

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. **2823**

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Introduced by Representative Estrellita B. Suansing

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Visual impairment among the elderly is a consequence of a functional loss of vision. This can be caused by degenerative eye disorders and other underlying diseases. Senior citizens with functional visual impairments are more prone to falls, burns, and other forms of injuries, as well as bouts of depression. Because visual impairment substantially interferes with a person's activities of daily living, and with frail bodies, senior citizens rely and become dependent on others for their care. There is also the matter of costly medical services, which most of our senior citizens are unable to avail.

By intervening in a timely fashion and linking senior citizens to appropriate services, the State can assist in maintaining the health, welfare, and improve the quality of life of our elderly.

This bill seeks to establish a national senior vision services program which will provide comprehensive services to the elderly who suffer from functional visual impairments. The services included in the program are rehabilitation and equipment services; advice, information and signposting service; and a registry for senior citizens with functional visual impairments. Client assessment, information and referral for health care services, as well as client and family counseling and education are integrated in the abovementioned services.

Elderly persons are eligible for the national senior vision services if they suffer from a visual impairment that substantially interferes with their ability to perform activities of daily living, even if they are not considered "legally blind."

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


ESTRELLITA B. SUANSING

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House Bill No. **2823**

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AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL SENIOR VISION SERVICES PROGRAM FOR SENIOR
CITIZENS WITH FUNCTIONAL VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

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

1 SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Senior Vision Services
2 Act.”

3 SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – Pursuant to Article II, Section 15 of the 1987
4 Philippine Constitution, it is hereby declared the policy of the State to protect and promote
5 the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them.

6 The State shall adopt an integrated and comprehensive approach to health
7 development which shall endeavor to make essential goods, health and other social
8 services to all people at affordable cost. There shall be priority for the needs of the
9 underprivileged, sick, elderly, disabled, women, and children.

10 Pursuant to these policies, it shall establish a national senior vision services program
11 for elderly persons with functional visual impairments.

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

13 (a) “Senior vision services” means the provision of medical and other needed
14 services to elderly persons who have functional visual impairment. These services may
15 include, but shall not be limited to, vision screening; eye examination; information and
16 referral; client and family counseling; referrals for ophthalmological, optometric or other
17 health care services; provision of corrective eyeglasses; technical assistance and training
18 for human services personnel to serve persons who are blind or visually impaired; and low
19 vision screening;

20 (b) “Visual impairment” or “vision impairment” means a vision loss to such as
21 degree as to qualify an additional support need through a significant limitation of visual
22 capability resulting from disease, trauma, congenital or degenerative conditions that can not
23 be corrected by conventional means such as refractive correction, medication, or surgery;

24 (c) “Functional visual impairment” means an impairment of sight that substantially
25 interferes with an elderly person’s ability to perform specific daily living skills and tasks.

1 Persons who are not regarded as legally blind, pursuant to this paragraph, but who
2 experience such an impairment of sight, shall be deemed eligible for senior vision services
3 pursuant to this Act;

4 SECTION 4. *National Senior Vision Services Program.* – There is hereby
5 established a national senior vision services program for elderly persons with functional
6 visual impairments and shall be under the direction of the Department of Health (DOH). The
7 Secretary of Health shall include in the program services, such as, but not limited to:

8 (a) *Rehabilitation and Equipment Service* – The Rehabilitation And Equipment
9 Service shall provide assessments and individual packages of rehabilitation and support on
10 personal care, access to communication and support on other difficulties of senior citizens
11 caused by their functional visual impairment.

12 Senior citizens can access this service through:

13 (1) A consultant ophthalmologist;

14 (2) A Social Work Team;

15 (3) A high street optician, general practitioner, or other health professional.

16 (b) *Advice, Information and Signposting Service* - The Advice, Information and
17 Signposting Service is aimed at assisting senior citizens with functional visual impairment
18 and their caregivers when they are consulting at the Ophthalmic Outpatient
19 Department/Ophthalmic Wards at government hospitals.

20 (c) *Registry for Senior Citizens with Functional Visual Impairments.* – Hospitals
21 shall also maintain the Registry for Senior Citizens with Functional Visual Impairments. This
22 receives referrals from consultant ophthalmologists and supports people to access a range
23 of support services.

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

30 SECTION 5. *Appropriations.* – The sum of Fifty million pesos (P50,000,000.00) is
31 hereby authorized to be appropriated from the National Treasury for the first three (3) years
32 of implementation of this Act immediately following its effectivity. Thereafter, the sums
33 necessary for its continuous implementation shall be included in the annual appropriations
34 of the Department of Health as a separate and distinct item.

35 SECTION 6. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days from
36 the effectivity of this Act, the DOH shall promulgate the implementing rules and regulations
37 necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act.

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

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

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

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

9 (d) Other information deemed necessary.

10 SECTION 7. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is held invalid or
11 unconstitutional, the other provisions not so declared shall remain in full force and effect.

12 SECTION 8. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, executive orders, decrees, instructions,
13 issuances, rules and regulations contrary or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are
14 hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

15 SECTION 9. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
16 publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

17 Approved,