

**EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES**  
*Second Regular Session*

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**SENATE**  
**S. B. No. 1845**



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Introduced by Senator SONNY ANGARA

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**AN ACT**  
**PROVIDING FOR THE PROTECTION AND ADVANCING THE WELFARE OF**  
**MEDICAL FRONTLINERS IN THE PHILIPPINES, APPROPRIATING FUNDS**  
**THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

It has been over 170 days since the Philippines reported the country's first case of COVID-19.<sup>1</sup> Since then, our frontline health workers have been sacrificing both their time and their lives in order to serve as the last line of defense against this new and contagious disease which has rendered most of our country immobile.

Due to the unenviable responsibility of mitigating the spread of this unseen and fast-moving enemy as well as treating those who have contracted it, our medical frontliners have long been subjected to physical, mental and emotional stress. Worse, many of our frontline health workers have also been sidelined because they were infected by the virus. Latest data from the Department of Health (DOH) situationer reported that close to 4,000 health care workers tested positive for COVID-19 – and of that number, 35 have died. Now, more than ever, the State must reciprocate the sacrifices that our medical frontliners have made to curb the transmission of this disease.

The proposed measure, which is a counterpart version to a bill filed by Representative Janette Loreto-Garin in the House of Representatives, will introduce additional benefits for our frontline health workers such as additional allowances, free mandatory Continuing Medical Education (CME) program, and free vaccinations for

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<sup>1</sup> Gregorio, Xave. "Philippines confirms first case of novel coronavirus?" *CNN Philippines*, 30 January 2020, <https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/1/30/Philippines-coronavirus-case.html>

them and their dependents. The proposed measure will also provide a mental health leave for these frontline health workers in addition to a range of responsive mental health services.

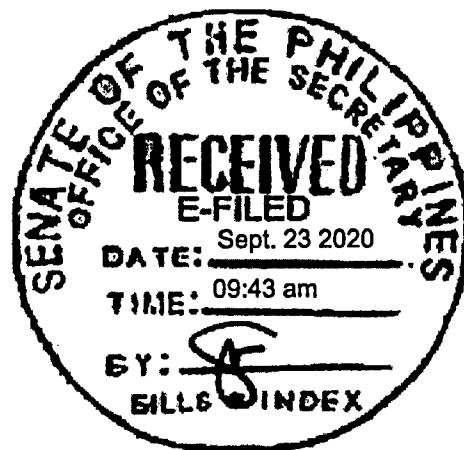
As an act of solidarity and support to our present heroes, it is necessary to advance their welfare by instituting a policy that will safeguard them and their families. In these especially trying times – which have kept our frontline health workers in a constant state of worry and anxiety – they deserve the highest form of protection that the government can provide for them.

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



**SONNY ANGARA**

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

1           **SECTION. 1. Short Title.** – This Act shall be known as the “Frontline Health  
2 Workers Welfare Act of 2020”.

3           **SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy.** – It is hereby declared the policy of the State  
4 to uphold the welfare of frontline health workers and assume the responsibility for the  
5 protection, respect, and improvement of the sector by instituting measures towards  
6 competent and relevant practice for the health and safety of the public, just and  
7 human condition of work, and promotion of professional growth. Thus, the State  
8 recognizes frontline health workers as prime movers of national government

9           **SEC. 3. Coverage.** – The provisions and benefits provided for in this Act shall  
10 be given to public and private frontline health workers. For the purpose of this Act,  
11 frontline health workers shall mean all persons who are engaged in health and health-  
12 related work in health facilities, regardless of employment status, whether salaried,  
13 contracted, or volunteers.

14           This shall include all persons employed in all hospitals, sanitarium, health  
15 infirmaries, health centers, rural health units, barangay health station, clinics, duly-  
16 registered nursing homes, and other health-related establishments.

17           **SEC. 4. Additional Benefits for Frontline Health Workers.** – The  
18 following incentives and benefits shall be provided to medical frontliners:

- 1 a. In times of a pandemic or a public health emergency, frontline health  
2 workers shall be entitled to a one-time allowance of not less than Five  
3 Thousand Pesos (Php 5,000.00) at the start of the pandemic or public health  
4 emergency;
- 5 b. Free mandatory Continuing Medical Education (CME) program, equivalent  
6 to two (2) Continuing Professional Development (CPD) units, for frontline  
7 health workers to enhance and upgrade the competencies and qualifications  
8 of frontline health workers in times of a pandemic or a public health  
9 emergency;
- 10 c. Free annual influenza and pneumococcal vaccination and other vaccines for  
11 frontline health workers; and,
- 12 d. Free annual influenza for the qualified dependents of frontline health  
13 workers.

14 *Provided*, That upon the availability of new vaccines and breakthrough drugs,  
15 priority access shall be given to the frontline health workers and their immediate  
16 family. *Provided further*, That the benefit stated under Sec. 4(a) shall be applicable  
17 only to future pandemics or public health emergencies and not to the current COVID-  
18 19 pandemic as the actual hazard pay and special risk allowance for COVID-19 for  
19 frontliners are already provided for under Republic Act No. 11494 or the Bayanihan to  
20 Recover as One Act.

21 The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) is hereby tasked  
22 to ensure the effective delivery of appropriate social welfare mechanisms for our  
23 frontline health workers, one that is adaptive to the prevailing pandemic context to  
24 carry out the purposes of this Act.

25 **SEC. 5. Mental Health of Frontline Health Workers.** – Every frontline  
26 health worker shall be entitled to a yearly mental health leave of five (5) days with  
27 pay. *Provided*, that responsive mental health services shall be developed and  
28 integrated as part of the medical health benefits of the frontline health workers.  
29 *Provided further*, That mental health therapy, consultations, and medications shall be  
30 made available to all frontline health workers until three (3) years after the end of  
31 their service.

1           The standards of mental health services shall be determined by the Department  
2 of Health (DOH) in consultation with stakeholders based on the most current mental  
3 health practices and in accordance with Republic Act No. 11036 or the Mental Health  
4 Act.

5           **SEC. 6. Appropriations.** – The amount necessary to carry out the provisions  
6 regarding vaccines and breakthrough drugs shall be sourced from the Department of  
7 Health while the provision on allowances shall be sourced from the Department of  
8 Social Welfare and Development.

9           Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the continued implementation  
10 of this Act shall be included in the succeeding General Appropriations Act (GAA) under  
11 the emergency fund

12           **SEC. 7. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** – Within sixty (60) days  
13 from the effectivity of this Act, the DOH, DSWD and the Department of Labor and  
14 Employment (DOLE), in coordination with other concerned government agencies and  
15 interest groups, shall formulate and adopt amendments to the existing rules and  
16 regulations of this Act.

17           **SEC. 8. Separability Clause.** – If any provision of this Act is declared invalid  
18 or unconstitutional, the other provisions not affected thereby shall continue to be in  
19 full force and effect.

20           **SEC. 9. Repealing Clause.** – All other laws, decrees, orders, rules and  
21 regulations, other issuances, or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this  
22 Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

23           **SEC. 10. Effectivity.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its  
24 publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

*Approved,*