

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

23 MAY 29 AM 11:44

RECEIVED BY: 

SENATE
S. No. 2255

Introduced by Senator MARK A. VILLAR

AN ACT
TO ESTABLISH A GRANT PROGRAM TO PROVIDE VISION CARE TO CHILDREN
EXPLANATORY NOTE

Poor vision has a significant impact on the overall well-being, educational development, and productivity of children. If detected and addressed at an early age, many visual impairments can be treated, and further complications can be prevented. However, in the Philippines, the lack of funding for such programs serves as a barrier in accessing adequate vision care.

Based on a report by the UP Manila National Institutes of Health's Philippine Eye Research Institute (PERI), in a classroom of forty, four have vision impairments or disorders such as amblyopia (lazy eye) or myopia (nearsightedness). More than 10% of Filipino kindergarten-aged pupils are affected by poor vision, and many children are still left undiagnosed¹. There is also a disparity in the access to visual care, as most families must rely on out-of-pocket expenses. As a result, some families consider the availing of treatments or the purchasing of eyeglasses as a luxury. Hence, there is a need to grant funding for programs promoting vision care to children.

¹ University of the Philippines Manila. (2021). National Vision Screening Program for Kindergarten Pupils Signed into Law. Upm.edu.ph.
<https://www.upm.edu.ph/node/2787#:~:text=National%20Vision%20Screening%20Program%20for,identify%20early%20childhood%20visual%20problems.>

This bill will complement current state efforts by granting funds to LGUs. By awarding grants, comprehensive eye examinations, treatments, and services can be accessed by more Filipino children. Besides that, more educational materials on eye care can be disseminated to the public.


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



MARK A. VILLAR

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

- 1 Section 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “*Vision Care for Kids Act.*”
2 Sec. 2. *Definition of Terms.* – The following terms as used in this Act shall be defined
3 as follows:
4 (a) “*Comprehensive Eye Examination*” includes an assessment of a patient’s
5 history, general medical observation, external and ophthalmoscopic examination,
6 visual acuity, ocular alignment and motility, refraction, and as appropriate, binocular
7 vision or gross visual fields, performed by an optometrist or an ophthalmologist.
8 (b) “*LGU*” refers to a local government unit, which may be a province, city or a
9 municipality.
10 (c) “*Secretary*” refers to the Secretary of Health.
11 Sec. 3. *Grant Regarding Vision Care for Children.* – The Secretary shall carry out
12 this grant program to award grants to LGUs on the basis of an established review process
13 for the purpose of complementing existing government efforts for:
14 (a) Providing comprehensive eye examinations by a licensed optometrist or
15 ophthalmologist for children who have been previously identified through a
16 vision screening or eye examination by a licensed health care provider or vision

1 screener as needing such services, with priority given to children who are under
2 8 years old;

3 (b) Providing treatment or services, subsequent to the examinations described in
4 the aforementioned paragraph, necessary to correct vision problems; and

5 (c) Developing and disseminating to parents, teachers, and health care practitioners'
6 educational materials on recognizing signs of visual impairment in children;
7 *Provided that* the LGU shall not expend more than 20 percent of the amount
8 received under the grant to carry out the purpose described in this paragraph.

9 *Sec. 4. Criteria and Coordination.* – The Secretary, in consultation with appropriate
10 professional and consumer organizations including individuals with knowledge of age
11 appropriate vision services, shall develop a criteria governing the operation of the grant
12 program under Section 3, and for the collection of data related to vision assessment and
13 the utilization of follow up services.

14 *Sec. 5. Application.* – To be eligible to receive a grant under Section 3, an LGU shall
15 submit to the Secretary an application in such form, made in such manner, and containing
16 such information as the Secretary may require, including the following:

17 (a) Information on existing children vision programs;

18 (b) A plan for the use of grant funds, including how funds will be used to
19 complement existing State efforts (including possible partnerships with non-
20 profit entities);

21 (c) A plan to determine if a grant eligible child has been identified as provided for
22 in Section 3; and

23 (d) A description of how funds will be used to provide items or services only as a
24 secondary payer to any local government compensation program, under an
25 insurance policy, or under any government health benefits program.

26 *Sec. 6. Evaluations.* – To be eligible to receive a grant under Section 3, an LGU shall
27 agree that not later than one (1) year after the date on which amounts under the grant
28 are first received by it, and annually thereafter while receiving amounts under the grant,
29 the LGU shall submit to the Secretary an evaluation of the operations and activities carried
30 out under the grant, including-

- 1 (a) An assessment of the utilization of vision services and the status of children
2 receiving those services as a result of the activities carried out under the grant;
3 (b) The collection, analysis, and reporting of children's vision data according to
4 guidelines prescribed by the Secretary; and
5 (c) Such other information as the Secretary may require.

6 *Sec. 7. Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – The Department of Health (DOH),
7 in consultation with Department of the Interior and Local Government shall formulate the
8 rules and regulations necessary to implement the provisions of this Act within six (6)
9 months from its effectivity.

10 *Sec. 8. Appropriations.* – Such sums as may be necessary for the initial
11 implementation of this Act shall be taken from the current appropriations of the DOH.
12 Thereafter, the fund necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act shall be included in
13 the annual General Appropriations Act.

14 *Sec. 9. Separability Clause.* – If any portion or provision of this Act is declared
15 unconstitutional or invalid, the remainder of this Act or any provisions hereof not affected
16 thereby shall continue to be in force and effect.

17 *Sec. 10. Repealing Clause.* –Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive
18 order, letter of instruction, rule or regulation inconsistent or contrary to the provision of
19 this Act is hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

20 *Sec. 11. Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days
21 following its publication in the Official Gazette or a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,