Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City
SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session
House Bill No. 1859

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Introduced by **Hon. Sol Aragones**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Visually impaired older people are more prone to falls, burns, bouts of depression, and are more likely to need assistance with activities of daily living. They are more likely to become reliant on personal care services and costly medical services. By intervening in a timely fashion and linking senior citizens to appropriate services, the State can assist in maintaining the health, welfare, and quality of life of our elderly.

This bill seeks to establish a national senior vision services program which will provide comprehensive services to elderly persons who suffer from functional visual impairments. The services will include client assessment, information and referral for health care services, client and family counseling and education, and technical assistance for human services agencies without experience serving the blind or visually impaired. Elderly persons will be eligible for services if they suffer from a visual impairment that substantially interferes with their ability to perform routine daily tasks, even if they are not regarded as "legally blind."

In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly requested.

SOL ARAGONES
Representative, 3rd District of Laguna

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AN ACT
CREATING A NATIONAL SENIOR VISION SERVICES PROGRAM
FOR ELDERLY PERSONS WITH FUNCTIONAL VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

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 "Senior Vision Services Act of 2016."

SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to promote the general welfare of the people. Pursuant to this policy, it shall establish a national senior vision services program for elderly persons with functional visual impairments

SECTION 3. *Definition of Terms.* – For purposes of this Act, the term

(A) "Senior vision services" means the provision of medical and other needed services to elderly persons who have a functional visual impairment. These services may include, but not be limited to, vision screening; eye examination; information and referral; client and family counseling; referrals for opthalmological, optometric, or other health care services; provision of corrective eyeglasses; technical assistance and training for human

services personnel to serve persons who are blind or visually impaired; and low vision screening;

(B) "Functional visual impairment" means an impairment of sight that substantially interferes with an elderly person's ability to perform specific daily living skills and tasks. Persons who are not regarded as legally blind, pursuant to this paragraph, but who experience such an impairment of sight, shall be deemed eligible for senior vision services pursuant to this Act;

(C) "Elderly" means an individual over sixty (60) years of age; and

(D) "Secretary" means the Secretary of Health.

SECTION 4. *National Senior Vision Services Program.* – There is hereby established a national senior vision services program for elderly persons with functional visual impairments. Such program shall be under the direction of the Secretary of Health.

In providing senior vision services, the Secretary shall take into consideration the lack of services for elderly persons in need of senior vision services to establish or to expand existing blind or visually impaired services currently provided or available in municipalities and cities throughout the country. The Secretary shall likewise ensure that due consideration is given to the geographic and existing service demands for senior vision services within a municipality or city.

SECTION 5. *Implementing Rules and Regulations*. – Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Secretary shall promulgate the implementing rules and regulations necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act.

The Secretary shall submit a report to the House of Representatives and the Senate, prior to, but in no event later than, December thirty-first, in the year following enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, which shall include, but not be limited to:

(A) Financial reports of the program operations established pursuant to this Act;

(B) An analysis of the program's ability to provide such nationwide senior vision services to elderly persons with functional visual impairments;

(C) Recommendations on the continuation of such program and the need for program expansion, if appropriate; and

(D) Other information deemed necessary.

SECTION 6. *Funding*. – The sum of Fifty Million Pesos (P50,000,000.00) is hereby authorized to be appropriated from the National Treasury for the first three (3) years of implementation of this Act immediately following its enactment. Thereafter, the sums necessary for the continuous implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual appropriations of the Department of Health as a separate and distinct item.

SECTION 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.

SECTION 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.

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

Approved,