

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



Senate
Office of the Secretary

'13 JUL 29 A9:07

SENATE

S. No. 1135

REC'D

BY: *Ji*

Introduced by Sen. Antonio "Sonny" F. Trillanes IV

Explanatory Note

Section 15, Article 2 of the Philippine Constitution mandates:

"The State shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them."

Thousands of infants each year are born with serious birth defects of the brain and spine, called neural tube defects. The most common of these are *spina bifida*, the incomplete closure of the spinal column and *anencephaly*, a fatal condition in which an infant is born with a severely underdeveloped brain and skull.

Only recently have researchers made some progress in preventing these defects. Studies show that as many as seventy percent (70%) of neural tube birth defects could be prevented if all women of childbearing age consume 400 micrograms of folic acid daily, before conception and during early pregnancy. Folic acid is a B vitamin found naturally in foods such as leafy green vegetables, beans, citrus fruits, and juices and in certain multivitamins capsules. Unfortunately, a majority of women lack information about this.

Thus, this bill seeks to provide a national folic acid education campaign in order to urge women to take the simple step to prevent neural tube defects.

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

ANTONIO "SONNY" F. TRILLANES IV
Senator

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Introduced by Sen. Antonio "Sonny" F. Trillanes IV

AN ACT
TO PROVIDE FOR A NATIONAL FOLIC ACID EDUCATION PROGRAM TO
PREVENT BIRTH DEFECTS

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

1 **SECTION I. Short Title.-** This Act shall be known as the "*Folic Acid Promotion and Birth*
2 *Defects Prevention Act*".

3
4 **SEC. 2. Promotion of the Beneficial Effects of Folic Acid in the Prevention of Birth**
5 **Defects.-** The Department of Health shall carry out a program directly or through special
6 arrangements with other government agencies and other promotional entities engaged in public
7 information activities, to provide education and training for health professionals and the general
8 public for purposes of explaining the effects of folic acid in preventing birth defects and to
9 encourage women of reproductive capacity to consume the appropriate amount of folic acid as a
10 dietary supplement on a daily basis.

11 Pursuant thereto, the Secretary of Health may consult with the appropriate public or
12 private entities, including national nonprofit and nongovernment organizations, health
13 professionals and health insurance and health plan providers, to ensure the success of such
14 education and training program. In addition, the Secretary shall, directly or through partnership
15 with other sectors, provide technical assistance to public and nonprofit private organizations to
16 fulfill the mandate provided for in Sections 2 and 3 hereof.

1 **SEC. 3. *Continuing Research and Study on the Effects of Folic Acid.***- The Department
2 of Health shall conduct continuing studies on the effects of folic acid to increase the
3 understanding of the same on the health of the citizenry, especially its contribution to the
4 prevention of birth defects, cleft lip and palate, and heart defects. It shall likewise conduct
5 research with respect to such education and training, including identifying effective strategies
6 for increasing the rate of consumption of folic acid by women of reproductive capacity. In
7 addition, it shall provide for appropriate epidemiological activities regarding folic acid, birth
8 defects and neural tube defects.

9
10 **SEC. 4. *Evaluation of Program Implementation.***- The Secretary of Health shall
11 cause the review of the program to evaluate the extent to which the activities carried out,
12 pursuant to Sections 2 and 3 hereof, have been effective in fulfilling the goals of the program,
13 including their effect on different sectors of the population. Methods of evaluation to be
14 undertaken pursuant thereto may include surveys of knowledge and attitudes on the consumption
15 of folic acid and on blood folate levels, and the complete and timely monitoring of infants who
16 are born with neural tube defects.

17
18 **SEC. 5.** The Secretary of Health shall include in the Department's program the
19 implementation of this Act, the funding of which shall be included in the annual General
20 Appropriations Act.

21
22 **SEC. 6. *Separability Clause.***- If any provision or part hereof is held invalid or
23 unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected thereby shall
24 remain valid and subsisting.

25
26 **SEC. 7. *Repealing Clause.***- Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order,
27 letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary to or inconsistent with the
28 provisions of this Act is hereby repealed, modified or amended accordingly.

1 **SEC. 8. *Effectivity Clause.***- This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
2 publication in the Official Gazette.

Approved,