

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



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SENATE
S. No. 1919

RECEIVED BY *[Signature]*

Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Constitution, Article 11, Section 15, provides:

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.

Studies in the United States show that as many as seventy percent (70%) of neural tube birth defects could be prevented if all women of childbearing age consume four hundred (400) micrograms of folic acid daily, beginning before pregnancy. Folic acid is a B vitamin found naturally in foods such as leafy green vegetables, beans, citrus fruits, and juices and in certain multivitamin capsules. Unfortunately, a majority of women are neither aware of this prevention opportunity, nor consuming the recommended daily amount.

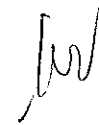
Hence, this bill seeks to provide a national folic acid education campaign in order to urge women to take the simple step to prevent neural tube defects.*

Miriam Defensor Santiago
MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO
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* This bill was originally filed during the Thirteenth Congress, First Regular Session.

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SENATE
S. No. **1919**

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1 AN ACT
2 PROVIDING FOR A NATIONAL FOLIC ACID EDUCATION PROGRAM
3 TO PREVENT BIRTH DEFECTS

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 "Folic Acid Promotion and
5 Birth Defects Prevention Act."

6 SECTION 2. *Program Regarding Effects of Folic Acid in Prevention of Birth Defects.* -

7 (A) *In General.* - The Secretary of Health shall carry out a program, directly or
8 through grants or contracts, for the following purposes:

9 (1) To provide education and training for health professionals and the general
10 public for purposes of encouraging each women of reproductive capacity,
11 whether or not planning a pregnancy, to consume on a daily basis a dietary
12 supplement that provides an appropriate level of folic acid.

13 (2) To conduct research with respect to such education and training, including
14 identifying effective strategies for increasing the rate of consumption of
15 folic acid by women of reproductive capacity.

16 (3) To conduct research to increase the understanding of the effects of folic
17 acid in preventing birth defects, including understanding with respect to
18 cleft lip, cleft palate, and heart defects.

19 (4) To provide for appropriate epidemiological activities regarding folic acid
20 and birth defects, including epidemiological activities regarding neural
21 tube defects.

1 (B) Consultations with Private Entities. - In carrying out paragraph (A), the Secretary
2 shall consult with appropriate public or private entities, including national non-profit private
3 organizations, health professionals, and providers of health insurance and health plans.

4 (C) Technical Assistance. - The Secretary may, directly or through grants or contracts,
5 provide technical assistance to public and non-profit private entities in carrying out the activities
6 described in paragraph (A).

7 (D) Evaluations. - The Secretary shall, directly or through grants or contracts, provide
8 for the evaluation of activities under paragraph (A) in order to determine the extent to which
9 such activities have been effective in carrying out the purposes of the program under such
10 subsection, including the effects on various demographic populations. Methods of evaluation
11 under the preceding sentence may include surveys of knowledge and attitudes on the
12 consumption of folic acid and on blood folate levels. Such methods may include complete and
13 timely monitoring of infants who are born with neural tube defects.

14 (E) Authorization of Appropriations. - There are authorized to be appropriated such
15 sums as may be necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act.

16 SECTION 3. *Separability Clause.* - If any provision or part hereof is held invalid or
17 unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall remain
18 valid and subsisting.

19 SECTION 4. *Repealing Clause.* - Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive
20 order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule, or regulation contrary to or inconsistent
21 with the provisions of this Act is hereby repealed, modified, or amended accordingly.

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

Approved,