

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



Senate
Office of the Secretary

13 AUG 29 P5:12

SENATE

S.B. No. 1445

RECEIVED BY: ji

Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Constitution, Article 2, Section 15, states that:

Section 15. The State shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them.

While the Constitution mandates health care for every Filipino, a significant number of the population is unable to afford basic health care services. For the poorer population, it is least in their priorities. They prefer not to go to hospitals or clinics for treatment because of the high costs of medical service and medicines.

According to the Department of Health, medicine prices in the Philippines are grossly high compared to other countries. Aside from the high prices, the poorer rural communities also lack pharmacies. There are village drugstores, *Botika ng Bayan* or *Botika ng Barangay*, which sell medicines at lower prices, but some of the poorest and far-flung provinces do not have them. Barangay health centers also provide free medicines and supplements, but supplies tend to be sporadic. This bill seeks to ensure that free essential medicines are accessible to the poor.


MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO




13 AUG 29 P5:12

SENATE
S.B. No. **1445**

RECEIVED BY

Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

1 AN ACT
2 PROVIDING THE POOR WITH ACCESS TO FREE ESSENTIAL MEDICINES
3 THROUGH BARANGAY HEALTH CENTERS

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

4 SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Free Essential Medicines for
5 Barangays Act.”

6 SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to
7 protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among
8 them. Towards this end, the State shall implement a program of distribution of free essential
9 medicines to indigents nationwide.

10 SECTION 3. *Definition of Essential Medicines.* – As used in this Act, “essential
11 medicines” means basic medicines for primary health care.

12 SECTION 4. *Establishment of Free Essential Medicines Program.* – There is hereby
13 established a program to be known as the “Free Essential Medicines Program,” referred to in this
14 Act as the “Program.”

15 Free essential medicines shall be made available to indigents by barangay health centers,
16 in adequate amounts and in appropriate dosage forms. Essential medicines shall be selected with
17 regard to efficacy, safety, and comparative cost-effectiveness.

1 SECTION 5. *Qualified Beneficiaries.* – The Program shall be restricted to indigent
2 residents of the barangay, in accordance with rules and regulations to be promulgated by the
3 Secretary of Health.

4 SECTION 6. *Priority Health Problems.* – Priority health problems for the Program shall
5 include, but shall not be limited, to the following:

6 (A) Coughs and colds, including nasal congestion and sore throat;

7 (B) Minor cuts, bruises, and burns;

8 (C) Aches and pains;

9 (D) Diarrhea; and

10 (E) Intestinal worm infections in children.

11 SECTION 7. *Implementing Agencies.* – The provisions of this Act and the implementing
12 rules and regulations shall be enforced by the Department of Health, in coordination with the
13 Department of Social Welfare and Development.

14 SECTION 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within sixty (60) days from the
15 effectivity of this Act, the Secretary of Health shall promulgate the necessary rules and
16 regulations for its effective implementation.

17 SECTION 9. *Appropriations.* – The necessary amount for the initial implementation of
18 this Act shall be charged to the appropriations of the Department of Health under the current
19 General Appropriations Act. Thereafter, such amount as may be necessary for its continued
20 implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act as a separate and
21 distinct item.

22 SECTION 10. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part thereof is held invalid or
23 unconstitutional, the remainder of the law of the provision not otherwise affected shall remain
24 valid and subsisting.

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

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

Approved,