

Republic of the Philippines  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
Quezon City, Metro Manila

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS  
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 4017



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Introduced by HON. HENRY R. VILLARICA  
4<sup>th</sup> District, Bulacacan

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EXPLANATORY NOTE

Republic Act No. 9439 entitled: "An Act Prohibiting the Detention of Patients in Hospitals and Medical Clinics on the Ground of Non-Payment of Hospital Bills or Medical Expenses" provided reprieve to indigent patients who were unable to settle their medical expenses from being inhumanely detained in hospitals.

However, the law did not address the imposition of interest or penalties on medical expenses that are left by indigent patients who could not afford to pay their hospital bills. This aggravates further the plight of these patients, who do not only have to contend with paying their hospital bills, but also the interest due these unpaid accounts.

Therefore, to provide substantive relief to indigent patients, this bill seeks to prohibit the imposition of interest and/or penalty charges on unpaid hospital bills and medical expenses of patients who earn minimum wage or less, for one year from the patient's discharge. The one year allowance is given in the hope that this will be enough time for the patients to fully settle their medical bills before they are charged with interest and/or penalties.

This proposed bill was filed in the 17<sup>th</sup> Congress but due to time constraints no further action was taken on it. This bill is re-filed for the consideration of the 18<sup>th</sup> Congress. Medical expenses of indigent patients who are unable to settle their medical bills are a burden on them. Support for enactment of this measure is earnestly requested.

REP. HENRY R. VILLARICA

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AN ACT PROHIBITING THE IMPOSITION OF INTEREST AND/OR PENALTY  
CHARGES ON UNPAID HOSPITAL BILLS AND MEDICAL EXPENSES OF PATIENTS  
WHO EARN MINIMUM WAGE OR LESS

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

SECTION 1. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to protect and  
promote the right to health of the people.

SEC. 2. *Prohibition on Interest and/or Penalty Charges on Unpaid Hospital Bills or  
Medical Expenses.* – It shall be unlawful for any hospital or medical clinic to charge interest  
or impose other penalties on unpaid hospital bills and medical expenses of patients who earn  
minimum wage or less, for one year from the date of the discharge.

This prohibition shall likewise apply to the unpaid hospital bills and medical expenses  
of minor patients whose parents or legal guardians earn minimum wage or less.

Any officer or employee of the hospital or medical clinic responsible for billing who  
violates the provisions of this Act shall be punished by a fine of not less than twenty thousand  
pesos (Php20,000.00) but not more than fifty thousand pesos (Php50,000.00) or  
imprisonment of not less than one (1) month but more than six (6) months, or both such fine  
and imprisonment, at the discretion of the court.

SEC. 3. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – The Department of Health shall  
promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to carry out the provisions of this Act within  
ninety (90) days from its effectivity.

SEC. 4. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations and issuances inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

SEC. 5. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect immediately upon its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

*Approved,*