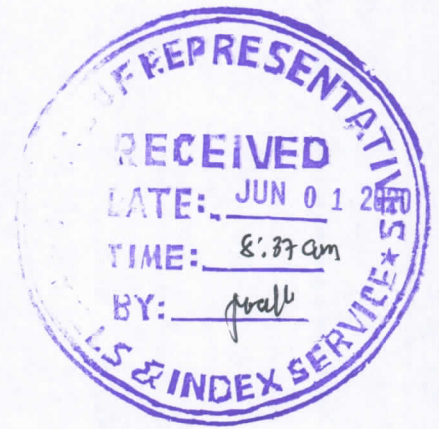


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 6886



Introduced by **HON. EDGAR M. CHATTO**
First District, Bohol

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM) was established in 1981 to plan and implement research programs for infectious and tropical diseases. Initial facility of RITM included a laboratory wing and a 50-bed hospital for patients with infectious diseases requiring tertiary care. In 1984, RITM's facilities were expanded to include a building for animal research and laboratory animal breeding. In 1989, the RITM Center for Training in Tropical Infectious Diseases was established for in-country and third country training activities.

In November 2000, the Biologicals Production Service (BPS) of the Department of Health (DOH) was formally merged with the RITM as a vaccine laboratory in the country. This gave rise to a more comprehensive and logical approach in the control of infectious and/or tropical diseases through research and biologicals production.

In 2000, RITM was designated as the National Reference Laboratory (NRL) for dengue, influenza, enteroviruses, measles and other viral exanthems, polio, tuberculosis and other mycobacteria, bacterial enteric diseases, mycology, emerging diseases, malaria and other parasites. It is also the confirmatory testing laboratory of blood donor units for the National Voluntary Blood Services Program; the coordinating center for antimicrobial resistance surveillance; a provider of the National External Quality Assurance for Bacteriology, Parasitology and Mycobacteriology; and a WHO-recognized National Influenza Center.

The recent onslaught of COVID-19 in the country showed three facts: first, that the country has a well-placed infectious disease response; second, the presence of the RITM facility only in Metro Manila; and third, the need to continuously improve our preparedness and response to infectious and communicable diseases which continue to evolve around the world.

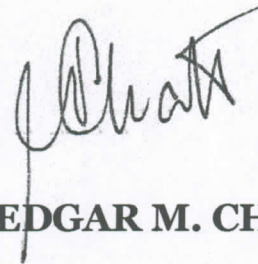
The third COVID-19 case was in Bohol. To date, all of the persons investigated for suspected COVID-19 infection in the province have tested negative for the disease. Though well-contained and well-managed, the lack of facility in the area was a challenge faced by our health officials. Testing, referrals and instructions had to be done and had to come from Manila. And this may not be the best option in urgent and extreme cases.

Thus, to improve response and management of such cases in the future, especially those that require immediate response and with due regard to the sensitivity of the cases, the establishment of RITM facilities in other parts of the country is an imperative. And in the Visayas, we propose that the RITM be placed in Bohol.

Having an RITM facility in Bohol would greatly ease and expedite processes especially in emergency cases not only in the province but the whole Visayas region. It will ensure the presence of facilities in terms of laboratories and hospital care in the Visayas. It will ensure the presence of trained personnel specifically in handling infectious diseases and special health cases. Ultimately, it will ensure the best response, referral and handling of such health concerns within the specialization of an RITM facility.

COVID-19 will not be the last health threat that we will face as a nation. With the seamless world now, in terms of travel, we will always be vulnerable to contagious diseases. Preparing, thus, is our best defense.

In view of the foregoing, the passing of this bill is earnestly sought.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Chatto', is positioned above the printed name.

REP. EDGAR M. CHATTO

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

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 6886

Introduced by **HON. EDGAR M. CHATTO**
First District, Bohol

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING THE RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR TROPICAL
MEDICINE (RITM) FOR VISAYAS TO BE LOCATED IN THE
MUNICIPALITY OF CORTES. PROVINCE OF BOHOL AND
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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

SECTION 1. Declaration of Policy. – It is the declared policy of the State to protect and promote the right to health of the people. Towards this end, the State shall promote and advance the country's complete development in the field of health and research.

SEC. 2. Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM) for Visayas. – There shall be established, under the supervision of the Department of Health (DOH), a Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM) for Visayas to be located at the Governor Celestino Gallares Memorial Hospital at the Municipality of Cortes, Province of Bohol.

The said institute to be known as RITM – Visayas shall be constituent specialty hospital of the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM) and shall be administered by its existing Board of Trustees, hereinafter referred to as the Board.

RITM-Visayas shall have a bed capacity of one hundred (100).

SEC. 3. Powers and Functions. - RITM-Visayas shall maintain its two-fold primary functions of undertaking research in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of tropical diseases of public health importance as well as producing vaccines for the control of vaccine-preventable diseases.

In general, the functions of RITM-Visayas shall be as follows:

1. Provide high quality tertiary care to both in-patients and out-patients suffering from tropical diseases included within the scope of the Institute's research activities;

2. Undertake research activities in the diagnosis, control and prevention of tropical diseases that are major causes of mortality and morbidity in the Philippines;
3. Develop cost effective strategies for the control of infectious/tropical diseases;
4. Conduct clinical trials according to accepted Good Clinical Practice (GCP) guidelines, aimed at better understanding and control of tropical diseases;
5. Conduct regular training courses for medical and paramedical personnel in the control of common tropical diseases in the country;
6. Participate in the technical cooperation programs with foreign government in research activities in the diagnosis, control and prevention of tropical diseases;
7. Apply for, receive, and accept bequests, grants, and donation of funds, equipment, materials and services, in accordance with law, needed for the attainment of its objectives;
8. Perform such other functions as may be assigned by the Department of Health or as may be provided by law consistent with the purposes of the Institute.

SEC. 4. Medical Director. – The RITM-Visayas shall be headed by a Medical Director who shall be appointed by the Secretary of Health upon the recommendation of the Board and who shall be responsible for the implementation of policies and the immediate management of the programs and operations of the Institute. The Medical Director shall be assisted by one Assistant Medical Director.

SEC. 5. Organization and Staffing Pattern. – The organizational structure and staffing pattern of the RITM-Visayas shall be determined by the Board in accordance with existing rules and regulations of the Civil Service Commission and the Organization, Position Classification and Compensation Bureau of the Department of Budget and Management.

In accordance with existing laws, rules and regulations, the Board may reorganize the structure, modify the staffing pattern and create and abolish divisions, sections or units in the RITM-Visayas.

SEC. 6. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – the Secretary of Health and the Board of the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM) shall promulgate the Implementing Rules and Regulations to carry out the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 7. Appropriations. – The amount of two billion pesos (Php 2,000,000,000.00) out of the National Treasury, not otherwise appropriated is hereby appropriated for the establishment, initial operation and maintenance of the RITM-Visayas. Thereafter, such amount necessary for its continued operation of the RITM-Visayas shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 8. Repealing Clause. – All laws, decrees, executive orders, executive issuances or letters of instruction, rules and regulations or any part thereof inconsistent with or contrary to the provisions of this Act are hereby deemed repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

SEC. 9. *Separability Clause.* – If, for any reason or reasons, any part or parts of this Act shall be declared unconstitutional or invalid by any competent court, other parts of this Act shall be thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SEC. 10. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,