



Senate  
Office of the Secretary

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

22 AUG 15 P 4:55

SENATE

RECEIVED BY:

S. No. 1161

Introduced by Senator JOSEPH VICTOR G. EJERCITO

**AN ACT  
ESTABLISHING THE VIROLOGY SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE OF  
THE PHILIPPINES (VIP), APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Pandemics negatively affect the health of the population and hamper the economic growth.

In the Philippines, a trade loss of about 1 billion Philippine pesos (approximately US\$ 21 million) was estimated after the country saw its first African swine fever outbreak in July 2019. This spread across major island regions, killing 251 450 pigs from culling and reduced national domestic production by 8.5%. In July 2020, a case of the highly infectious H5N6 subtype of the influenza A virus was reported in the province of Pampanga, prompting a poultry farm to slaughter nearly 39 000 chickens to curb a bird flu outbreak. In aquaculture, viral diseases also exact a heavy toll in production. In 2017, the tilapia lake virus killed 101,383 tilapia in Bulacan-based ponds alone. In 2014, the white spot syndrome virus reduced the harvest of penaeid shrimps from 1 to 1.5 tons to as little as 200 kilos per hectare per fishpond. The papaya ringspot virus reduced the yield of the small-scale papaya industry by 80% in the Southern Tagalog area, worth almost 60 million pesos in 1994.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://health-policy-systems.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12961-021-00723-z> accessed on 3 August 2022


For COVID-19, the National Economic Development Authority made a pronouncement in September 2021 that our estimated present and future costs of COVID-19 and quarantines is at 41.4 trillion pesos.<sup>2</sup>

Recognizing the devastating effect of pandemics to economies and human life, this bill aims to prioritize the establishment of a strong research and development institution that would capacitate the government to perform its critical role in surveillance, diagnosis and monitoring of viral diseases in humans, plants and animals.

The Virology Science and Technology Institute of the Philippines (VIP) proposed to be established under this measure shall be the lead agency to study viruses for agricultural, industrial, clinical and environmental importance. It shall also conduct research on contagious and non-contagious viral diseases and manner off suppressing infectious and non-infectious viral diseases, while clarifying and supporting the scientific background of viruses in relation to zoological, botanical and human health and medical administration of the government.

Our experiences in battling the COVID-19 and other infectious viral diseases showed us the urgent need to establish the proposed virology institute. This is one of our public health responses to prevent the emerging, re-emerging and existing viral diseases in order to raise the level of health of the Filipino and ensure our unhampered economic growth.

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



**JOSEPH VICTOR G. EJERCITO**

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://neda.gov.ph/covid-19-pandemic-to-cost-php-41-4-t-for-the-next-40-years-neda/> accessed on 3 August 2022

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



'22 AUG 15 P4:55

SENATE  
S. No. 1161

RECEIVED BY: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Introduced by Senator JOSEPH VICTOR G. EJERCITO

---

**AN ACT**  
**ESTABLISHING THE VIROLOGY SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE OF**  
**THE PHILIPPINES (VIP), APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

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

1 Section 1. *Short Title.* - This Act shall be known as the "Virology Science and  
2 Technology Institute of the Philippines (VIP) Act."

3 Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* - It is hereby declared the policy of the State to  
4 protect and promote the right to health of every Filipino by ensuring that they are  
5 proactively protected from diseases.

6 Towards this end, the State shall take a systematic approach to the  
7 improvement of our health system requires the establishment of an institution  
8 equipped with the necessary capacity, competency, latitude and authority to decisively  
9 and scientifically respond to the demands of public health and public health  
10 emergencies, crises and situations brought about by viral infections to prevent possible  
11 public health threats resulting from the operation of these laboratories.

12 Sec. 3. *Definition of terms.* - As used in this Act, the following terms shall mean:

13 (a) *Biosafety* is the application of safety precautions that reduce a laboratory  
14 personnel's risk of exposure to a potentially infectious microbe and limit  
15 contamination of the work environment and ultimately the community;

16 (b) *Biosafety levels* are divided into four (4). Each level has specific controls for the  
17 containment of microbes and biological agents based on internationally-accepted  
18 safety standards. The primary risk that determines the levels of containment are

1 infectivity, severity of disease transmissibility and the nature of the work  
2 conducted;

3 (c) *Kit* or test kit is a commercially packaged system of the principal or key components  
4 of an analytical method used to determine the presence of a specific analyte(s) in  
5 a given matrix (es). Test kits include directions for their use and are often self-  
6 contained, complete analytical systems; but they may require supporting supplies  
7 and equipment. The key components frequently represent proprietary elements or  
8 reagents that may be readily prepared only by the producer of the kit.

9 (d) *Personal protective equipment* consists of garments placed to protect a laboratory  
10 scientist, worker or any other person from getting infected by a viral agent. It  
11 consists of standard precautions: gloves, masks and gowns. When working with  
12 blood or airborne high infections, it shall also include face protection, goggles and  
13 masks or faces shields, gloves or coveralls, head cover and rubber boots;

14 (e) *Reagent* is any natural or synthetic substance used in a chemical or biological  
15 reaction in order to produce, identify, or measure another substance; and

16 (f) *Virology* is the study of viruses, vims-like agents including but not limited to their  
17 taxonomy, disease-producing properties, cultivation and genetics.

18 *Sec. 4. Establishment of a Virology Science and Technology Institute of the*  
19 *Philippines (VIP).* - There is hereby established a Virology Science and Technology  
20 Institute of the Philippines (VIP), hereinafter referred to as the Institute.

21 The Institute shall be an attached agency under the Department of Science and  
22 Technology (DOST). The DOST, in coordination with the Department of Agriculture  
23 (DA) and the Department of Health (DOH), shall promulgate policies for and exercise  
24 supervision and control over the Institute.

25 *Sec. 5. Mandate.* The Institute shall serve as the primary research and  
26 development in institute in the field of virology, encompassing all areas in viruses and  
27 viral diseases in humans, plants and animals. It shall act as a venue for scientists to  
28 work collaboratively to study viruses of agricultural, industrial, clinical and  
29 environmental importance.

30 The Institute shall implement policies, plans, programs, and projects for the  
31 development of virology science and technology in the country and the promotion of  
32 scientific and technological activities for both the public and private sectors, and ensure

1 that the results of these activities are properly applied towards self-reliance and utilized  
2 to accelerate economic and social development.

3 In addition, the Institute shall establish strategic partnerships with the world's  
4 leading scientists, virology centers, and institutes and conduct innovative and  
5 pioneering researches that will advance the frontiers of virology in the country.

6 *Sec. 6. The Director of the Institute.* - The Institute shall be headed by a  
7 Director, who shall have a rank of an undersecretary and shall be appointed by the  
8 President of the Philippines upon the recommendation of the Advisory Board created  
9 under Section 9 of this Act. The Director shall be a qualified virologist possessing a  
10 postgraduate degree in virology with three (3) to five (5) years of experience in  
11 diagnostic virology.

12 The Director shall have overall responsibility for the activities including the  
13 supervision of all the staff working in the Institute, and shall be directly responsible for  
14 reporting to the Secretary of Science and Technology and the President of the  
15 Philippines the results of the various diagnostic assays and research studies performed  
16 in the Institute.

17 The Director shall be responsible for the implementation of policies and the  
18 immediate management of the programs and operations of the Institute including its  
19 general institutional affairs, promote research and foster efficient assay and research  
20 activities.

21 The Director shall be assisted by a Deputy Director, who shall have a rank of an  
22 assistant secretary, and shall be appointed by the President of the Philippines upon  
23 the recommendation of the Advisory Council.

24 *Sec. 7. Powers and Functions.* - The Institute shall be the principal laboratory  
25 of the country in providing quality virology laboratory investigations, researches and  
26 technical coordination of the entire network of the virology laboratories in the  
27 Philippines.

28 The Institute shall perform the following functions:

29 (a) Conduct basic and applied research projects on zoological, botanical and human  
30 infectious, non-infectious and other intractable diseases of viral etiology with  
31 primary focus on their characterization, vector/reservoir transmission, viral  
32 ecology, clinical virology, pathogenesis, pathophysiology, and host immune

- 1 response to these viral pathogens;
- 2 (b) Provide reference services including all that are necessary for ensuring the assay  
3 systems for diseases of viral etiology, industrial and technological implications of  
4 virology and services involving the storing and supplying pathogenic and non-  
5 pathogenic viral agents and their vectors and hosts, standardizing reagents,  
6 preparing and supplying reference materials needed for the diagnosis and  
7 surveillance of plant, animal and human diseases, educating professional  
8 technicians, and information exchange;
- 9 (c) Establish testing, reference and biosafety levels 1,2 3, and 4 research laboratories  
10 which are fully compliant with the provisions of this Act and the internationally-  
11 accepted guidelines in the establishment and operation of the same;
- 12 (d) Conduct viral disease surveillance program, collection, analysis, and feedback and  
13 distribution of information on diseases of viral etiology;
- 14 (e) Comprehensively coordinate the planning and implementation of research  
15 projects, approve liaison and coordination with relevant governmental agencies,  
16 and coordinate research projects with other research institutions;
- 17 (f) Provide technical advice to national authorities on the progress, needs and  
18 aspirations of the virology laboratory network in the country and to regulate the  
19 operation of the same;
- 20 (g) Assist national authorities in the planning, organization and supervision of the  
21 virology laboratory network;
- 22 (h) Develop technical/training material for use in laboratories in the network to  
23 enhance their quality;
- 24 (i) Assess the needs and impart training to the staff of other virology laboratories in  
25 the country in quality testing for viral pathogens;
- 26 (j) Validate reagents and kits that may be used nationally;
- 27 (k) Validate new technologies that may become available and recommend their  
28 implementation in the country;
- 29 (l) Develop minimum standards, standard operating procedures and research  
30 protocols for virology laboratories and assist virology laboratories in their  
31 implementation of the same;
- 32 (m) Develop, in consultation with the DOH, DA, other relevant government agencies,

- 1 the academe, and private enterprises engaged in the industry of virology, a  
2 national database of viruses and laboratory results;
- 3 (n) Organize external quality assessment schemes to periodically assess the quality of  
4 testing in networks and suggest remedial measures to those laboratories that show  
5 poor performance;
- 6 (o) Undertake research to improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of virology  
7 laboratory services in the country;
- 8 (p) Collaborate with the World Health Organization (WHO) and other international  
9 agencies in virology researches and technical matters pertaining to improvement  
10 of laboratories;
- 11 (q) Create within the Institute various divisions that will spearhead basic and applied  
12 molecular biological research and reference activities in arbovirology, emerging  
13 and reemerging viral diseases, neurovirology, herpes virology, enteric virology,  
14 tumor virology, hepatitis virology, acute viral respiratory infections and cytokines,  
15 viral genomics and molecular genetics and biosafety control studies of viruses,  
16 among others;
- 17 (r) Promulgate rules and regulations regarding the management and operation of  
18 virology laboratories in the country as well as its rules of engagement;
- 19 (s) Collect fees in connection with the exercise of its regulatory powers;
- 20 (t) Apply for, receive, and accept bequests, grants, and donation of funds, equipment,  
21 materials and services needed for the attainment of its objectives;
- 22 (u) Provide grants, research fund, materials and equipment for the conduct of virology  
23 researches by both public and private higher education institutions;
- 24 (v) Order the suspension or closure of virology laboratories and prosecution of  
25 individuals and corporations for violations of this Act;
- 26 (w) Establish an editorial office of a refereed journal of virology to published it and a  
27 library which shall to collect and preserve books, journals and other reference  
28 materials in the field of virology; and
- 29 (x) Perform such other related activities as may be assigned by the DOST.

30 *Sec. 8. Organization and Personnel.* - The Institute shall have its technical and  
31 administrative support staff as well as consultants as may be necessary. Such  
32 consultants may be drawn from the public and private sectors on consultancy or

1 contractual basis and shall be granted honoraria or allowances at such amounts as  
2 may be determined in accordance with existing rules and regulations.

3 All laboratory workers shall undergo periodic training to increase their laboratory  
4 competencies. Attendance to conferences, seminars and trainings shall be given  
5 additional service credits.

6 *Sec. 9. Advisory Board.* - The Institute shall have an Advisory Board composed  
7 of the following officials or their representatives:

8 (a) The Secretary of Science and Technology, Chairman;

9 (b) The Secretary of Health, Co-Chairman;

10 (c) The Secretary of Agriculture, Co-Chairman; and

11 (d) Ten (10) members from the academe who must have distinguished  
12 themselves in the field of medical virology, genomics, plant virology, animal  
13 virology, epidemiology, genetic engineering and other related disciplines and  
14 shall be appointed by the President of the Philippines.

15 *Sec. 10. Transfer of Biomedical Research Functions.* - All functions in the  
16 Department of Health involving biomedical research in virology and in the Department  
17 of Agriculture involving animal and plant virology shall be transferred to the Institute  
18 together with their applicable appropriations, records, equipment, property and such  
19 personnel as may be necessary.

20 Notwithstanding the provisions of this law, the Research Institute for Tropical  
21 Medicine shall retain its existing mandate on reference laboratories for public health  
22 purposes, as stipulated in relevant laws and rules.

23 *Sec. 11. Virology Research Fund.* – There is hereby a Virology Research Fund  
24 to be used exclusively for the implementation of the Virology Institute Strategic Plan,  
25 which shall be administered by the VIP following, existing government budgeting,  
26 accounting, and auditing rules and regulations. The Fund shall be sourced from the  
27 following:

28 (a) Initial amount of Two Billion pesos (P2,000,000,000.00) shall be  
29 appropriated herein from the current year's budget of the agency concerned;

30 (b) Loans, contributions, grants, bequests, gifts, and donations whether from  
31 local or foreign sources: *Provided*, That acceptance of grants, bequests,  
32 contributions, and donations from foreign governments shall be subject to



1 the approval of the President upon the recommendation of the Secretary of  
2 the DOST and Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs. The Secretary  
3 of DOST, with the approval of the NEDA and subsequently, the Department  
4 of Finance is hereby granted authority to enter into loan

5 Sec. 12. *Use of Income.* – The VIP shall be authorized to use all of the income  
6 generated from its operations, as well as donations, bequests, grants for those  
7 upgrading of its physical and human resources, and for the augmentation of its budget,  
8 in case of a shortfall.

9 Sec. 13. *Congressional Overnight Committee on the Virology Science and*  
10 *Technology Institute of the Philippines.*— To monitor the implementation of this Act,  
11 there shall be a Congressional Oversight Committee on the Virology Science and  
12 Technology Institute of the Philippines, composed of the Chair and four (4) members  
13 of the House Committee on Science and Technology, Chair of the House Committees  
14 on Health and Agriculture and Food and the Chair and four (4) members of the Senate  
15 Committee on Science and Technology, and the Chair of the Committees on Health  
16 and Demography and Agriculture, Food and Agrarian Reform. No part of this Act shall  
17 be construed as to limit the oversight powers inherently or actually possessed by the  
18 same committees.

19 Sec. 14. *Staffing.* —The Secretary of Science and Technology, in consultation  
20 with the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), shall determine the  
21 organizational structures, qualification standards, staffing pattern and compensation  
22 of the newly created Institute and other positions which are established under this Act  
23 in accordance with existing laws, rules and regulations.

24 Sec. 15. *Appropriations.* - The amount needed for the initial implementation of  
25 this Act shall be taken from the current year's appropriations of the DOST. Thereafter,  
26 such sums, as may be necessary for its continued implementation, shall be included in  
27 the annual General Appropriations Act.

28 Sec. 16. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* - The Secretary of Science and  
29 Technology, in coordination with the DBM, Civil Service Commission, and other  
30 relevant government agencies, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations  
31 within ninety (90) working days from the effectivity of this Act.

32 Sec. 17. *Separability Clause.* — If any portion or provision of this Act is declared

1 unconstitutional, the remained of this Act or any provisions not affected thereby shall  
2 remain in force and effect.

3         *Sec. 18. Repealing Clause.* — All other laws, acts, presidential decrees, executive  
4 orders, presidential proclamations, issuances, rules and regulations, or parts thereof  
5 which are contrary to or inconsistent with any of the provisions of this Act are hereby  
6 repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

7         *Sec. 19. Effectivity.* — This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its  
8 publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

*Approved,*