

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

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SENATE  
S. No. 1673

RECEIVED BY: 2

Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

#### EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Constitution, Article 13, Section 11 provides that:

SEC. 11. The State shall adopt an integrated and comprehensive approach to health development which shall endeavor to make essential goods, health and other social services available to all the people at affordable cost. There shall be a priority for the needs of the underprivileged, sick, elderly, disabled, women and children. The State shall endeavor to provide free medical care to paupers.

Health care has always been last among the priorities of many Filipino families. In many cases, a lot of our countrymen seek medical attention only if their condition is already at an advanced stage, which can no longer be controlled nor hidden. This is attributable to several factors. First, the cost of prevention and treatment is prohibitive. Second, poverty has forced many families to choose between health care and basic necessities. Finally, many Filipinos are not health literate. It is often in these situations that many of our constituents approach the politicians for doles to address their health care expenses, which, in many instances, lead to patronage politics.

Health literacy means an individual's ability to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health care decisions. This means knowing how to make use of available resources to pay for a person's medical expenses, such as government benefits and health benefits available to employees. This knowledge goes a long way into assisting our citizens in making sound and timely decisions concerning the protection of their health. If we are able to do this, we will be able to encourage our citizens to avail of preventive medicine instead of curative. Preventive medicine is less costly and gives the family less burden than curative.

This bill seeks to establish within the Department of Health a Health Literacy Implementation Center to enhance efforts to help eliminate the problem of low health literacy by improving measurements, research, development, and information dissemination.<sup>1</sup>

*Miriam Defensor Santiago*  
MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO  
*ad*

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<sup>1</sup> This bill was originally filed in the Fourteenth Congress, Second Regular Session

10 JUL 20 AM 11:14

SENATE  
S. No. 1673

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Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

AN ACT  
TO ENSURE THAT ALL FILIPINOS HAVE BASIC HEALTH LITERACY SKILLS TO  
FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY AS PATIENTS AND HEALTH CARE CONSUMERS

*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 “National Health Literacy  
Act.”

SECTION 2. *Definitions.* – The purposes of this Act the term –

A. HEALTH LITERACY - means an individual's ability to obtain, process, and  
understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate  
health care decisions;

B. CENTER - means the Health Literacy Implementation Center established under  
Section 3; and

C. SECRETARY - means the Secretary of Health, unless otherwise indicated.

SECTION 3. *Health Literacy Implementation Center.* – The Secretary shall establish  
within the Department a Health Literacy Implementation Center, to be headed by a Director to be  
appointed by the Secretary, to enhance efforts to help eliminate the problem of low health  
literacy by improving measurements, research, development, and information dissemination.

SECTION 4. *Duties.* – The Center shall--

A. gather health literacy resources from public and private sources and make such  
resources available to researchers, health care providers, and the general public;

- 1 B. sponsor demonstration and evaluation projects to establish the feasibility and utility  
2 of health literacy interventions and tools in various settings;
- 3 C. develop the next generation of health literacy interventions and tools, including  
4 curricula, measures, and health information decision support, with specific attention  
5 placed on elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities (including  
6 community colleges), and adult and vocational education programs and language  
7 barriers and cultural differences that contribute to low health literacy rates;
- 8 D. identify and fill research gaps relating to health literacy that have direct applicability  
9 to quality improvement;
- 10 E. assist appropriate government agencies in establishing specific objectives and  
11 strategies for carrying out the purpose of the Center and in monitoring the programs  
12 of such agencies;
- 13 F. enter into implementation partnerships with organizations and agencies to promote  
14 the adoption of interventions and tools developed under this section; and
- 15 G. enter into an interagency agreement with the Secretary of Education to facilitate the  
16 coordination of health literacy activities within the Department of Health and the  
17 Department of Education.

18 SECTION 5. *Public Meetings.* – The Center shall convene at least one annual public  
19 meeting to help raise awareness about the problem of health literacy and government efforts to  
20 address the issue. The Center shall invite representatives from the Department of Health and the  
21 Department of Education, local government officials, private sector groups, and other interested  
22 parties involved in health literacy activities.

23 SECTION 6. *Report.* - The Center shall annually submit to Congress a report that  
24 includes--

- 25 A. a comprehensive and detailed description of the operations, activities, financial  
26 condition, and accomplishments of the Center in the field of health literacy; and
- 27 B. a description of how plans for the operation of the Center for the succeeding fiscal  
28 year will facilitate achievement of the goals of the Center.

1       SECTION 7. *Health Literacy Resource Centers.* – The Director of the Center shall award  
2       grants to local government units (LGUs) to provide for the establishment of a network of local  
3       health literacy resource centers to facilitate efforts to eliminate low health literacy.

4       SECTION 8. *Eligibility for Grants.* – To be eligible for a grant under Section 7, the LGU  
5       shall submit to the Director of the Center an application at such time, in such manner, and  
6       containing such information as the Director may require, including a description of how the LGU  
7       will structure and provide services through the resource center established under the grant.

8       SECTION 9. *Functions of the Health Literacy Resource Centers.* – The Health Literacy  
9       Resource Centers shall –

10       A. support efforts to better understand the nature and scope of low health literacy among  
11       the LGU's population;

12       B. assist public and private efforts in the LGU in coordinating and delivering health  
13       literacy services;

14       C. encourage LGU and local government and industry partnerships to coordinate efforts  
15       to address low health literacy;

16       D. provide technical and policy assistance to LGU and local governments and service  
17       providers; and

18       E. monitor and evaluate programs conducted under this grant.

19       SECTION 10. *Meetings.* – A LGU health literacy resource center shall meet at least once  
20       each year to share models of best practices. A summary report with respect to such meeting shall  
21       be made available to the public to facilitate the dissemination of effective LGU-based practices

22       SECTION 11. *Report by Health Literacy Resource Centers.* – Not later than September  
23       30, or each fiscal year for which a grant is received by a LGU under this section, the LGU shall  
24       submit to the Director of the Center a report that shall describe the programs supported by the  
25       grant and the results of monitoring and evaluation of those programs.

1       SECTION 12. *Appropriations.* –The amount necessary for the initial implementation of  
2 this Act shall be charged against the appropriations of the Department of Education under the  
3 current General Appropriations Act. Thereafter, such sum as may be necessary for its full  
4 implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act as a distinct and  
5 separate item.

6       SECTION 13. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part hereof, is held invalid or  
7 unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall remain  
8 valid and subsisting.

9       SECTION 14. *Repealing Clause.* – Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive  
10 order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary to or is inconsistent  
11 with the provision of this Act is hereby repealed, modified, or amended accordingly.

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

14       Approved,

/apm100708