

THIRTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES  
*First Regular Session*

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SENATE  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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SENATE

S. No. 589

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INTRODUCED BY HON. MANUEL B. VILLAR JR.

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### EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Constitution, Article 2, Section 15 provides:

The State shall protect and promote the right to health of the people  
and instill health consciousness among them.

Thousands of infants each year are born with serious birth defects of the brain and spine, called neural tube defects. The most common of these are *spin bifida*, the incomplete closure of the spinal column and *anencephaly*, a fatal condition in which an infant is born with a severely underdeveloped brain and skull.

Studies in the United States show that as many as 70 percent of neural tube birth defects could be prevented if all women of childbearing age consume 400 micrograms of folic acid daily, beginning before pregnancy. Folic acid is a B vitamin found naturally in foods such as leafy green vegetables, bean, citrus fruits, and juices and in certain multivitamins capsules.

Unfortunately, a majority of women are neither aware of this prevention opportunity, nor consuming the recommended daily amount.

Hence, this bill seeks to provide a national folic acid education campaign in order to urge women to take the simple step to prevent neural tube defects.

  
MANUEL B. VILLAR, JR.

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**AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR A NATIONAL FOLIC ACID EDUCATION PROGRAM  
TO PREVENT BIRTH DEFECTS**

*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 "Folic Acid Promotion and Birth Defects Prevention Act."

SECTION 2. *Program regarding effects of folic acid in prevention of birth defects-*

(a) IN GENERAL - The Secretary of Health shall carry out a program (directly or through grants or contracts) for the following purposes:

- (1) To provide education and training for health professionals and the general public for purposes of explaining the effects of folic acid in preventing birth defects and for purposes of encouraging each woman of reproductive capacity (whether or not planning a pregnancy) to consume on a daily basis a dietary supplement that provides an appropriate level of folic acid.
- (2) To conduct research with respect to such education and training, including identifying effective strategies for increasing the rate of consumption of folic acid by women of reproductive capacity.
- (3) To conduct research to increase the understanding of the effects of folic acid in preventing birth defects, including understanding with respect to cleft lip, cleft palate, and heart defects.

- (4) To provide for appropriate epidemiological activities regarding folic acid and birth defects, including epidemiological activities regarding neural tube defects.
- (b) CONSULTATIONS WITH PRIVATE ENTITIES - In carrying out subsection (a), the Secretary shall consult with appropriate public or private entities, including national nonprofit private organizations, health professionals, and providers of health insurance and health plans.
- (c) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE - The Secretary may (directly or through grants or contracts) provide technical assistance to public and nonprofit private entities in carrying out the activities described in subsection (a).
- (d) EVALUATIONS - The Secretary shall (directly or through grants or contracts) provide for the evaluation of activities under subsection (a) in order to determine the extent to which such activities have been effective in carrying out the purposes of the program under such subsection, including the effects on various demographic populations. Methods of evaluation under the preceding sentence may include surveys of knowledge and attitudes on the consumption of folic acid and on blood folate levels. Such methods may include complete and timely monitoring of infants who are born with neural tube defects.
- (e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS - There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act.

SECTION 3. *Separability Clause* - If any provision or part hereof, is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

SECTION 4. *Repealing Clause* - Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary to or inconsistent with the provision of this Act is hereby repealed, modified or amended accordingly.

SECTION 5. *Effectivity Clause* - This Act shall take fifteen (15) days after its publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,