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SENATE

S. No. 3427

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Introduced by **SENATOR PIA S. CAYETANO**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Worldwide, infant and maternal mortality rates are still alarmingly high, particularly in developing countries. According to the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund, more than half a million women lose their lives as a result of complications due to pregnancy or childbirth. Around 99 percent of all maternal deaths occur in developing countries, with some 84 percent concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

To address this appalling global problem, member-states of the United Nations, together with more than 23 international organizations, agreed to adopt the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which intend to eradicate poverty and improve the social and economic conditions in the world's poorest countries by the year 2015. The Philippines is one of the signatories.

The National Economic Development Authority (NEDA), the agency tasked to monitor compliance with the MDG, reports that the Philippines is on track with most of the eight (8) goals. However, it admits that there is great likelihood that the Philippines will fail to achieve at least two of these goals: (1) universal primary education and (2) improvement in maternal and neonatal health.

As of 2006, maternal mortality rate (MMR) in the Philippines stands at 162 per 100,000. The target MMR under MDG is 52 per 100,000 population by 2015.

Health workers play a vital role in lowering the MMR in the country. Unfortunately, there is lack of access to professional healthcare practitioners all over the country. Healthcare professionals are sorely lacking and unequally distributed in rural and urban areas. Most of our healthcare professionals, especially doctors and nurses, have left the country in search for greener pastures abroad. Given this problem, health experts recommend that the gap on the delivery of maternal and infant healthcare services be covered by the appointment of midwives who are trained to provide healthcare services, especially maternal and infant healthcare.

There is a need to act now. We cannot wait in the sideline while mothers are dying.

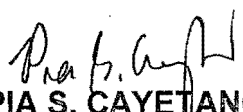
Midwives comprise one of the largest occupational groups in the public and private health system in the Philippines. Records show that there are 150,722 registered midwives as of June 2007. Midwives work in the private or public sector in hospitals, birthing clinics, barangay health stations, or rural health units. They comprise 65% of the public health workforce. In the rural areas, they are the first point of contact for patients coming into the health system. In fact, midwives are currently implementing public health programmes in these areas. With the great potential and significant contribution of midwives in augmenting the presence of

professional healthcare practitioners in rural areas, the increased community presence of midwives is necessary.

This bill thus mandates to provide one midwife in each barangay. In 2005, there were 16,967 government midwives in the country, delivering frontline services in 15,436 barangay health stations and 2266 rural health units. Although the recommended ratio is one midwife for every 5,000, most midwives currently cater to the needs of 10,000-30,000 individuals in their catchment area. Recognizing the importance of primary healthcare and the presence of midwives in the country, especially in the rural areas, the bill further seeks to increase the number of midwives in a barangay where there is a population of more than 5,000. This will enable the midwives to provide quality and efficient healthcare services.

Indeed, midwives play a key role in delivering patient-focused services that are accessible, affordable and appropriate to the needs of patients, as individuals, and their families. The midwifery profession is central to the delivery of an effective health service, particularly in the rural areas.


In view of the foregoing, approval of this bill is earnestly requested.


PIA S. CAYETANO
Senator

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AN ACT
MANDATING THE APPOINTMENT OF ONE MIDWIFE FOR EACH BARANGAY,
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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 "Midwife to the Barangay Act of 2009."

Section 2. Statement of Policy. - It is the policy of the State to protect and promote the right to health of the people. The State shall provide appropriate programs and measures to provide access to affordable and quality health and social services, especially in rural areas.

The services of midwives, as front liners in the country's health care delivery system, are essential in achieving the State's health policy, especially with regard to pre-natal and post natal maternal, and newborn, care. Toward this end, this Act shall mandate the appointment of midwives for each barangay to increase access to health care services for the people, especially the underprivileged.

Section 3. Ratio of Midwives to the Barangay. - All barangays shall be equipped with one (1) midwife; *Provided*, That if the population of a barangay exceeds five thousand (5,000), the number of midwives shall be increased, as determined by the Department of Health (DOH).

Section 4. Role of Midwives to the Barangay. - All Midwives to the Barangay are mandated to ensure that mothers and infants, in their respective jurisdictions, are given quality and essential health care services, including, but not limited to, pre-natal and post natal care, breastfeeding support, providing information on the importance of immunization and ensuring that infants are given the proper vaccines as provided in the DOH Expanded Program on Immunization, and proper care and nutrition of both the mothers and the infants.

Section 5. Appointment of Midwives to the Barangay. - The DOH, through its Center for Health Development, is mandated to appoint the Midwife to the Barangay. It shall immediately determine which areas are in need of midwives. Priority in appointments shall be given to remote areas where there are no existing healthcare professionals providing for the healthcare services of the population and areas which have high maternal mortality rate.

Section 6. Qualifications of Midwives to the Barangay. - The DOH shall provide for the qualifications of the Midwife to the Barangay, who shall, as much as

possible, come from the same barangay or municipality where he or she will be appointed.

Section 7. *Basic Emergency Obstetric Care* – The DOH shall ensure that the midwives are equipped with Basic Emergency Obstetric Care. It shall also determine, subject to guidelines that it may issue, the need to further provide these midwives with training on Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric Care.

Section 8. *Compensation and Benefits*. - All Midwives to the Barangay shall be appropriately compensated by the DOH and shall be entitled to all the benefits provided in Republic Act No. 7305, otherwise known as the "Magna Carta of Public Health Workers."

Section 9. *Implementing Rules and Regulation*. - The DOH, in cooperation with the Department of Interior and Local Government, the Civil Service Commission, and other concerned government agencies and non-government organizations, shall formulate and promulgate, within ninety days (90) from its effectivity, the rules and regulations necessary to implement this Act.

Section 10. *Appropriations*. – For a period of five (5) years from the passage of this Act, the amount necessary to implement the provisions of this Act shall be charged against the appropriations of the DOH. Thereafter, such funds as may be necessary for the continued implementation of this Act shall be included in the appropriations of the respective Local Government Units.

Section 11. *Separability Clause*. - If any part or provision of this Act shall be held unconstitutional or invalid, other provisions thereof which are not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

Section 12. *Repealing Clause*. - All laws, decrees, executive orders, and other presidential issuances which are inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

Section 13. *Effectivity*. - This Act takes effect immediately after its publication in at least two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved.