

SENATE

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S.B. No. 2073

RECEIVED BY: 

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Introduced by SENATOR PIA S. CAYETANO

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### EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill designates the month of February of every year as "**National Liver Cancer and Hepatitis-B Awareness Month**" in order to draw and raise public attention and awareness about liver cancer and Hepatitis-B and the urgency to prevent and control the disease.

Hepatitis-B is a serious public health issue in the Philippines where it is highly endemic. The country office of the World Health Organization (WHO) reports that around 60 percent of Filipinos have been infected with HBV, while approximately 10 percent have chronic or active Hepatitis-B and are virus carriers. This means that there are already around 8 to 10 million Hepatitis-B carriers in our country who shall infect more people.

One of the major infectious diseases of humankind, Hepatitis-B is caused by the Hepatitis-B Virus, or HBV, which can be transmitted through blood, sex, shared needles and from an infected mother to her newborn during delivery. According to available data, there is a 90% chance for pregnant women who are HBV carriers to pass the virus on to their newborn at delivery. These children who become infected are more likely to become carriers and to develop fatal complications as adults.

Although most people are infected with Hepatitis-B in infancy or childhood, the illness manifests only in adulthood where most deaths occur, as a result of liver cancer and/or cirrhosis, both of which are strongly associated with the virus. It is shown that around 70% of liver cancer is caused by Hepatitis-B. Statistics further show that liver cancer is the 4<sup>th</sup> leading site of cancer for both sexes, ranking 2<sup>nd</sup> among males and 7<sup>th</sup> among females.

This bill hopes that a comprehensive public education and awareness program on Hepatitis-B and liver cancer will help enlighten people about the disease and stir them into action. A focal point of this program is an information campaign about the benefits of routine infant immunization within 24 hours of birth, which is compulsory government health policy to protect the youngest and most fragile of our population who are most at risk, as well as the importance of child and adult vaccination for a holistic approach to battling the disease.


Immediate approval of this bill is thus most earnestly and urgently sought.

  
SENATOR PIA S. CAYETANO

30 JUL 27 A10:11

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AN ACT  
DECLARING THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY OF EVERY YEAR AS  
"LIVER CANCER AND HEPATITIS-B AWARENESS MONTH"

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

**SECTION 1. Short Title.** – This Act shall be known as "The Liver Cancer and Hepatitis-B Awareness Month Act."

**SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy.** – In line with the principles and mandates set by the Philippine Constitution that "the State shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them" (Article 2, Section 15) and that "the State shall adopt an integrated and comprehensive approach to health development" (Article 13, Section 11), the month of February of every year throughout the Philippines shall be known under the name of "Liver Cancer and Hepatitis-B Awareness Month."

**SECTION 3. Public Education and Awareness Program.** – To ensure the meaningful observance of the month as herein declared, a comprehensive public education and awareness program shall be undertaken on the communicable disease of Hepatitis-B, which causes around 70% of liver cancers. The program shall specifically discuss the causes, transmission, consequences, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of Hepatitis-B, including the urgent need for routine and immediate infant immunization, which is a compulsory government health policy in order to combat the rapid spread of the disease and protect lives, as well as the importance of child and adult vaccination, for a holistic approach to battling the virus.

**SECTION 4. Inter-Agency and Multi-Sectoral Effort.** – The Department of Health shall lead in the implementation of the comprehensive public education and awareness program on Hepatitis-B and liver cancer through a collaborative inter-agency and multi-sectoral effort at all levels. It shall particularly ensure widespread and expeditious public information about the benefits of compulsory routine immunization for Hepatitis-B of all infants within 24 hours of birth, which is in line with the World Health Organization (WHO) prescription for immediate infant immunization in all countries with a high endemic rate of Hepatitis-B infections like the Philippines.

**SECTION 5. Effectivity.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,