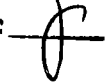




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SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE )  
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES )  
First Regular Session )

RECEIVED BY: 

SENATE

S. No. 596

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Introduced by Senator Antonio "Sonny" F. Trillanes IV

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

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Section 15, Article 2 of the Philippine Constitution mandates:

*"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 *spina 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.

Only recently have researchers made some progress in preventing these defects. Studies show that as many as seventy percent (70%) of neural tube birth defects could be prevented if all women of childbearing age consume 400 micrograms of folic acid daily, before conception and during early pregnancy. Folic acid is a B vitamin found naturally in foods such as leafy green vegetables, beans, citrus fruits, and juices and in certain multivitamins capsules. Unfortunately, a majority of women lack information about this.

Thus, 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.

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

  
ANTONIO "SONNY" F. TRILLANES IV  
Senator



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ACT

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

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

1           **SECTION I. Short Title.**- This Act shall be known as the "*Folic Acid Promotion and*  
2 *Birth Defects Prevention Act of 2016*".

3

4           **SEC. 2. Promotion of the Beneficial Effects of Folic Acid in the Prevention of Birth**  
5 *Defects.*- The Department of Health shall carry out a program, directly or through special  
6 arrangements with other government agencies and other promotional entities engaged in  
7 public information activities, to provide education and training for health professionals and  
8 the general public for purposes of explaining the effects of folic acid in preventing birth  
9 defects and to encourage women of reproductive capacity to consume the appropriate amount  
10 of folic acid as dietary supplement on a daily basis.

11

12           Pursuant thereto, the Secretary of Health may consult with the appropriate public or  
13 private entities, including national nonprofit and nongovernment organizations, health  
14 professionals and health insurance and health plan providers, to ensure the success of such  
15 education and training program. In addition, the Secretary shall, directly or through  
16 partnership with other sectors, provide technical assistance to public and nonprofit private  
17 organizations to fulfill the mandate provided for in Sections 2 and 3 hereof.

18

19           **SEC. 3. Continuing Research and Study on the Effects of Folic Acid.**- The  
20 Department of Health shall conduct continuing studies on the effects of folic acid to increase  
21 the understanding of the same on the health of the citizenry, especially its contribution to the  
22 prevention of birth defects, cleft lip and palate, and heart defects. It shall likewise conduct  
23 research with respect to such education and training, including identifying effective strategies  
24 for increasing the rate of consumption of folic acid by women of reproductive capacity. In  
25 addition, it shall provide for appropriate epidemiological activities regarding folic acid, birth  
26 defects and neural tube defects.

1           **SEC. 4. Evaluation of Program Implementation.**- The Secretary of Health shall  
2 cause the review of the program to evaluate the extent to which the activities carried out,  
3 pursuant to Sections 2 and 3 hereof, have been effective in fulfilling the goals of the program,  
4 including their effect on different sectors of the population. Methods of evaluation to be  
5 undertaken pursuant thereto may include surveys of knowledge and attitudes on the  
6 consumption of folic acid and on blood folate levels and the complete and timely monitoring  
7 of infants who are born with neural tube defects.

8  
9           **SEC. 5. The Secretary of Health shall include.** - In the Department's program the  
10 implementation of this Act, the funding of which shall be included in the annual General  
11 Appropriations Act (GAA).

12  
13           **SEC. 6. Separability Clause.**- If any provision or part hereof is held invalid or  
14 unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected thereby  
15 shall remain valid and subsisting.

16  
17           **SEC. 7. Repealing Clause.**- Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive  
18 order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary to or inconsistent  
19 with the provisions of this Act is hereby repealed, modified or amended accordingly.

20  
21           **SEC. 8. Effectivity Clause.**- This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its  
22 publication in the *Official Gazette* or in two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

*Approved,*