

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Constitution Hills, Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 4025



Introduced by Representative Salvador B. Belaro, Jr.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

According to a World Bank study in 2002, "the Philippines suffer from a mal-distribution of health workforce with only 10% of doctors, dentists and pharmacists are found in rural areas where more than half of the population resides". It was actually the very reason why in 1993, the very laudable "Doctors to the Barrios" (DTTB) program was launched by the Department of Health (DOH) with the vision that "all municipalities would have a doctor within 20 years" by way of providing scholarships to medical students under the condition that they will render return service for two-years in rural communities. At that time, 271 municipalities were without a doctor.

Under the DTTB program, the DOH hires up to 300 doctors annually for assignment to poor and remote municipalities without physicians. Each DTTB is expected to serve for two year with an average monthly salary P54,000 from the DOH plus honorarium.

Unfortunately, 20 years after, DOH lamented that the same local government units (LGUs) that have been requesting for doctors have not been able to hire and keep their own physicians due to failure on the part of the LGU, under the devolved delivery of health services, to match the financial requirements to keep their doctors. Former DOH Secretary Enrique Ona noted that "many doctors have the desire to work in small communities but when they get married and have their own family, they begin to think how they can feed them well and send their children to school. We have around 3,000 new doctors every year so there is really no shortage of doctors. So what we have to do is to make it attractive for them to stay in the rural community."

The DOH partnered with the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) and various LGUs to finance at least 250 medical students with 10-year return service to rural communities. DOH also conducted a

study on the incentive packages doctors assigned in rural communities and has proposed that those serving in fifth or sixth class municipalities be provided with better compensation. Aside from this, DOH worked with the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP) on a scheme Continuing Medical Education (CME) scheme that allows DTTBs to eventually earn a Master's degree in Public Management, major in Health Systems and Development.

But according to the monitoring study of DOH, "out of the 452 DTTBs who took part in the program between 1993-2011, only 81 or 18% chose to remain in their rural posts and absorbed by their respective LGUs. This number of DTTBs opting to stay in the rural areas have been declining since 2006."

The DOH actually made an appeal for LGUs to offer scholarships to poor but deserving students to study medicine with a payback period of 10 years to serve in the community. Likewise, DOH called upon the LGUs to also come up with a program that will attract their doctors to stay.

This Act seeks to address the unresolved issues of barrios not having doctors.



SALVADOR B. BELARO, JR.
Representative
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AN ACT
ENHANCING THE DOCTORS TO THE BARRIOS PROGRAM

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

SECTION 1. Short Title. – This Act shall be known as the "Enhancing the Doctors to the Barrios (DTTB) Program Act of 2016."

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy. The State shall establish means to promote quality health services across the country, down to the farthest communities.

SEC. 3. The Department of Health (DOH) shall pool together experts and representatives from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Mayors League of the Philippines, and the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) to study and draft a policy that will recommend actions that will permanently resolve the lingering problem of not having sufficient doctors who will opt to be assigned and commit to stay in the barrios.

SEC. 4. The funds necessary to carry out the provision of this Act shall be included in the General Appropriation Act of the year following its enactment into law and thereafter.

SEC. 5. All laws, orders, issuances rules and regulations or parts thereof inconsistent with any provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, modified or amended accordingly.

SEC. 6. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

Approved.