



SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Second Regular Session)

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SENATE

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SENATE BILL NO. 1709

Introduced by **SENATOR LEILA M. DE LIMA**

**AN ACT
TO ESTABLISH THE NATIONAL SIGHT STRATEGY PLAN**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Constitution, Article II, Section 15 provides:

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

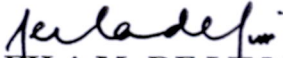
Article XIII, Section 11, likewise provides:

SECTION 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. xxx

Sight is one of the most prized senses. But the high incidence of vision defects and abnormalities pose serious public health issues. The Department of Health estimates about two million Filipinos suffer from moderate to severe visual impairment. According to the World Health Organization, the Philippines is among the three countries in the Western Pacific that account for the most incidence of blindness in the region. Visual impairment results in lost employment opportunities, decreases productivity, impedes learning and diminishes the general well-being of those who suffer from them.

This proposed measure seeks to address the need to strengthen vision care in the country. It seeks to institutionalize a National Sight Strategy that provides a comprehensive national plan of action to address the prevalence of vision defects, including blindness. It sets out measures for the appropriate deployment and use of resources, mandates the collection and dissemination of data, promotes the practice

of vision health related professions, and authorizes the use of public facilities to make vision care services accessible to all.


LEILA M. DE LIMA



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TO ESTABLISH THE NATIONAL SIGHT STRATEGY PLAN**

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

1 **SECTION 1.** *Title.* - This law shall be known as the “*National Sight Strategy Plan*
2 *Act*”.

3 **Sec. 2.** *Declaration of State Policy.* - The physical well-being of the citizenry,
4 including their vision health, is a primary concern of the State. The role of vision care
5 professionals and providers, including ophthalmologists, optometrists and opticians,
6 in safeguarding and enhancing the vision health of Filipinos, including preventing
7 blindness, is recognized and shall be strengthened.

8 **Sec. 3.** *National Sight Strategy.* -

9 a. The Department of Health (DOH), within one year from the effectivity of this
10 Act and in consultation with all stakeholders in the field of vision care, shall
11 formulate a National Sight Strategy that shall address the following:

12 1. The collection, collation, organization and publication of data and statistics
13 on the incidence and prevalence of vision abnormalities such as blindness,

1 errors of refraction and common eye diseases, and the causes of such
2 medical conditions.

3 2. The formulation and implementation of a comprehensive national strategy
4 to address vision health issues including the prevention and treatment of
5 blindness and visual defects, deployment of personnel, allocation of public
6 resources, and public education to increase awareness of the importance of
7 protecting and improving vision health at all ages.

8 3. The promotion and development, in the underserved areas in the country,
9 of the study and practice of vision health related professions such as
10 ophthalmology, optometry, and opticianry.

11 4. The undertaking of studies and consultation to formulate recommendations
12 on the inclusion of vision care services in national health programs such as
13 PhilHealth.

14 b. As part of the National Sight Strategy, all national and local government
15 healthcare facilities such as hospitals, medical centers and clinics, shall be made
16 available for the establishment of eye care clinics or centers where eye care
17 professionals can provide ready access to quality vision care, especially to those
18 who could not otherwise afford them.

19 **Sec. 4. Appropriations.** - The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this
20 Act shall be charged against the available appropriations of the DOH under the current
21 General Appropriations Act. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for its
22 continued implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations
23 Act.

24 **Sec. 5. Reporting.** - DOH shall submit, upon completion, the National Sight Strategy
25 Plans to the Senate and the House of Representatives.

1 **SEC. 6.** *Repealing Clause.* - All laws, decrees, executive orders, and rules and
2 regulations, or parts thereof, inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, are hereby
3 repealed or modified accordingly.

4 **SEC. 7.** *Separability Clause.* - If, for any reason, any section or provision of this Act
5 is held unconstitutional or invalid, the other sections or provisions hereof shall not be
6 affected and thereby remain in full force and effect.

7 **SEC. 8.** *Effectivity Clause.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
8 complete publication in at least two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,