

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



SENATE

S. No. 852

'19 AUG -1 P2:45

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

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**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 more preferred senses, through which most of our daily tasks are performed. However, the occurrence of the high incidence of vision defects and abnormalities, which poses serious health issues on many Filipinos, is apparent in our country and yet eye care continues to be the least priority if our government when it comes to public health.

Statistics from the World Health Organization (WHO) show that 36 million people all over the world are blind, while 217 million people have moderate to severe vision impairment. <sup>1</sup> The Department of Health's (DOH) latest statistics estimate that about two (2) million Filipinos suffer from moderate to severe visual impairment. It

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pressreader.com/philippines/manila-bulletin/20181011/281698320704423>

further reported that around 332,150 people in the country were bilaterally blind while the number of persons with bilateral low vision had reached 2.179 million.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, according to the WHO, the Philippines is among the three countries in the Western Pacific that account for the most incidence of blindness in the region.

We need to consider the various implications and effects of visual impairment on the relatively large number of affected individuals in our society. It is often overlooked how visual impairment impeded learning and diminishes the general well-being of those who suffer from them. It similarly affects our economic growth more than we realize because visual impairment could vastly result to loss of productivity and income which likewise could lead to poverty and social dependency.

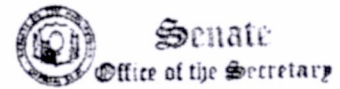
This proposed measure seeks to address the need to strengthen vision care in the country. It pursues to institutionalize a National Sight Strategy that provides a comprehensive national plan of action to address the prevalence of vision defects, including blindness. It sets out measures for the appropriate 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.

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

  
DEILA M. DE LIMA

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<sup>2</sup> The Manila Times. 26 May 2018. *Eye Health needs more attention*. Retrieved from <https://www.manilatimes.net/eye-health-of-filipinos-needs-more-attention/401198/>



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**AN ACT  
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*  
2 *Plan 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,  
14 errors of refraction and common eye diseases, and the causes of such  
15 medical conditions;

16 2. The formulation and implementation of a comprehensive national strategy  
17 to address vision health issues including the prevention and treatment of  
18 blindness and visual defects, deployment of personnel, allocation of public

1 resources, and public education to increase awareness of the importance of  
2 protecting and improving vision health at all ages;

3 3. The promotion and development, in underserved areas in the country, of the  
4 study and practice of vision health-related professions such as  
5 ophthalmology, optometry, and opticianry; and

6 4. The undertaking of studies and consultations to formulate  
7 recommendations on the inclusion of vision care services in national health  
8 programs such as PhilHealth.

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

14 Sec. 4. *Appropriations.* - The amount necessary for the initial  
15 implementation of this Act shall be charged against the available appropriations of the  
16 DOH under the current General Appropriations Act. Thereafter, such sums as may be  
17 necessary for its continued implementation shall be included in the annual General  
18 Appropriations Act.

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

21 Sec. 6. *Repealing Clause.* - All laws, decrees, executive orders, and rules and  
22 regulations, or parts thereof, inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, are hereby  
23 repealed or modified accordingly.

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

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

Approved,