

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 898

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

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE MEDICAL SCHOLARSHIP AND SERVICE PROGRAM AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The 1987 Constitution provides that: The State shall establish and maintain an effective food and drug regulatory system and undertake appropriate health manpower development and research, responsive to the country's health needs and problems (Article XII, Section 12).

The Philippine Star in its editorial reports that "Several years after some 100 private hospitals across the archipelago were forced to close shop for lack of health professionals particularly physicians, the country continues to suffer from a shortage of doctors (19 July 2013). This is the sad situation of most hospitals especially in rural areas in Visayas and Mindanao. Even prestigious medical institutions find it difficult to attract fresh graduates to fill up slots for doctors. The government has acknowledged the reality that, indeed, the country is facing an alarming shortage of medical doctors and other medical professionals.

Medical studies in the country are too costly that it has become beyond the reach of Filipino families even those belonging to the higher middle income class. To make this problem even worse is the fact that doctors are already taking up nursing and leaving the country for more lucrative jobs overseas.

This bill seeks to address the shortage of doctors by establishing a medical scholarship and service program. It shall provide the institutional mechanism for the envisioned sustained human resource development for the Philippine public health care system. The scholarship program shall provide the financial and other educational resource support mechanisms for the pursuit of studies in the field of medicine by deserving and qualified young people.

It is envisioned that a scholar shall undergo higher post-graduate internship in a public health and medical institution which shall be considered as part of the mandatory public service. After passing the medical board examination, the scholar shall commence integration into the public health service system and shall accordingly be given the appropriate rank and salary. The integration into the public service system shall be required for a period equivalent to at least two (2) years for each year of scholarship benefits received.

In view of the urgent need to create a steadily expanding pool of medical doctors in order to enable the government to deliver timely, adequate, competent and affordable medical and health care services to the people, especially the poor, immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.

[Signature]

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. *Short Title.* - This Act shall be known as the "Medical Scholarship and Service Program Act of 2013".

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* - It is the policy of the State to undertake health manpower development responsive to the country's health service needs. Towards this end, the State shall establish a scholarship and service program to enable deserving and qualified individuals to pursue education and training in the field of medicine and shall formulate and implement such policies and programs to systematically integrate these individuals, upon qualifying as doctors of medicine, into the public health care system.

SEC. 3. *Medical Scholarship and Service Program (MSSP).* - There shall be an annual selection through appropriate examinations and screening processes of those who shall be admitted to the Medical Scholarship and Service Program (MSSP). The candidates shall come from among qualified graduating students or graduates of appropriate courses in colleges and universities nationwide. The qualified and selected scholars shall be granted scholarship in a medical course and shall cover expenses for, among others, tuition, matriculation and other school fees; prescribed textbooks, supplies and equipment; board and lodging expenses; clothing and uniform allowances; traveling expenses and other related miscellaneous living allowances: *Provided*, That at least five (5) candidates per region, or when practicable, one (1) candidate from every province and city shall be chosen to participate in the annual selection: *Provided, further*, That at least fifty (50) scholars shall be selected annually.

The scholar shall render services and be integrated into the public health and medical service system as medical doctor, with the appropriate rank and salary upon passing the medical board examination: *Provided*, That such service and integration in the public service shall be mandatory for a period equivalent to at least two (2) years for every year of scholarship availed: *Provided, further*, That the scholar when he obtains a very satisfactory performance rating, shall be entitled to salary step increases at least every two years in the service: *Provided, finally*, That the scholar shall undertake post graduate internship in a public health or medical institution that shall ensure his acceptance and such internship shall be part of the mandatory service and integration into the public health and medical service system.

SEC. 4. *Qualifications of Candidates.* - Candidates for the MSSP shall possess the following minimum qualifications:

a. Must belong to the top thirty per centum (30%) of their respective graduating classes and must be completing or already completed undergraduate courses identified by the Department of Health (DOH) as a prerequisite course to the pursuit of studies in the field of medicine;

b. Family and or personal incomes are not sufficient to finance their education in the field of medicine: *Provided*, That those who are financially capable and are willing to serve in public health and medical institutions after graduation may be accepted:

Provided, further, That they do not compose more than ten percent (10%) of the total scholars for a particular year;

c. Must be not more than twenty-five (25) years of age and a natural-born citizen of the Philippines;

d. The DOH shall determine such other qualifications as it deems necessary for the purpose.

SEC. 5. *General Conditions for Admission to the MSSP.* - A medical scholar shall be accepted to the MSSP and shall receive and continue to enjoy the benefits of the scholarship until the completion of the course, subject to the following conditions:

a. He shall pass the entrance/admission examinations and related requirements of the DOH and the medical school the scholar intends to enroll;

b. The scholar shall carry the full load of subjects prescribed per semester by the medical school, and shall, under no circumstance, drop a course which will result in under-loading; and

c. The scholar may be allowed, for valid reasons preventing his enrolment, to defer availing of the scholarship and file a leave of absence for a period not exceeding one school year.

d. The scholar shall sign an agreement stating the terms and conditions of the scholarship on a form prescribed by the DOH;

e. He shall repay the full cost of scholarship and related benefits received, and the scholarship shall be terminated in the event the grantee accepts another scholarship from other government or private agencies or entities; and

f. The full cost of scholarship and related benefits received shall be paid by the scholar in case of failure to complete the medical course without valid cause as may be determined by the DOH: *Provided,* That, if the terminated medical scholar completes another course and qualifies as an allied medical service practitioner, he may choose, instead of repayment of scholarship costs, to render public service and be integrated into the public health and medical service system.

SEC. 6. *Secretariat.* - The Department of Health, through its Secretary, may create a Secretariat to provide administrative and technical assistance to effectively and efficiently implement the MSSP. It shall perform duties and responsibilities as may be determined and delegated by the Secretary of Health. The support staff as may be created shall be recruited preferably from qualified professionals from the academe and medical profession.

SEC. 7. *Appropriations.* - The sum of One Hundred Million (P100,000,000.00) pesos for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the Contingent Fund and over-all savings of the Executive Branch. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary shall be included in the subsequent annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 8. *Donations, Grants, and other contributions.* - The DOH may accept donations, legacies, grants, and other contributions to form part of the Medical Scholarship Fund. *Provided,* that such donations, legacies, grants, and other contributions shall be exempt from taxation and shall be allowable deductions for income tax purposes. Proceeds from at least two (2) draws of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes per year shall also be allocated to finance the Program.

SEC. 9. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* - The Secretary of the Department of Health, in coordination with the Chairperson of the Commission on Higher Education, the President of the University of the Philippine System and the Chairpersons of the Committees on Health and Education of the Senate and the House of Representatives

shall issue such rules and regulations as may be necessary for the implementation of this Act within sixty (60) days from the effectivity thereof.

SEC 10. Repealing Clause. - All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations and other issuances or parts thereof, inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 11. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation or the Official Gazette.

Approved,