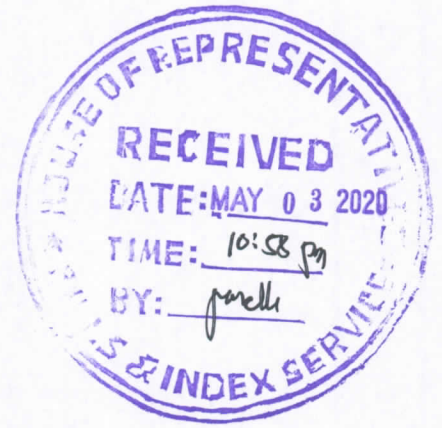


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 6650



Introduced by the Honorable Precious Hipolito Castelo

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is continuously dealing damaging consequences to the society. Filipinos are facing the defining crisis of their time with no end in sight. Along with the fear of being infected is the uncertainty of whether there is some sort of normalcy that can be established to endure this public health emergency.

While history has already seen the occurrence of many plagues and outbreaks, it is the novelty of this virus which left the world blindsided. SARS-CoV-2 came from the family of known coronaviruses such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). What sets it apart from SARS and MERS is its high possibility of transmission. Research shows that this is due to the longer incubation period of the virus. Persons with minimal or no symptoms may also be able to transmit the disease, making it difficult to contain the outbreak.

It is true that technology in the field of medicine is continuously evolving. However, it is also true that viruses constantly mutate, which causes new strains to develop. Ultimately, the world is dealing with an invisible entity as it learns about it along the way. This is the primary reason why Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), which is the novel coronavirus which causes COVID-19 was able to surreptitiously attack most countries. Undeniably, the Philippines was not ready.

Thus, this bill aims to strengthen national response and preparedness in the event of public health emergencies such as the occurrence of pandemics and outbreaks. Pro-active, instead of reactive measures must be put in place when public health is at stake. It is essential to prepare now in order to prevent a repeat of this disaster in the future.

A "wait-and-see" strategy will never be enough when human lives are at risk. Whenever there is an imminent threat to society, it is necessary that the threat is dealt with appropriately at the outset.

Thus, the immediate passage of this bill is most earnestly sought.


PRECIOUS HIPOLITO CASTELO

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AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL RESPONSE AND PREPAREDNESS STRATEGY IN
ADDRESSING PANDEMICS AND OUTBREAKS

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the "Pandemic Preparedness Act of 2020".

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to undertake appropriate health manpower development and research, responsive to the country's health needs and problems. Towards this end, the State shall strengthen and improve its national response and preparedness to the occurrence of outbreaks, epidemics and pandemics.

SEC 3. *Creation of National Response and Preparedness Strategy to Pandemics and Outbreaks.* – To carry out the above policy, the Secretary of Health shall lead the creation of a national response and preparedness strategy to address the occurrence of outbreaks and pandemics. It is necessary to operationalize and institutionalize a national strategy in order to put in place appropriate measures to be employed before, during, and after the occurrence public health emergencies.

SEC 4. *Components of the National Response and Preparedness Strategy.* – This National Response and Preparedness Strategy shall include the following:

- a) Initiatives that deal with the improvement of public health emergency response through bi-lateral and multi-lateral cooperation with countries with more advanced health care systems;
- b) Promotion of improved emergency medical services, research, data collection, treatment protocols, and policies with regard to public health emergencies;
- c) Provision of additional medical and health resources such as specialized hospitals and facilities that particularly deal with the treatment of infectious and communicable diseases;
- d) Systematic approaches for expedient mobilization of healthcare and security personnel and resources whenever there is a need to contain a communicable disease outbreak, epidemic, or pandemic;
- e) Establishment of guidelines and principles that shall govern the imposition of isolation and quarantine measures whenever necessary; and
- f) Periodic evaluation and assessment of national and local preparedness and response capabilities to the occurrence of public health emergencies.

SEC 5. *Appropriations.* – The Secretary of Health shall immediately include in the Department's programs the operationalization of the National Response and Preparedness Strategy, the funding of which shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 6. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within thirty (30) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Department of Health (DOH) shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to effectively implement the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 7. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part hereof is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

SEC. 8. *Repealing Clause.* – Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary to or inconsistent with, the provisions of this Act is hereby repealed, modified, or amended accordingly.

SEC. 9. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,