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Introduced by Sen. Aquilino "Koko" Martin L. Pimentel III

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#### EXPLANATORY NOTE

In 2011, a total of 431 natural and human-induced disasters were reported in the Philippines. The 2011 Philippine Disaster Report showed that these disasters resulted in 1,774 deaths and affected more than 3 million families or 15.3 million people and caused over Php26 billion in economic damages.<sup>1</sup> This placed the Philippines on the top spot of the list of countries with the most number of reported natural disasters and second to Japan for the most number of casualties caused by natural disasters.

In most of these calamities, Filipinos not only mourn the loss of their loved ones and their properties, but also bear the pain of uncertainty on the fate of their lost family members. We hear news reports of mass burials of unidentified persons simply because the government lacked capable professionals to identify dead bodies.

Although Republic Act 7160, otherwise known as the Local Government Code of 1991, mandates the appointment of a local health officer in all levels of local government, most of them are not technically capable of identifying dead bodies during and after calamities. Considering that local health officers have knowledge on the medical field, it is but apt that they also be empowered to answer and respond to this problem brought about by disasters. Appropriate and timely management of dead bodies following disasters is a matter of

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<sup>1</sup> *The Philippine Disaster Report 2011*. Citizens' Disaster Response Center, retrieved from <http://www.cdrc-phil.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/PDR-2011.pdf> on November 26, 2012.

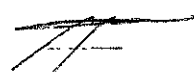
collective well-being, a question of ethics and human dignity, and more than just a means of avoiding diseases.

This bill seeks to equip local health officers with the basic knowledge in the identification of dead bodies during and after calamities. They shall undergo mandatory training on the identification of dead bodies to be conducted by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) and other appropriate government agencies. In this way, local health officers will be able to help in the speedy and efficient identification of dead bodies, not only to prevent the outbreak of diseases in the affected communities, but most importantly, to allow families to bury their dead with dignity and respect.

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

  
AQUILINO "KOKO" MARTIN L. PIMENTEL III

SENATE  
S. B. No. 3368



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Introduced by Sen. Aquilino "Koko" Martin L. Pimentel III

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AN ACT  
REQUIRING ALL LOCAL HEALTH OFFICERS TO HAVE MANDATORY  
TRAINING IN THE IDENTIFICATION OF DEAD BODIES DURING AND  
AFTER NATURAL AND HUMAN-INDUCED DISASTERS, AMENDING FOR  
THIS PURPOSE SECTION 478 OF REPUBLIC ACT 7160, AS AMENDED,  
OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE OF 1991

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

**SECTION 1.** Section 478 of Republic Act 7160, otherwise known as the "Local Government Code of 1991" is hereby amended to read as follows:

**Section 478. Qualifications, Powers and Duties.**

(a) No person shall be appointed health officer unless he is a citizen of the Philippines, a resident of the local government unit concerned, of good moral character, and a licensed medical practitioner. He must have acquired experience in the practice of his profession for at least five (5) years in the case of the provincial or city health officer, and three (3) years in the case of the municipal health officer.

The appointment of a health officer shall be mandatory for provincial, city and municipal governments.

(b) The health officer shall take charge of the office on health and shall:

(1) xxxxxxxxxxxx;

(2) xxxxxxxxxxxx;

(3) xxxxxxxxxxxx;

(4) xxxxxxxxxxxx;

(5) Be in the frontline of health services delivery, particularly during and in the aftermath of [man-made] HUMAN-INDUCED and natural disasters and calamities.

IN ORDER TO BE CAPACITATED TO IDENTIFY DEAD BODIES DURING AND AFTER HUMAN-INDUCED AND NATURAL DISASTERS AND CALAMITIES, LOCAL HEALTH OFFICERS SHALL UNDERGO A MANDATORY TRAINING ON THE IDENTIFICATION OF DEAD BODIES TO BE CONDUCTED BY THE NATIONAL DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT COUNCIL (NDRRMC) AND OTHER APPROPRIATE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES; and

(c) xxxxxxxxxxxx.

**SECTION 2. *Repealing Clause.*** All laws, decrees, executive orders, proclamations, rules and regulations, or parts thereof inconsistent herewith are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

**SECTION 3. *Effectivity.*** - This Act shall take effect upon its publication in at least two (2) newspapers of national circulation.

*Approved,*