EXPLANATORY NOTE

The recent COVID-19 pandemic brought financial, economic and health concerns to everyone. Businesses have been asked to close, employees requested to stay at home basically putting majority of the country’s population safely tucked in the confines of their homes. At the same time, essential employees and first responders particularly those in the health and medical sectors have been doubling their efforts to contain the pandemic. Physicians, nurses, technicians have been taking longer shifts, skipping meals, and risking their own health all because they chose to stand by their oath as health professionals.

Despite putting themselves at risk, these workers willingly do their jobs so that the situation improve and everyone get back their normal lives. Some of these doctors fell ill and have been in critical condition, and many more have been placed at even higher risk. Our doctors, nurses, and all other health workers do not deserve this. At the same time, this did not go unnoticed. Several groups and private individuals have observed their dedication and have even dedicated specific times of the day to thank these health and medical workers and first responders in their own way. Placards and sign boards have been placed in windows and walls to publicly show the appreciation to them.

However, these are not enough and these workers and their families should be protected and secured for the services they render in these troubling times. As such, a law granting health and medical workers and first responders special financial and monetary benefits should be passed so that, if they get sick, their families will have the financial means to move on with their lives. Our health and medical workers and first responders deserve not only our salute, but also our protection. It is for these reasons that the passage of this bill is earnestly sought.

PRINCESS RIHAN M. SAKALURAN
Representative
1st District, Sultan Kudarat
Republic of the Philippines  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
Quezon City, Metro Manila  

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS  
First Regular Session  

HOUSE BILL NO. 6695  

Introduced by REP. PRINCESS RIHAN M. SAKALURAN

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AN ACT  
PROVIDING FOR SPECIAL COMPENSATION AND SURVIVORSHIP  
ASSISTANCE TO COVID 19 HEALTH AND MEDICAL PERSONNEL, AND  
FIRST RESPONDERS, AND PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFORE  

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 “Appreciation Act  
of 2020.”  

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. – It is the policy of the State to protect  
and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness  
among them. In recognition of the substantial role that health workers play as  
forerunners in the implementation of the said State policy, the State shall  
endeavor to promote the health and safety of health workers, especially in times  
of public health emergency, outbreaks, and pandemic.  

The Act is intended to help the members of the medical, health  
professionals and personnel, the first responders and their immediate family who  
risk their lives during the entire duration of the COVID 19 Pandemic and to those  
who died in the performance of their duty.  

SECTION 3. Definition of Terms. – As used in this Act:  

a) “Health worker” shall include all persons who are engaged in health  
and health-related work, whether employed in a private hospital or  
health facility or public hospital, sanitarium, health infirmaries,  
health centers, rural health units, barangay health stations, clinics  
and other health-related establishments owned and operated by the  
Government or its political subdivisions with original charters.
b) “First responder” shall include all persons with specialized training who is among the first to arrive and provide assistance at the scene of an emergency, such as an accident, natural disaster, or terrorism. First responders typically include law enforcement officers, state troopers, deputies, federal agents, school resource officers, paramedics, emergency medical technicians, firefighters, rescuers, military personnel, sanitation workers, public works, and other trained members of organization connected with this type of work.

SECTION 4. Coverage. – This Act shall apply to all health and medical personnel and first responders who risked their lives during the entire duration of the COVID 19 Pandemic and to those who died in the performance of their duty.

SECTION 5. Compensation. – Financial assistance in the equivalent of the persons three (3) month salary shall be received by the health and medical personnel and first responders who are covered under this Act from the State and are free of tax. Provided, in case of death of the health and medical personnel and first responders who are covered under this Act, their families shall receive additional benefits such as one million pesos (1,000,000.00) death benefit. Such death benefit is also free of tax.

SECTION 6. Appropriations. – The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act is hereby authorized to be appropriated in the General Appropriations Act for the year following its enactment into law and thereafter.

SECTION 7. Separability Clause. – If any provision or part of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions or parts unaffected shall remain in full force and effect.

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

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

Approved,