

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 6514



Introduced by: Hon. Angelina "Helen" D.L. Tan, M.D.

AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION OF ADDITIONAL QUARANTINE STATIONS, GROUNDS AND ANCHORAGES IN ALL STRATEGIC AREAS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Joint External Evaluation of the IHR Core Capacities of the Republic of the Philippines Mission report dated 10-14 September 2018 reveals that "The Philippines, similar to other countries in the Region, continues to face threats from disease outbreaks and other public health emergencies. In recent years, the Philippines National IHR Focal Point has reported several public health events to the WHO, including human infection with MERS-CoV, Henipah virus, Zika Virus and Avian Influenza A/H5N6."

Very recently, the emergence of the novel coronavirus, which was later named as COVID-19, has caught the country and many nations in the globe by surprise. As of this writing, there are already 101,927 confirmed cases globally. In the Philippines, ten (10) cases have been confirmed and many were considered patients under investigation (PUIs).¹ The outbreak appears to be getting closer to meeting the World Health Organization's definition of a global health pandemic, which is defined as the "worldwide spread" of a new disease.

Quarantine facilities serve as a control measure to curb the spread of contagious diseases like MERS-CoV, Henipah virus, Zika Virus, Avian Influenza A/H5N6, and COVID-19. It aims to prevent the exposure of healthy persons to potentially infected persons. Quarantine is used to separate persons who, while not ill, have been exposed to an infectious agent and therefore may become infectious.

In this light, this measure seeks to preempt the spread of communicable diseases and to prepare for the spread of infectious diseases that may occur in the future by establishing additional quarantine facilities in order to accommodate and contain infectious diseases that pose a significant threat to public health.

Republic Act No. 9271, otherwise known as the "Quarantine Act of 2004" provides in Section 6 that "The Director of the Bureau shall control direct and manage all quarantine stations, grounds and anchorages, and designate their boundaries. With the approval of the Secretary of Health, **he shall establish such additional quarantine stations, grounds and anchorages if, in his judgment, these are necessary to prevent the introduction of diseases of international concern into the country.** The Director, in the same manner may also order the closure of non-functional quarantine, stations, grounds and anchorages (*emphasis supplied*).

Although the power to establish such additional quarantine facilities was already lodged upon the discretion of the Director of the Bureau of Quarantine, such authority may, however, be constrained by the inadequacy of funds notwithstanding the provision that "The Bureau of Quarantine shall be authorized to use

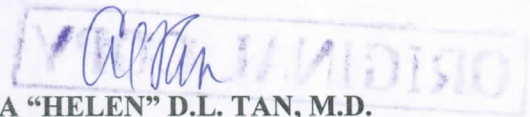
¹ COVID-19 Philippine Cases as of February 27, 2020 (<https://www.doh.gov.ph/2019-nCoV>)

at least fifty percent (50%) of the income generated, subject to accounting and auditing rules and regulations” (Section 9).

According to the DOH, there are eighteen (18) provincial quarantine stations in the country today. Such facilities are usually established along ports of entry into the country in coordination with the Bureau of Customs, Bureau of Immigration, and the Philippine Ports Authority. That quarantine stations are few and far between is not helped by the fact that the Philippines is one of the world’s largest archipelago with vast shorelines and built-in geographic susceptibility.

Hence, this bill serves as an enabling legislation for the establishment of additional quarantine stations, grounds and anchorages in all strategic areas throughout the country to contain the spread of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases.

In view thereof, immediate approval of this measure is earnestly sought.



ANGELINA “HELEN” D.L. TAN, M.D.

4th District, Quezon

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

SECTION 1. There shall be established pursuant to Section 6 of Republic Act No. 9271, otherwise known as the "Quarantine Act of 2004", additional quarantine stations, grounds and anchorages in all strategic areas throughout the country.

SEC. 2. The Secretary of Health shall include in the Department's programs the establishment of additional quarantine stations, grounds and anchorages, including the expansion of existing quarantine facilities, as may be deemed necessary by the Director of the Bureau of Quarantine, the funding of which shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 3. The Secretary of Health shall establish adequate, effective, responsive and enabling mechanisms and support systems that shall strengthen the coordination of relevant agencies of government and the private sector to ensure the safety of persons under investigation, health workers, and the community.

SEC. 4. The Secretary of Health, in consultation with appropriate government agencies, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the implementation of this Act within sixty (60) days from its effectivity.

SEC. 5. 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 are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 6. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,