

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

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

H.B. No. **3128**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Introduced by Representative H. Harry L. Roque Jr.

**AN ACT PROVIDING A NATIONAL FOLIC ACID AWARENESS PROGRAM TO
PREVENT BIRTH DEFECTS AND PROVIDE FREE FOLIC ACID
SUPPLEMENTATION IN HEALTH CENTERS**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Constitution provides in Article II, Section 15 that, "[T]he state shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and instil health consciousness among them."

Thousands of infants each year are born with serious birth defects of the brain and spine, called neural tube defects. The most common of these are spina bifida, the incomplete closure of the spinal column and anencephaly, a fatal condition in which an infant is born with a severely under-developed brain and skull.

Studies in the United States show that as many as 70% of neural tube birth defects can be prevented if all women of childbearing age begin in consuming 400 micrograms of folic acid daily, before pregnancy. Folic acid is a B vitamin found naturally in foods such as leafy green vegetables, beans, citrus fruits, and juices and in certain multivitamins capsules.

Unfortunately, a majority of women are neither aware of this prevention opportunity, nor consuming the recommended daily amount.

Hence, this bill seeks to provide a national folic acid education campaign in order to urge women to take the simple step to prevent neural tube defects. This bill also provides for funding to provide free folic acid supplements in health centers. Foregoing premises considered, the immediate approval of this bill is earnestly solicited.



REP. H. HARRY L. ROQUE JR.

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1 **AN ACT PROVIDING A NATIONAL FOLIC ACID AWARENESS PROGRAM TO**
2 **PREVENT BIRTH DEFECTS AND PROVIDE FREE FOLIC ACID**
3 **SUPPLEMENTATION IN HEALTH CENTERS**

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

4 **PART I**
5 Introductory Provisions

6
7 Section. 1. **Title.**— This Act shall be known as the “Folic Acid Promotion and Birth Defects
8 Prevention Act.

9
10 Sec. 2. **Promotion of the Beneficial Effects of Folic Acid in the Prevention of Birth Defects.**
11 – The Department of Health (DOH) shall carry out a program, directly or through special
12 arrangements with other government agencies and other promotional entities engaged in public
13 information activities, to provide education and training for health professionals and the general
14 public for purposes of explaining the effects of folic acid in preventing birth defects and to
15 encourage women of reproductive capacity to consume the appropriate amount of folic acid as a
16 dietary supplement on a daily basis.

17 Pursuant thereto, the Secretary of Health may consult with the appropriate public and
18 private entities, including national nonprofit and nongovernment organizations, health
19 professionals and health insurance and health plan providers, to ensure the success of such
20 education and training program. In addition, the Secretary shall, directly or through partnership
21 with other sectors, provide technical assistance to public and non-profit private organizations to
22 fulfill the mandate provided for in Sections 2 and 3 hereof.

23
24 Sec. 3. **Continuing Research and Study on the Effects of Folic Acid.** – The DOH shall
25 conduct continuing studies on the effects of folic acid to increase the understanding of the same

on the health of the citizenry, especially its contribution to the prevention of birth defects, cleft
lift and palate, and heart defects. It shall likewise conduct research with respect to such education
and training, including identifying effective strategies for increasing the rate of consumption of
folic acid by women of reproductive capacity. In addition, it shall provide for appropriate
activities regarding folic acid, birth defects, and neural tube defects.

Sec. 4. Evaluation of Program Implementation. – The Secretary of Health shall cause the
review of the program to evaluate the extent to which the activities carried out, pursuant to
Sections 2 and 3 hereof, have been effective in fulfilling the goals of the program, including their
effect on different sectors of the population. Methods of evaluation to be undertaken pursuant
thereto include surveys of knowledge and attitudes on the consumption of folic acid and on blood
folate levels, and the complete and timely monitoring of infants who are born with neural tube
defects.

Sec. 5. Free Folic Acid Supplements in Health Centers. This Act also provides for funding for
free folic acid supplements in barangay health centers for women contemplating of pregnancy,
under the care of a health professional.

Sec. 6. Funding. - 5. The Secretary of Health shall include in the Department's program the
implementation of this Act, the funding of which shall be included in the annual General
Appropriations 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 thereby 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 the
Official Gazette.

Approved,