

FOURTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC )  
 OF THE PHILIPPINES )  
 Second Regular Session )

8 SEP 30 P3:17

SENATE

S. No. 2644RECEIVED BY: 


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Introduced by Senator Manuel "Lito" M. Lapid

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### EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article 13, Section 12 of the 1987 Constitution provides that the State shall establish and maintain an effective food and drug regulatory system and undertake appropriate health manpower development and research, responsive to the country's health needs and problems.

The elimination of lymphatic filariasis as a public health problem in the Philippines is a 20-year strategic plan for the world community, with the vision of all endemic communities to be free of transmission of lymphatic filariasis by 2020 and with the commitment to ensure the delivery of quality technologies and human services to eliminate lymphatic filariasis worldwide through a multi-stakeholder global alliance of all endemic countries. This global goal of elimination of lymphatic filariasis is a significant opportunity for partnerships – a world with less poverty through sustainable development and free from the scourge of lymphatic filariasis.

Within the Philippines areas endemic for lymphatic filariasis are in regions with the highest incidence of poverty. Out of a total of 79 provinces, 39 have a higher poverty incidence than the national average and 30 of these 39 provinces are endemic for lymphatic filariasis. For example, Romblon province has a Circulating Filarial Antigen (CFA) rate of 18.75% and Oriental Mindoro province has a microfilaria prevalence rate of 12.59%. These two provinces have the highest prevalence rates compared to other provinces in the country.

Recognizing that provinces endemic for lymphatic filariasis are also among the poorest provinces, the elimination of lymphatic filariasis in these areas presents significant opportunities to reduce poverty and inequalities in health. The implementation of an effective national program to educate the public and provide for the elimination of lymphatic filariasis will indeed provide means for sustainable development at national, local and community levels.

With the devolution and decentralization of health services in the Philippines since 1991, there has been a great need to provide health research systems development with epidemiological research, basic health research, health social science research, health systems research, evaluation research, operational research and participatory action research.

This proposed measure seeks to provide a comprehensive program for health research on lymphatic filariasis disease in the country and provide a comprehensive information and education drive to inform the general public of the nature and mode of infection of the disease. As such, by establishing a national education program for health providers about lymphatic filariasis, it is hoped that this proposed measure will help prevent the spread of the disease.

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


  
**MANUEL "LITO" M. LAPID**  
 Senator

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**AN ACT**  
**ESTABLISHING A COMPREHENSIVE RESEARCH AND INFORMATION**  
**PROGRAM ON LYMPHATIC FILARIASIS, APPROPRIATING FUNDS**  
**THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSE**

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

**SECTION 1. Short Title.** - This Act shall be known as the *"Lymphatic  
Filariasis Research and Information Act of 2008."*

**SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy.** - It is hereby declared the policy of the  
State to protect and promote the right to health of the people to full, healthy and holistic  
development and the right to self-determination. As such, the State shall promote an  
environment conducive to the development of all its citizens to become, to the best of  
their potentials, independent, self-reliant and productive members of society.

Towards this end, the State commits itself to the establishment of institutional  
mechanisms to provide quantitative and qualitative research on lymphatic filariasis that  
is responsive to the country's health needs.

**SEC. 3. Definition of Terms.** - For purposes of this Act, the following terms  
shall be defined as follows:

- (a) "Secretary" shall refer to the Secretary of the Department of Health;
- (b) "Lymphatic Filariasis" shall refer to the parasitic and infectious tropical  
disease that is caused by thread-like parasitic worms of the type filarial nematode,  
which causes enlargement of the entire leg or arm, the genitals, vulva and breasts;
- (c) "Committee" refers to the Committee on Lymphatic Filariasis Research.

**SEC. 4. Comprehensive Research on Lymphatic Filariasis.** - The  
Secretary of the Department of Health (DOH) is hereby mandated to conduct a  
comprehensive research and information drive on incidence and prevalence of

lymphatic filariasis disease in the country. Moreover, the Department is also mandated to support medical and epidemiological research activities to expand the knowledge and understanding of lymphatic filariasis disease.

It shall strengthen its research focus concerning lymphatic filariasis, including a renewed investment into basic and clinical research, expanded research into the link between environmental factors and the disease, and continued investigations into causation, diagnosis, early detection and treatment for lymphatic filariasis. Such factors that will be studied shall also include, among others, infection and immune function, hormones and reproductive factors, genetic factors, gastro-intestinal factors, socio-demographic factors, and others.

**SEC. 5.        *Committee on Lymphatic Filariasis.*** - To assist the Secretary in receiving accurate and complete information about lymphatic filariasis, its symptoms, origin, classification, prevention and treatment, there is hereby established a Committee on Lymphatic Filariasis Research to ensure the strategic management, communication, and oversight of the policy formation, research, and activities of the government regarding the disease.

The objectives of the Committee shall be as follows:

- a) to promote public awareness, education and information on issues concerning lymphatic filariasis;
- b) to establish sustainable networks of support group for families of afflicted persons;
- c) to provide referral services to patients with lymphatic filariasis and identify the appropriate educational and medical expertise and facilities suited to the needs of the patient;
- d) to combat the spectrum of medical problems related to lymphatic filariasis through screening, education, early intervention, prompt referrals for treatment and services;
- e) to undertake research and/or collaborate with other entities on research activities regarding the prevalence of the disease in the Philippines;
- f) to receive donations and grants from local and international donor institutions, foundations, and multilateral and bilateral foreign donor agencies involved in research, prevention, cure and rehabilitation of persons with lymphatic filariasis;
- g) to provide the avenue for exchange of information, exchange programs and sharing of best practices on issues relating to the early detection, prevention, cure, treatment and rehabilitation of afflicted patients; and
- h) to ensure that materials concerning the disease are available and up to date, responsive to reports of problems with lymphatic filariasis, and that timely

aggregate data concerning such reports shall be made available to the public upon request and consistent with existing confidentiality standards.

**SEC. 6.      *Composition.*** - The Committee on Lymphatic Filariasis Research shall be composed of the following members:

- (a) One (1) representative from the Department of Health (DOH), who shall be the Chairperson;
- (b) One (1) representative from the National Institute of Health (NIH);
- (c) One (1) representative from duly accredited drug and vaccine manufacturers and distributors;
- (d) One (1) representative from the duly accredited association of hospitals in the Philippines;
- (e) One (1) representative from the Philippine Medical Association; and
- (f) One (1) representative from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in the advocacy for the prevention, cure and rehabilitation of persons with filariasis.

**SEC. 7.      *Meetings.*** – The Committee on Lymphatic Filariasis Research shall meet at least once a month upon a three-day notice signed by the Chairperson or as often as necessary upon the written request signed by two-thirds (2/3) of its members.

The presence of a majority of the members of the Committee shall constitute a quorum in order for it to conduct its business.

The meetings of the Committee shall be open to the public and public witnesses shall be given the opportunity to speak and make presentations at such meetings.

Each member shall make a presentation to the full Committee at each meeting concerning the activities conducted by such member.

**SEC. 8.      *Early Identification and Intervention for Persons with Lymphatic Filariasis Disease.*** – The DOH is hereby mandated to establish a program for early identification, screening and detection of persons with lymphatic filariasis disease.

**SEC. 9.      *Prevention of Conflict of Interest in the Research Process.*** - Within six (6) month from the date of effectivity of this Act, the DOH shall issue the necessary standards, guidelines and regulations in order to ensure that there is no conflict of interest between the research agenda of the researchers and the drug manufacturers or government agencies promoting the widespread usage of a particular

vaccine or medicine for the treatment and rehabilitation of persons with lymphatic filariasis disease.

It shall ensure the timely publication and dissemination of information of these guidelines and regulations so that various health providers and stakeholders all over the country are adequately informed.

**SEC. 10. Appropriations.** - The funds necessary to implement the provisions of this Act shall be incorporated in the annual general appropriations of the Department of Health (DOH).

**SEC. 11. 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.

**SEC. 12 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.

**SEC. 13. Effectivity Clause.** - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days from the date of its complete publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

***Approved,***