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SENATE
S. B. No. 962

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by Senator SONNY ANGARA

AN ACT
CREATING A DENTAL UNIT IN EVERY RURAL HEALTH UNIT UNDER THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AS PART OF THE PRIMARY APPROACH IN THE DELIVERY OF HEALTH SERVICES AND PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Constitution mandates the State to protect and promote the right to health of the people (Article II, Section 15) and to undertake appropriate health human resource development responsive to the country's needs and problems (Articles XIII, Section 12).

At the 1978 international Alma Ata Conference held in the then USSR, the Philippines joined several other countries in signing a declaration calling on all governments to "formulate national policies, strategies, and plans of actions to launch and sustain primary health care as part of a comprehensive national health system and in coordination with other sectors." This was the country's formal declaration that it would adopt a "Primary Health Care" approach.

Nearly four decades have passed since the country signed the declaration, and through the years the Philippines' Primary Health Care system has grown and has made some modest gains. Several gaps however remain, including the lack of an institutional means of promoting and ensuring the dental health of every Filipino.

Almost entire communities in the country suffer from two of the most prevalent of dental diseases: Tooth decay and gum diseases. 92% of Filipino are suffering from dental caries—tooth decay or cavities—while 78% have gum diseases. A 2015 study¹ even suggested that the Philippines has the highest number of people wearing dentures in Asia. In 2016, the Philippine Prosthodontic Society estimated

¹ <http://news.abs-cbn.com/lifestyle/05/29/15/how-ph-ranks-dental-health>

that around 7 million Filipinos have never been attended to by a dentist due to the “misconception” that accessing dental care is expensive. Perhaps this played a big factor as to why – in 2018 – around 80% of Filipinos suffer from some form of dental problem.

The magnitude of the dental problem is reflected in its ranking as one of the highest in the country’s morbidity picture. In economic terms, every tooth affected means the loss of productivity of two days, lost opportunities, recurring pain and severe discomfort as well as increased cost of dental treatments.

The proposed bill aims to reverse this unfortunate situation by creating a dental unit in each of the rural health units (RHUs) listed under the Department of Health (DOH) as part of the country’s overall Primary Health Care strategy.

By ensuring that each RHU under the DOH has at least one dentist serving, the priority targets of dental health services—pre-school children, school children, pregnant and non-pregnant mothers and adults—will be adequately served. It will cost more in their services, but the benefits to be derived would more than compensate for the cost.

In view of the foregoing, the swift passage of the bill is earnestly sought.



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

- 1 Section 1. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State:
2 a) To pursue the Primary Health Care Approach in the delivery of health services
3 and to undertake the appropriate health human resource development for this
4 policy; and
5 b) To promote preventive dental healthcare in the rural areas as part of the
6 Primary Health Care strategy.

7 *Sec. 2. Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act, the following terms shall
8 mean:

- 9 a) *Rural Health Unit* (also known as Main Health Center) shall be composed of a
10 doctor, a nurse and a midwife. Its function is to carry out the public health
11 functions of the Department of Health which includes both preventive and
12 curative health care.
13 b) *Dental Unit* shall be composed of a public health dentist and a trained
14 Barangay Health Worker as a dental aide.

15 *Sec. 3. Creation of Dental Unit.* – As part of the Primary Health Care
16 Approach, there is hereby created a dental unit in every rural health unit under the
17 supervision of the Department of Health.

1 Sec. 4. *Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR)*. – Within ninety (90) days
2 from the approval of this Act, the Department of Health shall promulgate the rules
3 and regulations necessary for the effective implementation of this Act.

4 Sec. 5. *Funding*. – The amount necessary for the purpose of this Act shall be
5 funded from the current fiscal year's appropriation for the Department of Health
6 (DOH). Thereafter, such amount as may be necessary for the implementation of this
7 Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

8 Sec. 6. *Effectivity*. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
9 publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,