-definition videoconferencing hardware, advanced point-of-care diagnostic tools like digital electrocardiograms (ECGs) and portable ultrasounds, and independent satellite internet terminals to bypass local commercial power or signal grid failures. This specialized equipment will stream real-time patient data directly to regional apex hospitals and national specialty centers like the Philippine Heart Center, allowing a patient in a distant island province to receive top-tier specialist consultations locally.

Crucially, the proposed bill heavily protects the patients both financially and legally. It integrates directly with the Universal Health Care (UHC) Act by mandating that all telehealth consultations, diagnostics, and electronic prescriptions be fully covered under PhilHealth, ensuring zero out-of-pocket expenses for GIDA residents.

Furthermore, it safeguards sensitive patient information by enforcing strict compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, requiring all cloud-based Electronic Health Records (EHR) to be heavily encrypted and accessible only to authorized medical personnel. Funded initially through current agency budgets and secured permanently through the annual General Appropriations Act, this law establishes a highly integrated, accessible, and secure digital lifeline for rural Filipinos.

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



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**SECTION 1. *Short Title.*** – This Act shall be known as the “*Telehealth for Remote Communities Act.*”

**SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.*** – It is the policy of the State to protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them. Recognizing the archipelagic nature of the country, the State shall leverage modern digital technology to eliminate geographical barriers to quality healthcare, ensuring that specialty medical consultations, diagnostics, and emergency triaging are accessible to every Filipino, regardless of location.

**SEC. 3. *Objectives.*** – This Act aims to:

- a. **Equip All Rural Health Units (RHUs):** Provide every GIDA-classified RHU and barangay health station with reliable satellite internet and standard digital diagnostic equipment.
- b. **Establish Specialty Tele-Consultation Hubs:** Link remote health centers directly with regional apex hospitals and national specialty centers (e.g., Philippine Heart Center, National Kidney and Transplant Institute).
- c. **Train Local Health Workers:** Upskill community doctors, nurses, and Barangay Health Workers (BHWs) in telehealth navigation, digital triage, and data privacy protocols.

**SEC. 4. *The National Telehealth Infrastructure Program.*** – The Department of Health (DOH), in coordination with the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), shall establish the National Telehealth Infrastructure Program.

Within three years of the enactment of this Act, every RHU in a GIDA municipality must be equipped with a “**Telehealth Kit**,” which includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- a. A dedicated satellite internet terminal (independent of local commercial grid failures).
- b. High-definition videoconferencing hardware.
- c. Point-of-care digital diagnostic tools (e.g., digital ECG, portable ultrasound, electronic stethoscopes, and vital sign monitors capable of real-time data transmission).

**SEC. 5. *Integration with the Universal Health Care (UHC) Act.*** – All consultations, digital diagnostics, and prescriptions generated through the Telehealth Network shall be fully covered under the PhilHealth National Health Insurance Program, ensuring zero out-of-pocket expenses for GIDA residents seeking remote specialist care.

**SEC. 6. *Data Privacy and Security.*** – The DOH and DICT shall ensure that the Telehealth Network strictly complies with Republic Act No. 10173, otherwise known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Patient records must be encrypted, stored in a secure cloud-based Electronic Health Record (EHR) system, and accessible only to authorized medical personnel directly involved in the patient's care.

**SEC. 7. *Appropriations.*** – The amount necessary to implement the provisions of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriations of the DOH and DICT. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for its continued implementation and maintenance shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA).

**SEC. 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).*** – The DOH and DICT, in coordination with the National Privacy Commission (NPC) and in consultation with healthcare professional organizations, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for its effective implementation.

**SEC. 9. *Effectivity.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

*Approved,*