

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 10692



Introduced by **ANG PROBINSYANO**
Party-List Representative Alfred Delos Santos

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Republic Act No. 12290, signed into law on September 12, 2025, created the Virology and Vaccine Institute of the Philippines (VIP) to serve as the country's lead institution for virology research, vaccine development, and diagnostic innovation. It was, and remains, a necessary response to the inadequacies during the COVID-19 pandemic, which exposed the country's ability to detect and understand emerging pathogens. However, the Institute's promise will only be felt nationwide if its capacity reaches beyond the capital region, and as presently structured, there is no guarantee that it will.

The pandemic made painfully clear what provincial and rural communities have long known: that the country's scientific infrastructure for pathogen detection has always been concentrated in Metro Manila. Genome sequencing capacity, in particular, was housed almost exclusively at the Philippine Genome Center in UP Diliman and the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine in Muntinlupa, forcing provinces to ship samples to the capital and absorb the resulting delays before results could inform local response.

The Department of Health itself acknowledged this bottleneck, moving in 2021 and 2022 to establish satellite genome sequencing laboratories in the Visayas and Mindanao to ease the transportation burden on regional health workers. That expansion was a step forward, but it remains partial. Many provinces, particularly those in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas, still have no meaningful local access to genome sequencing or virology diagnostic capacity, and must rely on a small number of hub facilities far from where outbreaks actually begin.

The VIP, as currently mandated, does not explicitly address this imbalance. Its flagship facility, still under construction, is planned for a five-hectare site in New Clark City, Capas, Tarlac. While the site sits outside Metro

Manila proper, it remains firmly within the Luzon corridor already best served by existing scientific infrastructure, offering little direct benefit to provinces in the Visayas, Mindanao, and other far-flung regions that were hit hardest by diagnostic delays during the pandemic. Left as is, the country risks building a second generation of centralized capacity that repeats the very gap it was created to close.

This bill seeks to correct that by amending Republic Act No. 12290 to explicitly mandate the VIP to establish regional and provincial satellite laboratories and outreach programs, prioritizing regions and provinces currently underserved by existing virology and genomic surveillance infrastructure. It directs the Institute to partner with state universities and colleges, provincial and regional hospitals, and local government units outside Metro Manila to build local diagnostic and research capacity, train local scientists and health workers, and ensure that when the next outbreak begins in a rural municipality rather than the capital, the country's response does not depend on how quickly a sample can reach Manila.

It is for the foregoing premises that the approval of this Bill is earnestly sought.



ALFRED C. DELOS SANTOS
Representative, Ang Probinsyano Party-List

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AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE VIROLOGY AND VACCINE INSTITUTE OF THE PHILIPPINES BY MANDATING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF REGIONAL AND PROVINCIAL SATELLITE LABORATORIES AND OUTREACH PROGRAMS TO EXPAND ACCESS TO VIROLOGY RESEARCH, DIAGNOSTIC, AND GENOME SEQUENCING CAPACITY IN RURAL AND PROVINCIAL AREAS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 12290, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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 "Provincial VIPs Act of 2026."

SECTION. 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. The State recognizes that science and technology is essential for national development and progress.

To this end, the State shall formulate and implement policies that shall address current health issues, such as the quality and adequacy of health and medical human resources, health institutions, and delivery of health services, and shall give priority to research, the development and promotion of innovations in both technology and services, the use of safe and indigenous health-promoting practices, and their appropriate utilization by the health sector.

In this regard, the State shall prioritize the establishment of an institute that will conduct in-depth studies on viruses and their potential disease-causing agents that affect people, plants, and animals, in order to provide the scientific bases for the treatment of viral diseases, and for the formulation of policies that

shall prevent the transmission of these diseases within the community and national context.

SECTION. 3. Section 3 of Republic Act No. 12290 is hereby amended by adding a new paragraph (i) to read as follows:

"SEC. 3. Objectives. - This Act seeks to establish a Virology and Vaccine Institute that shall focus on research and development to address pathogens and potential disease-causing agents affecting plants, animals, and humans. Its mandate shall include, but not limited to, the following:

(a) to (h) [No change.]

(I) Expanding access to virology research, diagnostic, and genome sequencing capacity beyond Metro Manila and its adjacent provinces, by establishing regional and provincial satellite laboratories and outreach programs that prioritize regions, provinces, and geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDAs) currently underserved by existing virology and genomic surveillance infrastructure."

SECTION. 4. Section 6 of Republic Act No. 12290 is hereby amended by adding a new paragraph (r) to read as follows:

"SEC. 6. Powers, Functions and Duties. - To accomplish its mandate, the VIP shall have the following powers, functions, and duties:

(a) to (q) [No change.]

(r) establish, operate, and maintain regional and provincial satellite laboratories and outreach programs for virology research, diagnostics, and genome sequencing, in coordination with the Department of Health, the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine, local government units, and state universities and colleges outside Metro Manila, giving priority to regions and provinces with limited or no existing access to such facilities."

SECTION 5. A new Section 19-A is hereby inserted into Republic Act No. 12290, to read as follows:

"SEC. 19-A. Regional and Provincial Satellite Laboratories and Outreach Program. - In addition to its official site under Section 19 of this Act, the VIP shall establish, within three (3) years from the effectivity of this amendatory Act, at least one (1) satellite laboratory in each of the following island groups: Luzon (outside the National Capital Region and Central Luzon), Visayas, and Mindanao, with priority given to regions and provinces identified by the Department of Health and the VIP Board as having limited or no existing access to virology diagnostic or genome sequencing capacity.

Satellite laboratories established under this Section shall, at minimum, be capable of pathogen diagnostics and genome sequencing, and shall serve as regional hubs to reduce sample transport time and turnaround delays for local government units, provincial and regional hospitals, and rural health units within their catchment areas.

The VIP shall enter into partnerships with state universities and colleges, provincial and regional hospitals, and local government units in the host regions for the operation of these satellite laboratories, including the training of local scientists, medical technologists, and health workers, and shall prioritize the hiring of qualified local personnel in staffing these facilities.

The VIP shall submit a report on the establishment, staffing, and operational status of these satellite laboratories as part of its annual report under Section 24 of this Act."

SECTION. 5. Section 16 of Republic Act No. 12290 is hereby amended to read as follows:

"SEC. 16. Promotion of Knowledge-transfer and Research in the Academe. - The VIP shall promote the creation of hubs and programs for virology research and development in the academe, particularly in state universities and colleges (SUCs), *giving priority to sucs located outside metro manila and in regions hosting the satellite laboratories established under section 19-a of this act.* To this end, the VIP shall assist SUCs in the creation of virology courses and programs, open internships, and scholarships for qualified students for higher education institutions (HEIs), and collaborate with HEIs in the creation of virology research centers.

The CHED shall collaborate with the DOST in the promotion of HEI-VIP partnerships."

SECTION. 6. Section 26 of Republic Act No. 12290 is hereby amended to read as follows:

"SEC. 26. Appropriations. - The amount necessary to carry out the initial implementation of this Act, *including the establishment of regional and provincial satellite laboratories under section 19-a of this act,* shall be charged against the current year's appropriations of the DOST. Thereafter, such amount needed for its continued implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act."

SECTION 7. Implementing Rules and Regulations. - Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DOST Secretary, in consultation with the DOH, RITM, DA, DBM, CSC, and other relevant government agencies, shall

amend the Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic Act No. 12290 to incorporate the provisions of this amendatory Act.

SECTION 8. *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.

SECTION 9. *Repealing Clause.* - All laws, decrees, orders, rules, and regulations or other issuances or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 10. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,