

FOURTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC )  
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**SENATE**

RECEIVED BY: 

P. S. Res. No. 49

Introduced by Senator Manuel "Lito" M. Lapid

**RESOLUTION**

**DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND DEMOGRAPHY, AND OTHER APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES IN THE SENATE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE DEMOGRAPHIC, SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND MARKET FACTORS WHICH MAKE THE PRICES OF ESSENTIAL DRUGS AND MEDICINES IN THE PHILIPPINES AMONG THE HIGHEST IN ASIA, WITH THE END IN VIEW OF PROVIDING A COMPREHENSIVE AND HOLISTIC HEALTH POLICY INTERVENTION THAT WOULD LOWER THE COST OF ESSENTIAL DRUGS AND MEDICINES IN THE COUNTRY**

**WHEREAS**, the protection of public health is a paramount policy issue especially as this principle echoes the constitutional mandate of the State to protect the health of its citizens and to 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;

**WHEREAS**, in our increasingly polluted environment and rapidly urbanizing economy, essential and affordable drugs and medicines play a vital role in preserving the health and well being of our citizens. In our present situation, however, the exorbitant costs of medicines and essential drugs makes ordinary Filipinos vulnerable to higher morbidity and mortality rates;

**WHEREAS**, the problem of access to affordable drugs and medicines in the Philippines is clearly stated in the UNDP Human Development Report which explained that of the total Philippine population, only 50% to 79% have sustainable access to affordable essential drugs and medicines. This data indicate that almost half of the total population in the country do not have access to essential and affordable drugs or medicines. With more than 88 million population as of 2007, this means that about 44 million poor Filipinos do not have access to affordable drugs and medicines in this country;

**WHEREAS**, in the Philippine Pharmaceutical Industry, at least 70% of the market is controlled by multinational companies and only United Laboratories and Pascual Laboratories are owned by Filipinos with the rest of the market revenue share of around 17% earned by various small and medium sized pharmaceutical companies. Rough industry estimates pegged the Philippine pharmaceutical industry market at around Php 85 billion pesos with the market revenue sharing showing clear dominance by the multinationals;

**WHEREAS**, various studies indicate that medicine and drug prices in the Philippines are among the highest in Asia. Next to the affluent country Japan, the Philippines has Asia's second most costly medicines with some drugs priced 5 to 45 times higher than the same medicines sold in India or Pakistan;

**WHEREAS**, recent data indicate that 7.76 million Filipinos suffer from high blood pressure or hypertension and that this illness is the fifth leading cause of death in the Philippines, claiming an average of 300,000 lives per year. A medicine for hypertension, Norvasc, is sold here by a foreign company for the price of Php41.41 per 5-mg tablet while in India and Pakistan, the same drug, manufactured by the same company, is sold for the equivalent of roughly Php5.77 per 5-mg tablet. Another medicine for hypertension, Plendil, is sold here for Php21.82 per tablet while it costs only Php2.69 in India;

**WHEREAS**, the illness of asthma affects 12 percent to 15 percent of the total population in the country. A Ventolin inhaler costs Php 315.00 here in the Philippines while it costs only Php126.78 in India, and Bactrim 400, priced at Php17.75 per tablet in the Philippines can be bought for only Php1.00 in Pakistan and Php0.69 in India;

**WHEREAS**, our local pharmaceutical companies argue that there are a lot of barriers to a level playing field in the Philippine pharmaceutical market and that the intellectual property laws of the Philippines are designed in favor of heavily protecting the patents of the multinationals. Thus, granting more marketing monopoly in favor of the multinationals;

**WHEREAS**, the market dominance of the multinational companies has caused artificial barriers to the fair trade of drugs and medicines which consequently led to the high prices and lack of access of drugs and medicines to the detriment of millions and millions of Filipinos;

**WHEREAS**, there is an urgent need to study the economic and financial viability and efficiency in establishing a drug price regulatory board for essential drugs and medicines in order to solve the rising cost of medicines in the country;

**WHEREAS**, there is an urgent need to bring down the prices of medicines and essential drugs in the country to an affordable level for the benefit of the poor Filipino people who are suffering from the heavy burden of high cost of essential drugs and medicines.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** as it is hereby resolved to direct the Senate Committee on Health and Demography, and other appropriate committees in the Senate to conduct an inquiry, *in aid of legislation*, into the demographic, socio-economic and market factors which make the prices of essential drugs and medicines in the Philippines among the highest in Asia, with the end in view of providing a comprehensive and holistic health policy intervention that would lower the cost of essential drugs and medicines in the country.

**ADOPTED,**

  
**MANUEL "LITO" M. LAPID**  
Senator