

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 10912



Introduced by **Representative ELMER V. CATULPOS**
(I-Tahanan Party-List)

EXPLANATORY NOTE

At 4:47 in the afternoon of a school day, Nanay Liza, thirty-four, sits on a warm monobloc chair in the barangay hall, her third scheduled conciliation in five months. The electric fan turns from side to side without reaching her. In the brown envelope on her lap: her daughter's birth certificate, signed by the father in his own hand; a photocopy of the first settlement he did not honor; and an examination permit from the school stamped **PROMISSORY** in violet ink. The barangay secretary looks up from the logbook and says the words Liza already knows: *hindi na naman po siya dumating*. Her daughter's periodical exams begin at 7:30 tomorrow morning. The case will be reset to next month. Her daughter cannot be reset.

Across town, on the same afternoon, Kuya Marlon hands two thousand pesos in cash to the mother of his son, the way he has done every payday for three years. He asks for no receipt, because asking would start a fight in front of the boy. He does not know that the law keeps no ledger of what he has given — and that if an affidavit one day says he gave nothing, the system will have no memory with which to defend him.

Here is what most Filipinos do not know. **First:** asked under the Freedom of Information program how many Filipino homes are growing up without their fathers, the Philippine Statistics Authority answered, in writing, that it keeps no such data. The Republic does not count these children. **Second:** on 22 June 2022, the Philippines ratified the 2007 Hague Convention on the International Recovery of Child Support, which entered into force for our country on 1 October 2022. By that treaty, the Republic promised the world a Central Authority that would help any child collect support across borders. Nearly four years later, no statute has built it. We have made a promise to the children of other nations that we have not yet made, in enforceable form, to our own.

The numbers that do exist describe a quiet national emergency. There are an estimated 15 million solo parents in the Philippines, about 95 percent of them mothers of whom only 260,934 were registered with local governments as of February 2026 according to the Department of Social Welfare and Development — a gap that measures how far the State's

systems stand from the families they are meant to serve. A study of the University of the Philippines Population Institute found that *one in three Filipino youth between 1994 and 2021 grew up without both parents, and that 38 percent of solo-parenthood cases stem from separation*. Behind each statistic stands a child whose support today depends on a process with at least four stations — demand letter, barangay conciliation, Family Court petition, execution — each of which can consume months while a childhood, which cannot be extended by motion, runs out.

Other democracies have already crossed this river. Australia moved child support out of its courtrooms in 1988, after concluding that judicial determination was costly to obtain and ineffectual to enforce; today a government agency computes support through a published formula, and most separated parents never see a courtroom at all. The United States, since 1975, has run a nationwide enforcement program whose single most effective tool is automatic income withholding — the employer deducts support like a tax, and the money arrives like a salary. This bill brings home the best of both — the Australian assessment, the American collection — and adds what neither country built: an honest answer to the grievances of Filipino fathers.

In his 2026 State of the Nation Address, the President devoted an unmistakable passage to the protection of Filipino children, highlighting that “we must all assume a community responsibility for our young people’s protection.” This bill answers that call, for the oldest danger to a Filipino child is not new: it is to be left behind by the very people bound by blood to provide — and to be failed a second time by a system too slow to compel them. This Representation offers this measure not as criticism but as completion of the President’s summons.

Let it be said plainly: the antagonist of this bill is not the Filipino father, and it is not the Filipino mother. Many fathers pay faithfully and are never believed; many mothers stretch a peso until it is translucent and are still accused. The antagonist is the missing system — the absence of any office where support is computed by formula instead of by quarrel, collected by payroll instead of by plea, delivered through the State instead of through an argument at the doorstep, and remembered in a ledger that protects the honest on both sides. Where there is no system, the strong escape and the honest are punished. This bill builds the system.

The clock is the enemy. A support case that crawls for three years is not three years of delay; it is Grade 4, Grade 5, and Grade 6, gone. A childhood admits no continuance and grants no motion for extension. Every month the machinery does not exist, the arithmetic of abandonment compounds quietly in millions of homes.

The entire architecture of this Act obeys one principle: ***Ang bata ang sentro; ang Estado ang tagapamagitan***. The child is the center; the State is the intermediary. Support is assessed by the State through a published formula, within days, on the strength of a birth certificate. It is collected by the State — from payroll, from bank and e-wallet, from government payouts — and disbursed by the State, so that mother and father need never transact, argue, or meet over money again. Parenting time is guaranteed alongside it, but never chained to it: no child’s meal may be held hostage to a visitation quarrel, and no parent’s Sunday

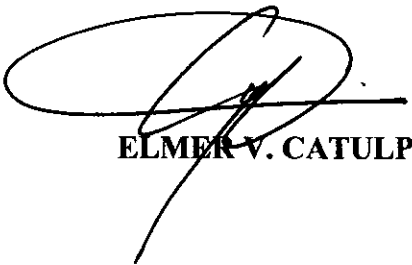
may be sold for arrears. For the parent who truly cannot pay, the answer is work, not jail; for the parent who can pay and hides, the answer is the full weight of the law. And where paternity is honestly doubted, the State itself resolves it by accredited DNA testing — so that no man supports a child who is not his, and no child waits on a doubt that science can settle in a week.

This Representation discloses its interests first. The author is the founder of enterprises employing more than one thousand workers nationwide; the employer duties this bill creates — new-hire reporting, payroll withholding, remittance to the last centavo — will bind his own payrolls first, and he accepts that burden as the price of the system. The author is likewise a broadcaster whose more than fifty radio stations receive, week after week, the calls of mothers asking how to make a father pay and of fathers asking how to prove they have paid. This bill was not composed in a hearing room. It was dictated, over years, by callers who did not know they were writing legislation.

Sapagkat ang paghihiwalay ng mga magulang ay hindi paghihiwalay sa pananagutan.

A companion measure of this Representation — the proposed Kalinga sa Anak Act — secures the solo parent's access to child care while she works. This bill secures the money that the absent parent owes. Together they answer the two questions every solo parent asks at dawn: *sino ang mag-aalaga, at saan kukunin ang panggastos.*

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



ELMER V. CATULPOS

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HOUSE BILL NO. 10912

*Introduced by Representative **ELMER V. CATULPOS***
(I.Tahanan Party-list)

**AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE NATIONAL CHILD SUPPORT SYSTEM,
CREATING THE CHILD SUPPORT BUREAU UNDER THE DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT, INSTITUTIONALIZING THE
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSESSMENT, COLLECTION, DISBURSEMENT, AND
ENFORCEMENT OF CHILD SUPPORT, GUARANTEEING PARENTING TIME,
DESIGNATING THE CENTRAL AUTHORITY UNDER THE 2007 HAGUE CHILD
SUPPORT CONVENTION, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

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

ARTICLE I
GENERAL PROVISIONS

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “**Siguradong Sustento Act**” or the “National Child Support System Act.”

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – The Family is the foundation of the nation. The State affirms that the right of every child to support from both parents is a right of the child — continuing, non-waivable, and independent of the state of the parents’ relationship, of their marital status, of the legitimacy of the child, and of any conflict between the households of the parents. The separation of parents is never a separation from responsibility. It is hereby declared the policy of the State to secure this right through an administrative system that assesses support swiftly by published formula, collects it reliably at the source of income, delivers it through the State so that neither parent is compelled to transact with the other, resolves questions of parentage through accredited science rather than protracted litigation, guarantees the child’s relationship with both parents, and reserves the coercive power of the State for those who can pay and will not — never for those who cannot.

SEC. 3. *Objectives.* – This Act has the following objectives:

(a) To reduce the time between a child’s need for support and the first peso received, from years of proceedings to days of administrative assessment;

- (b) To relieve the Family Courts and the Katarungang Pambarangay of the volume of support disputes resolvable by formula and administration;
- (c) To protect the paying parent with an official ledger, the receiving parent with a reliable remittance, and the child with both;
- (d) To answer, by design, the documented grievances of both mothers and fathers, so that compliance becomes the rational and dignified choice;
- (e) To support the implementation, within the authority of Philippine law, of the Convention of 23 November 2007 on the International Recovery of Child Support and Other Forms of Family Maintenance;
- (f) To develop reliable, aggregated, and anonymized national statistics on child support applications, assessments, collections, arrears, and compliance.

SEC. 4. Definition of Terms. – As used in this Act, the following terms shall be defined as follows:

- (a) “**Child**” refers to a person entitled to support under the Family Code or other applicable law, including a minor and a person who, by reason of a physical or mental disability, remains unable to support or protect oneself. A person who has reached the age of majority may continue to receive support only to the extent recognized by applicable law or by a court or valid agreement.
- (b) “**Obligor parent**” refers to the parent, whether father or mother, obliged to pay child support under an assessment, agreement, or order registered under this Act;
- (c) “**Obligee**” refers to the parent, actual custodian, or child entitled to receive child support;
- (d) “**Actual custodian**” refers to any person — including a grandparent, relative within the fourth civil degree, or legal guardian — who exercises actual, primary care and custody of the child;
- (e) “**Assessment**” refers to the administrative determination of the amount of child support issued by the Bureau under this Act;
- (f) “**Child Support Formula**” refers to the published formula under Section 14;
- (g) “**State Disbursement Unit or SDU**” refers to the centralized payment facility under Section 18;
- (h) “**Parenting time**” refers to the schedule of physical and remote contact between the child and each parent under a registered parenting plan;
- (i) “**Willful evasion**” refers to the conduct penalized under Section 29;
- (j) “**Central Authority**” refers to the designation under Section 9 pursuant to the 2007 Hague Child Support Convention; and
- (k) “**Bureau**” refers to the Child Support Bureau created under this Act.

SEC. 5. Parent-Neutral Application; Equality of Children. – Every obligation, remedy, procedure, enforcement measure, and penalty under this Act applies equally to fathers and to mothers, and inures equally to the benefit of every child, whether legitimate or illegitimate, and whether the obligee is the father, the mother, or an actual custodian from either the paternal or the maternal line. A mother who leaves a child in the care of the father or of an actual custodian is an obligor parent under this Act to the same extent, under the same formula, and subject to

the same measures, as a father similarly situated. All provisions of this Act shall be read in this parent-neutral sense, whatever the illustrative gender of any example in its legislative record.

ARTICLE II

THE CHILD SUPPORT BUREAU

SEC. 6. *Creation of the Child Support Bureau.* – There is hereby created a Child Support Bureau under the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), headed by a Director with the rank of Assistant Secretary, appointed by the President upon recommendation of the Secretary of Social Welfare and Development. The Bureau shall be the single national office responsible for the assessment, collection, disbursement, and enforcement of child support, and for the parenting-time services under Article VI.

SEC. 7. *Powers and Functions.* – The Bureau exercise the following powers and perform the following functions:

- (a) Receive applications; determine, solely for purposes of an administrative assessment and subject to this Act, whether parentage is sufficiently established; issue, modify, administer and enforce child support assessments;
- (b) Operate the State Disbursement Unit and the national ledger of payments;
- (c) Locate obligor parents, with the assistance of government agencies and instrumentalities, which are hereby authorized and directed to share locator and income information with the Bureau under data-sharing agreements compliant with Republic Act No. 10173;
- (d) Administer the parentage verification program under Section 13;
- (e) Provide parenting-time registration, mediation, orientation, and enforcement services;
- (f) Serve as the Central Authority under Section 9;
- (g) Maintain the National Child Support Registry and publish the statistics under Section 10; and
- (h) Perform such other functions necessary to carry out this Act.

SEC. 8. *Field Presence; Child Support Desks.* – The Bureau shall establish regional offices in every administrative region and, in coordination with local government units, Child Support Desks in provinces, cities, and municipalities, prioritizing localities with the highest registered solo-parent populations. Establishment shall be phased over *three (3) years* under a schedule published in the implementing rules. No unfunded obligation is imposed on any local government unit: participation of local personnel shall be by agreement and with national funding support under this Act. Applications may likewise be filed online and through any DSWD office.

SEC. 9. *Designation as Central Authority.* – The Bureau is hereby designated as the Central Authority of the Republic of the Philippines under the Convention of 23 November 2007 on the International Recovery of Child Support and Other Forms of Family Maintenance, which entered into force for the Philippines on 1 October 2022. The Bureau shall transmit and receive applications under the Convention, assist in the establishment and enforcement of support

decisions involving parents or children abroad, and coordinate with the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Migrant Workers, and counterpart authorities. In cases involving overseas Filipino workers, the Bureau may implement withholding through licensed manning and recruitment agencies in accordance with the implementing rules.

SEC. 10. *National Child Support Registry; Official Statistics.* – The Bureau shall maintain a National Child Support Registry of assessments, registered agreements and court orders, payments, arrears, and parenting plans. In coordination with the Philippine Statistics Authority, the Bureau shall compile and publish annually, in aggregated and anonymized form, official national statistics on child support compliance and parental absence — statistics which, as of the approval of this Act, the Republic does not keep. Registry data are confidential, accessible only as provided in Section 44.

ARTICLE III PARENTAGE AND ADMINISTRATIVE ASSESSMENT

SEC. 11. *Who May Apply.* – An application for assessment may be filed by:

- (a) Either parent;
- (b) An actual custodian of the child, who shall have full standing to apply, receive disbursements for the child, and pursue enforcement, whether the custodian belongs to the paternal or the maternal line. The Bureau shall verify the applicant's actual care, custody, or legal authority and shall establish procedures for resolving competing claims to receive disbursements;
- (c) The child, through a guardian, or personally if at least eighteen (18) and entitled to continuing support; and
- (d) The DSWD, *motu proprio*, for a child who is abandoned or in alternative care.

SEC. 12. *Parentage by Acknowledgment; No Court Action Required.* – Where the parentage of the obligor parent appears on the child's certificate of live birth, or in an affidavit of admission of paternity, an affidavit to use the surname of the father, a public instrument, or a private handwritten instrument executed under existing law, such documents shall serve as *prima facie* proof of parentage for purposes of assessment under this Act, and no judicial action to prove filiation shall be required before an assessment issues. Nothing in this section alters the rules of filiation under the Family Code for purposes other than this Act.

SEC. 13. *Parentage Verification by Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) Testing.* – Where parentage is not established under Section 12 and is denied in good faith, the Bureau shall order DNA parentage testing at a laboratory accredited by the Department of Health for parentage testing, observing chain-of-custody standards consistent with the Rule on DNA Evidence (A.M. No. 06-11-5-SC). The State shall advance the cost of testing: if parentage is established, the obligor parent shall reimburse the cost, payable in installments added to the assessment; if parentage is excluded, the State absorbs the cost, the application is dismissed, and no liability attaches to the man or woman excluded. Unjustified refusal to submit to testing after due notice

shall give rise to a disputable presumption of parentage for purposes of assessment, without prejudice to judicial remedies. Test results are confidential and shall not be used for any purpose other than this Act without the written consent of the parties. No person shall be assessed support under this Act for a child whom accredited testing has excluded as that person's child.

SEC. 14. *The Child Support Formula.* – Assessments shall be computed under a published Child Support Formula built on the following statutory structure:

- (a) The incomes of both parents shall be considered, after deducting from each a self-support reserve sufficient for the parent's own subsistence, so that no assessment reduces a parent below subsistence;
- (b) The cost of raising the child shall be estimated by reference to the number and ages of the children and published cost-of-living data;
- (c) Each parent's share of that cost shall be proportional to income, and the share of the parent with lesser physical care shall be payable as support, with credit for the percentage of overnight care that parent actually and regularly provides under a registered parenting plan;
- (d) A minimum assessment shall apply to every obligor parent with any capacity to pay, and assessments for obligor parents in verified hardship shall be right-sized so that consistent partial payment is always possible; and
- (e) The peso parameters, tables, and cost data of the Formula shall be set and updated at least every three (3) years by the DSWD upon recommendation of the Bureau and in consultation with the Philippine Statistics Authority, published in full, together with a free public calculator by which any parent may compute the assessment in advance.
- (f) The Formula shall account, to the extent relevant and verifiable, for irregular or seasonal income, self-employment, non-cash benefits, other legally supported dependents, extraordinary medical or educational expenses, and the actual—not merely scheduled—exercise of care;
- (g) No parenting-time credit shall reduce the amount necessary to meet the child's reasonable needs or apply where parenting time is unsafe, obstructed for legitimate reasons, or not actually exercised; and
- (h) The Bureau shall publish the methodology, assumptions, data sources, review procedure, and examples used in the Formula and shall provide notice and an opportunity for public comment before adopting or materially revising it.

The Formula binds the Bureau. Departure from the Formula shall be allowed only upon written, reviewable findings of special circumstances, on grounds enumerated in the implementing rules.

SEC. 15. *Provisional Assessment.* – Upon a prima facie showing of parentage under Section 12 and of the child's custody, the Bureau shall issue a provisional assessment within *fifteen (15) working days* from complete application, based on available income information or, in its absence, on presumptive income tables. The provisional assessment is immediately payable and enforceable, without prejudice to adjustment upon final assessment. No child shall wait for the completion of any proceeding to begin receiving support.

SEC. 16. *Modification; Indexation.* – Either party may seek modification upon material change of circumstances, including loss of employment, disability, or change in the care arrangement. Assessments shall be indexed under rules published with the Formula. Arrears already accrued shall not be retroactively reduced, but may be restructured into a payment plan under Section 24.

SEC. 17. *Registered Agreements; Non-Waiver.* – Parents may agree in writing on support at any amount not lower than the Formula assessment, and may register the agreement with the Bureau, whereupon it becomes enforceable as an assessment and payable through the State Disbursement Unit. Existing barangay settlements and court orders may likewise be registered and shall thereafter enjoy the collection and enforcement machinery of this Act. The right of the child to support cannot be waived, compromised below the child’s needs, or extinguished by any agreement between the parents.

ARTICLE IV COLLECTION AND DISBURSEMENT

SEC. 18. *State Disbursement Unit; The No-Contact Channel.* – All payments under this Act shall be made to and disbursed by the State Disbursement Unit of the Bureau, through banks, electronic money issuers, and authorized payment partners, to an account designated for the benefit of the child. Neither parent shall be required to meet, contact, or transact with the other for any payment. The SDU ledger is the official record of payment: it shall be viewable at all times by both parties, shall constitute prima facie evidence of payment and of non-payment in any proceeding, and shall protect the paying parent from unfounded claims of non-support as fully as it protects the child from non-payment. Direct payments outside the SDU after registration shall be credited only upon proof and confirmation by the obligee.

SEC. 19. *Income Withholding.* – Upon issuance of an assessment against an employed obligor parent, the Bureau shall serve a withholding order on the employer, who shall deduct the assessed amount from wages each pay period and remit it to the SDU within *five (5) working days* from payday. Withholding under this Act enjoys priority over all other deductions except those required by law, and shall not exceed the limits on wage deductions under existing law. No employer shall dismiss, demote, or otherwise penalize a worker by reason of a withholding order; any such act is unlawful. An employer who, after due notice, fails to withhold or remit shall be liable for the amounts not withheld or not remitted, without prejudice to administrative fines under the implementing rules. Withholding is a ministerial duty; the employer acquires no interest in, and no discretion over, the dispute between the parents.

SEC. 20. *New-Hire and Engagement Reporting.* – Every employer shall report to the Bureau, within *fifteen (15) days* from engagement, the hiring of any employee, through a simple electronic facility interoperable with existing reports to the Social Security System and the Bureau of Internal Revenue, so that no new report shall require data not already collected for existing government purposes. Digital labor platforms shall likewise report the engagement of

workers earning through the platform. Upon any report matching a delinquent obligor parent, a withholding order shall attach automatically. Employment under this Act is never a ground for disqualification from hiring: the policy of the State is that a delinquent parent be employed and paying, not unemployed and unreachable.

SEC. 21. *Collection from Self-Employment and the Informal Economy.* – Where the obligor parent is self-employed, informally employed, or without payroll income, the Bureau may, after notice and opportunity to be heard:

- (a) Levy upon deposits and electronic money accounts, through orders served on banks and electronic money issuers under rules issued with the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, subject to exemptions protecting subsistence amounts;
- (b) Intercept amounts payable to the obligor parent by government, including loan proceeds from the Social Security System, the Government Service Insurance System, and the Home Development Mutual Fund (Pag-IBIG), dividends, benefit payouts other than those exempt by law, and prizes subject to tax reporting, applying them to current support and arrears;
- (c) Annotate liens on registrable property and on motor vehicles; and
- (d) Accept and register installment payment plans right-sized to verified capacity, compliance with which suspends the measures under Article V.

SEC. 22. *Direct-Payment Election.* – The obligor parent may elect, through the Bureau, to pay specified child-dedicated costs directly — including tuition and school fees remitted to the school, and health insurance or HMO premiums remitted to the provider — and such payments shall be credited in full against the assessment upon confirmation in the SDU ledger.

SEC. 23. *Overseas Obligor Parents.* – For obligor parents working or residing abroad, the Bureau, as Central Authority, shall pursue collection under the 2007 Hague Child Support Convention and other applicable agreements, and may implement withholding through manning and recruitment agencies for sea-based and land-based workers under rules issued with the Department of Migrant Workers. Remittances of support through the SDU shall be exempt from documentary requirements beyond those applicable to ordinary remittances.

ARTICLE V ENFORCEMENT

SEC. 24. *Graduated Enforcement; Due Process.* – No measure under Sections 25 to 28 shall issue except: (a) upon a registered assessment; (b) after written notice of delinquency and a grace period of *thirty (30) days*; (c) after the obligor parent has been offered, and has failed without justification to enter or to comply with, a payment plan right-sized to verified capacity; and (d) with a right to be heard before the Bureau and to appeal to the proper Family Court. Compliance with a registered payment plan suspends all measures under this Article for as long as compliance continues. Verified inability to pay is a defense to every measure under this Article, and shall instead trigger the referral under Section 30.

SEC. 25. *License and Travel Document Measures.* – Against an obligor parent in willful delinquency as determined under Section 24, the Bureau may direct:

- (a) The Land Transportation Office to withhold the renewal of the obligor parent's driver's license: Provided, that where driving is the obligor parent's means of livelihood, a provisional license valid for work purposes shall issue upon entry into a payment plan, so that no measure under this Act destroys the very income that feeds the child;
- (b) The Department of Foreign Affairs to withhold issuance or renewal of the obligor parent's passport where registered arrears exceed *an amount equivalent to six (6) months of the assessment*, except for travel that is itself the source of the support, such as departure for verified overseas employment covered by a withholding arrangement under Section 23;
- (c) The Professional Regulation Commission to annotate the record of, and defer the renewal of, professional licenses; and
- (d) The Philippine National Police to suspend firearms licenses and permits.

The Bureau shall not request a measure under this section unless less restrictive collection measures have failed or are demonstrably inadequate. The concerned agency shall lift the measure without fee within five (5) working days from the Bureau's certification that the obligor parent has entered into and initially complied with an approved payment plan, or has fully settled the arrears.

The obligor parent may seek reconsideration before the Bureau and may appeal in the manner provided in the implementing rules. The filing of an appeal shall not automatically stay a lawful measure unless the Bureau or the proper court so orders.

SEC. 26. *Clearance Annotation.* – Clearances issued by the National Bureau of Investigation and the Philippine National Police to an obligor parent in willful delinquency shall bear an annotation of registered child support arrears, in a form prescribed in the implementing rules. No clearance shall be denied by reason of arrears, and no annotation shall appear for any obligor parent compliant with an assessment or payment plan. The annotation serves notice; it does not disqualify.

SEC. 27. *Government Loan Conditions; Interception of Proceeds.* – Applications of an obligor parent in willful delinquency for salary, calamity, or multi-purpose loans from the Social Security System, the Government Service Insurance System, and the Home Development Mutual Fund shall require either proof of compliance with a payment plan or the borrower's written authorization to apply loan proceeds first to arrears through the SDU, and such interception shall be deemed compliance for purposes of the loan. No outright denial of membership benefits mandated by law shall be imposed.

SEC. 28. *Credit Reporting.* – Registered arrears in willful delinquency shall be reported by the Bureau to the Credit Information Corporation as credit data under Republic Act No. 9510, and shall be updated within five (5) working days from any settlement or plan compliance. Private lending and financing institutions retain full discretion over their own credit decisions; nothing in this Act commands any private institution to deny credit.

SEC. 29. *Willful Evasion of Child Support.* – Any obligor parent who, having the capacity to pay, willfully evades a registered assessment — by concealing or understating income, transferring or concealing assets, deliberately remaining unemployed or underemployed to defeat withholding, using accounts or names of others to receive income, or absconding — where the evaded amount exceeds *six (6) months of the assessment or One hundred thousand pesos (P100,000.00), whichever is lower*, shall be punished by *imprisonment of six (6) months and one (1) day to six (6) years, or a fine of not less than One hundred thousand pesos (P100,000.00) nor more than One million pesos (P1,000,000.00), or both*, and shall, in all cases be ordered to pay the arrears as civil liability. Willfulness means the intentional violation of a known duty by a parent with capacity to pay; mere non-payment is not a crime under this Act. Prosecution shall be deferred while the accused complies with a court-approved payment plan, and full payment of arrears before finality of judgment is a mitigating circumstance. This offense is parent-neutral and may be committed by a father or a mother.

SEC. 30. *Genuine Inability to Pay; Work and Livelihood Referral.* – No obligor parent shall be imprisoned or subjected to a coercive enforcement measure under this Act solely because of genuine inability to pay, as established through a fair and documented assessment.

This section shall not limit the authority of a court to impose lawful sanctions for contempt upon a finding, after notice and hearing, of willful disobedience of a lawful order.

An obligor parent in verified hardship shall be referred by the Bureau to appropriate employment, skills-training, and livelihood programs of the Department of Labor and Employment, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, and the Department of Social Welfare and Development. The support assessment shall be periodically reviewed and adjusted under Section 14(d), taking into account the child's needs and the obligor parent's actual capacity.

SEC. 31. *Relationship with Republic Act No. 9262.* – This Act provides the administrative and civil machinery of first resort for child support and does not amend, repeal, or diminish Republic Act No. 9262. Deprivation of support attended by the elements of economic abuse remains prosecutable thereunder. The SDU ledger shall be admissible in any proceeding under Republic Act No. 9262, whether to prove deprivation or to prove payment. Protection orders issued under that Act prevail over any parenting plan or measure under this Act.

ARTICLE VI PARENTING TIME AND CO-PARENTING

SEC. 32. *Child's Right to Safe and Meaningful Relations with Both Parents.* – Subject to the child's best interests, safety, and welfare, a child whose parents are separated has the right to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents on a regular basis.

This right shall not be construed as absolute. Contact may be supervised, limited, suspended, or prohibited by the proper court or competent authority when necessary to protect the child from abuse, neglect, violence, coercive control, abduction, or other substantial risk.

No parent or third person shall use support, parenting time, or contact as a reward, punishment, bargaining tool, or means of coercion.

SEC. 33. *Parenting Plan.* – Every application under this Act involving separated parents shall include, where appropriate, a proposed parenting plan stating the schedule of parenting time, holidays, remote contact, transportation, exchange logistics, and emergency procedures.

The parents may submit an agreed plan using Bureau templates. In the absence of agreement, the Bureau may facilitate a child-sensitive process only when voluntary participation is appropriate and no protection order, credible safety risk, coercion, or violence makes mediation unsuitable.

Where a protection order exists or a safety risk is found, the plan shall conform to the order and may provide for supervised parenting time, neutral exchange locations, remote contact, or suspension of contact.

A parenting plan shall become enforceable as a court order only upon approval by the proper Family Court. Nothing in this section authorizes the Bureau to modify or disregard an existing judicial order.

SEC. 34. *Independence of Support and Parenting Time.* – Child support and parenting time are independent obligations, each owed to the child. Support shall never be suspended, reduced, or withheld by reason of denial of parenting time; parenting time shall never be denied, conditioned, or diminished by reason of arrears. Any stipulation to the contrary is void. Each obligation is enforced by its own remedies under this Act.

SEC. 35. *Co-Parenting Orientation.* – Before the first disbursement, both parents shall complete a co-parenting orientation conducted by the Bureau or by accredited DSWD facilitators, in person or online, covering the child’s needs across ages, the operation of the SDU and the ledger, the parenting plan, and the conduct expected of both households — including the households’ new partners, who shall be welcome to attend. Failure of one parent to attend shall not delay disbursement to the child; the non-attending parent’s obligations remain enforceable in full.

SEC. 36. *Bureau Communication Channel.* – The Bureau shall provide a free digital and SMS channel through which the parents may transact all logistics of parenting time and receive all payment notices, so that no direct contact between the parents, or between either parent and the other’s household, is ever required by this Act. Communications on the channel are logged and admissible in enforcement proceedings under this Article.

SEC. 37. *Enforcement of Parenting Time.* – Upon verified complaint of denial of registered parenting time, the Bureau shall enforce by graduated steps: (a) facilitated communication and mediation; (b) an order of make-up parenting time; (c) certification of contempt to the proper Family Court; and (d) in cases of chronic, willful denial, referral to the Family Court for re-evaluation of the custodial arrangement, which the court shall resolve solely on the best interests of the child. Denial of parenting time justified by a genuine, good-faith concern for the child’s safety, promptly reported to the Bureau, is not willful denial.

SEC. 38. *Interference by Any Person.* – Any person — whatever that person’s relationship to either parent, including a subsequent spouse or partner of either parent — who intentionally obstructs, prevents, or frustrates registered parenting time, conceals or withholds the child in violation of a registered plan, or intercepts, diverts, or appropriates child support, shall be liable to an administrative fine of *not less than Ten thousand pesos (P10,000.00) nor more than One hundred thousand pesos (P100,000.00)* per act, and, for repeated or aggravated acts, to *imprisonment of one (1) month and one (1) day to six (6) months, or a fine of up to Three hundred thousand pesos (P300,000.00), or both*, without prejudice to civil damages and to liability under the Revised Penal Code and special laws. Liability under this section attaches to conduct, not to status: no person is liable by reason only of a relationship with a parent, and no person escapes liability by reason of one.

SEC. 39. *Non-Delegable Parental Responsibility.* – The duties of a parent under this Act — to pay support, to honor parenting time, and to deliver the child for registered exchanges — are personal and non-delegable. The objection, jealousy, influence, or interference of a subsequent spouse or partner, or of any third person, is not a defense to any violation by a parent of this Act. A parent answers for the parent’s own compliance, whoever shares the parent’s home.

ARTICLE VII ACCOUNTABILITY, PROTECTION, AND PRIVACY

SEC. 40. *Use of Support; Misuse Complaint.* – Support disbursed for a child is presumed applied to the child’s sustenance, dwelling, clothing, education, health, and transportation within the receiving household, and no routine liquidation, receipts, or audit shall be required of the receiving parent or custodian. The obligor parent, a child of sufficient discernment, or a relative under Section 41 may file with the Bureau a verified complaint of gross and habitual diversion of support away from the child. Upon substantiation by a social-worker assessment, the Bureau may restructure disbursement toward direct-payment modes under Section 22, in-kind arrangements, or a supervised account, and shall provide family counseling; in no case shall support to the child be suspended by reason of the receiving parent’s conduct. Where the assessment discloses abuse or neglect of the child, the matter shall be referred under existing child protection laws.

SEC. 41. *Standing of Relatives.* – An actual custodian of the child may file and participate in proceedings before the Bureau in accordance with Section 11. This administrative authority shall not, by itself, confer authority to compromise, waive, or extinguish the child’s substantive right to support.

A grandparent, or a relative of the child within the fourth civil degree of consanguinity from either the paternal or maternal line, may submit to the Bureau a verified report alleging non-support, violation of a registered plan, or diversion of support.

The Bureau shall conduct an initial screening of every report. It may investigate and act on reports supported by sufficient basis and shall close reports that are not substantiated, without prejudice to the filing of a new report based on material, newly discovered facts.

Reports and records under this section shall be kept confidential. The identity of a reporting relative shall not be disclosed to the parties or to the public except with the relative's consent, when necessary to afford due process, or pursuant to a court order. All processing and disclosure of personal data shall comply with Republic Act No. 10173, otherwise known as the "Data Privacy Act of 2012."

SEC. 42. *Malicious Complaints.* – Any person who knowingly files a false or fabricated complaint or report under this Act, or who knowingly uses the processes of this Act primarily to harass, intimidate, or cause undue injury to another, may be subject to an administrative fine of not less than Twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00) nor more than Two hundred thousand pesos (P200,000.00), without prejudice to criminal, civil, or other administrative liability under existing law.

The Bureau may dismiss a complaint at the screening stage only when the complaint is plainly fabricated, legally impossible, or filed primarily for harassment, and not merely because the parties are involved in a family dispute. The dismissal shall not prejudice the filing of a proper complaint based on the same child's need.

SEC. 43. *Safety and Anti-Retaliation.* – No proceeding under this Act shall be used to locate, contact, or harass a parent or child protected by a protection order or in verified danger. Upon request supported by such order or by a social-worker finding, the Bureau shall withhold the address and contact details of the protected party from the other party in all processes, disbursing support and conducting proceedings without disclosure. Retaliation against any applicant, reporter, or witness is unlawful.

SEC. 44. *Data Privacy by Design.* – The Bureau shall collect only the minimum data necessary; access to any record shall be logged and the log viewable by the data subject; Registry data shall not be shared except under this Act, a data-sharing agreement compliant with Republic Act No. 10173, or a court order; and the child, upon reaching majority, may direct the sealing of the child's records except as needed for continuing enforcement. Violations shall be punished under Republic Act No. 10173, without prejudice to administrative liability.

ARTICLE VIII THE SUSTENTO ASSURANCE PROGRAM

SEC. 45. *State-Advanced Minimum Support.* – Where an obligor parent is in verified default despite the measures of this Act, and the child's receiving household falls below the poverty threshold, the Bureau shall advance to the child a monthly Sustento Assurance benefit of *Three thousand pesos (P3,000.00) per child, or such amount as the DSWD shall periodically set, for up to six (6) months, renewable upon revalidation*, disbursed through the SDU. The State is

thereby subrogated to the child's claim and shall collect the advanced amounts from the obligor parent with a surcharge of *ten percent (10%)*, through all the measures of this Act. The Program shall be rolled out in phases beginning with *regions or provinces with the highest registered solo-parent poverty incidence, under a schedule in the implementing rules*, and expanded as collections and appropriations allow.

SEC. 46. *Sustento Assurance Fund.* – A Sustento Assurance Fund is hereby established in the Bureau, sourced from the appropriations under this Act, amounts collected by subrogation and surcharge under Section 45, administrative fines under this Act, and donations and grants. The Fund shall be used exclusively for the Program and shall be subject to audit by the Commission on Audit, with an annual public report of advances, recoveries, and balances.

ARTICLE IX INSTITUTIONAL AND FINAL PROVISIONS

SEC. 47. *Relationship to Existing Laws and Measures.* – This Act builds upon and does not diminish: the support provisions of the Family Code, whose substantive rules on the duty, amount, and demandability of support continue to govern; Republic Act No. 8972, as amended by Republic Act No. 11861, whose benefits for solo parents this Act complements by securing the support owed from the other parent; Republic Act No. 9262, as provided in Section 31; and the Katarungang Pambarangay, whose settled agreements become enforceable through registration under Section 17, and to whose processes disputes registered with the Bureau shall no longer be subject to referral. Should Congress create by law a national child support office, program, or council of similar mandate, the Bureau, its Registry, its Disbursement Unit, and the systems of this Act shall constitute and be integrated as the implementing machinery thereof, and references herein shall be read accordingly.

SEC. 48. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – The DSWD, as lead agency, with the Department of Justice, the Department of Health, the Department of Labor and Employment, the Department of Information and Communications Technology, the Department of Migrant Workers, the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Philippine Statistics Authority, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, the Social Security System, the Government Service Insurance System, the Home Development Mutual Fund, the Land Transportation Office, the Professional Regulation Commission, and the Credit Information Corporation, shall promulgate the implementing rules within one hundred twenty (120) days from effectivity. The failure to promulgate rules shall not defeat the self-executing provisions of this Act, namely: Section 12 (parentage by acknowledgment), Section 15 (provisional assessment), Section 18 (State Disbursement Unit), Section 19 (income withholding), Section 34 (independence of support and parenting time), and Section 43 (safety), which shall be implemented immediately under interim guidelines of the DSWD.

SEC. 49. *Annual Report; Sustento Dashboard.* – The Bureau shall submit to both Houses of Congress an annual report on assessments issued, average days from application to first

disbursement, collection rates by sector including the informal economy, parenting-time compliance, Program advances and recoveries, and the statistics under Section 10, and shall publish the same in a public Sustento Dashboard, disaggregated by region and updated quarterly.

SEC. 50. Appropriations. – The amount of *Three billion pesos (P3,000,000,000.00)* is hereby appropriated for the initial implementation of this Act, charged against the unprogrammed funds of the current General Appropriations Act. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 51. Transitory Provisions. – Existing court orders and barangay settlements on child support may be registered with the Bureau within a continuing registration window and shall, upon registration, enjoy the collection, disbursement, and enforcement machinery of this Act without new litigation. Pending applications and cases may, at the option of the obligee, proceed under existing procedures or be assessed anew under this Act. Nothing herein divests the Family Courts of jurisdiction over cases already filed.

SEC. 52. Separability Clause. – If any provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions not affected thereby shall continue in full force and effect.

SEC. 53. Repealing Clause. – All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations, or parts thereof inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 54. Effectivity. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,