

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE )  
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES )  
*First Regular Session* )



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**HOUSE BILL No. 6707**

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Introduced by Representative **JANETTE LORETO-GARIN, MD, MBA-H**

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**AN ACT  
ENCOURAGING A BASELINE POLYMERASE CHAIN REACTION COVID-19  
TESTING FOR VULNERABLE MEMBERS OF SOCIETY FOR THE PURPOSE OF  
INTERCEPTING COVID-19 TRANSMISSION**

**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

The health crisis brought about by Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in the Philippines and around the globe has significantly altered our way of life. Not until the development of a viable vaccine or an anti-viral medicine proven to be effective in combating COVID-19, this novel coronavirus will remain a threat to public health and will not go away in the foreseeable future.

As we gear towards the new normal, we need to work harder in order to sustain the gains of the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ). Our invisible enemy continues to live inside its host.

According to relevant studies, 40-50% of COVID-19 cases are asymptomatic. This allows silent yet continuous spread of the virus. Worst, it was figured out that infected persons may become infectious two (2) days before the onset of symptoms or even without symptoms at all. If left unidentified/undetermined, the asymptomatic persons will unknowingly be transmitting the virus to people in the workplace and in their homes and communities.

To unmask them, they should be identified, before it could further spread widely, silently, causing more suffering, death and economic decline. Thus, it is necessary to widen and facilitate a reliable COVID-19 Testing that is available, accessible and

affordable for our vulnerable members of society. Knowing the extent of infection will allow our country's decision makers and strategists to plan accordingly.

We cannot be blind to the actual spread of the virus. We cannot allow our people to work in fear, knowing that only symptomatic people are tested. While the symptomatic patients need utmost care and attention, we should not forget the fact that COVID-19 carriers can be deceiving. They appear healthy on the outside, but virulent and infectious on the inside.

A difficult and challenging balance between public health and the economy, should be addressed. While people gradually enter the new normal, equipped with the knowledge of personal hygiene and physical distancing, the fact remains that our present failure to **TEST, TEST, TEST** has left the virus lurking, and preparing to attack once again.

It is therefore important to aggressively take two steps ahead of the virus. Testing the vulnerable asymptomatics, specifically those with co-morbidities will allow our country to:

- a. immediately isolate asymptomatic COVID19 patients, providing early intervention, ultimately reducing mortality;
- b. early protection of the patient's household companions and co-workers;
- c. sustain the gains of the initial lockdown while we allow economic return; and,
- d. not just flatten, but crushing the curve because we hit the virus in its hideout.

In crushing COVID, we need to find CLOY (COVID landing on you). It is for this reason that I enjoin the support of my colleagues for the immediate passage of this measure.

  
**JANETTE LORETO-GARIN, MD, MBA-H**



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*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 “CRUSHING **COVID ACT**”

Sec 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to protect and promote the right to health of the people during a health crisis. To safeguard the people from the threat of the recent global pandemic, there is a need to require the conduct of testing that will help in detection and management of the cases as we move forward to the new normal.

This Act shall further ensure the safety of the people in the workplace and families in their abode as we continue to work on identifying and determining the carriers of the virus who show no symptoms at all, and remain to be a serious threat to our society.

Sec. 3. *Objectives.* - The objective of this Act is to:

- a. Sustain the gains of the government in the initial lockdown, as the Filipino people enter the “new normal”;
- b. Enjoin the government in halting the transmission of COVID-19 by locating every possible human host, where COVID is lurking;
- c. Reduce COVID-19 mortality thru early detection and management; and,
- d. CRUSHING the curve of covid infections in the Philippines.

Sec. 4. *Coronavirus Disease – 2019 (COVID-19) Testing.* – There is hereby established a protocol on the conduct of a Baseline Polymerase Chain Reaction Testing (Baseline PCR Testing) for COVID-19.

For this purpose, the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases, in full cooperation with the Department of Health (DOH), the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and the Bureau of Immigration (BoI), shall ensure that the COVID testing centers are available, affordable and accessible.

Sec. 5. *Coverage.* – The vulnerable members of society covered by this Act shall be:

- a. Those persons returning to work with co-morbidities such as, but not limited to:  
Diabetes, hypertension, pulmonary diseases, cancer, renal failure, pregnancy, old age, obesity, and the immunocompromised; and,
- b. Those persons entering the Philippine territory coming from abroad including foreign nationals.

*Provided,* that the cost of testing for foreign nationals shall be at their own expense. *Provided, further,* that priority should be given to the following: Health care workers, sales personnel in public markets, groceries and supermarkets; Food handlers; Factory workers; Construction workers; Security guards and drivers; Banks and Transfer Fund Facilities Personnel; Laundry shop workers; House helpers; Caregivers; Pregnant women; Embalmers; Wellness and salon workers; uniformed personnel, Media personnel, barangay health workers, family members whose household has a dweller who went abroad last December 2019 until the present time.

Sec. 6. *COVID Testing Assistance Fund (CTAF).* – There is hereby created a COVID Testing Assistance Fund (CTAF), the amount of which can be charged to the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth), Department of Health Medical



Assistance Program (DOH-MAP) or Department of Social Welfare and Development Medical Assistance Fund, to effectively carry out the purposes of this Act.

Said testing subsidy shall not exceed the amount of One Thousand Seven Hundred Pesos (Php 1,700.00) for government institutions and One Thousand Eight Hundred Pesos (Php 1, 800.00) for private institutions, per asymptomatic vulnerable person tested.

The IATF is hereby tasked to assist in providing support for supplementary funding.

*Sec. 7. Emergency Pandemic Leave.* – If the testing yielded positive result (+), the concerned person shall undergo immediate isolation and quarantine within the suggested period. In the event that the case progresses, the IATF shall provide rules for their management to protect families and to ensure a safer workplace.

For this purpose, the concerned worker may avail of the Emergency Pandemic Leave covering the period of quarantine and/or treatment.

*Sec. 8. Implementation.* – Immediately after the approval of this Act, the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases shall be primarily responsible in implementing the provisions of this Act.

The IATF shall formulate, identify, and, promulgate the implementing guidelines, rules and regulations, necessary to immediately carry out the purposes of this Act.

*Sec. 9. Whole-of-Government Approach.* – In order to effectively mitigate the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, a whole-of-government approach shall be adopted. This approach shall facilitate engagement with the business sector, MSMEs, community-at-large and other stakeholders to ensure the full and effective implementation on the mitigation strategies of the government in containing COVID-19.

All government agencies concerned, including the following, shall implement the necessary measures and protocols in administering the RT-PCR COVID-19 Test:

- I. Department of Health;
- II. Department of the Interior and Local Government;

- III. Department of Foreign Affairs;
- IV. Department of Labor and Employment;
- V. Department of Trade and Industry;
- VI. Department of Finance;
- VII. Department of Budget and Management; and,
- VIII. Department of Transportation.

Sec. 10. *Sunset Clause.* — This Act shall expire as soon as the declaration of a pandemic will be lifted.

Sec. 11. *Separability Clause.* — If any portion of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the remainder of this Act or any provision not affected thereby shall remain in force and effect.

Sec. 12. *Repealing Clause.* — All other laws, decrees, orders, rules and regulations, other issuances, or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Sec. 13. *Effectivity.* — This Act shall take effect immediately after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,