EXPLANATORY NOTE


Preparedness under this proposed bill refers to activities and measures taken in advance to ensure the effective response to the impact of a pandemic, including the issuance of timely and effective health warnings and subsequent management. A preparedness plan that would be put in place will greatly reduce transmission should another virus result to another pandemic, which may result in lower cases of hospitalization and deaths, as well as ensure that essential services, medical supplies and equipment are readily available for use, especially by medical frontliners.

This bill gives the Department of Health the mandate to undertake measures, such as evaluation, planning, organizing, and training to improve national preparedness for public health emergencies.

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

REP. ESTRELLITA B. SUANSING  
1st District, Nueva Ecija

REP. HORACIO P. SUANSING, JR.  
2nd District, Sultan Kudarat

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1 CNN Philippines (cnnphilippines.com)  
2 World Health Organization (https://www.who.int)
AN ACT
STRENGTHENING THE NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE TO PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES

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

SECTION 1. Short Title. – This Act shall be known as the “Pandemic Preparedness Act.”

SEC. 2. Creation of a National Health Strategy for Public Health Emergencies. – The Secretary of Health shall spearhead the creation of a national health strategy to address public health emergencies. This strategy shall provide for integrated policy coordination and strategic direction with respect to all matters related to national public health and medical preparedness and execution and deployment of national response before, during, and following public health emergencies.

SEC. 3. Components of a National Health Strategy. – The National Health Strategy shall include:

(A) Provisions for increasing the preparedness, response capabilities, and surge capacity of ambulatory care facilities, dental health facilities, and critical care service systems;

(B) Plans for optimizing a coordinated and flexible approach to the medical surge capacity of hospitals, other health care facilities, critical care, and trauma care and emergency medical systems;

(C) Provisions taking into account the unique needs of individuals with disabilities in a public health emergency;

(D) Strategic initiatives to advance countermeasures to diagnose, mitigate, prevent, or treat harm from any biological agent or toxin or any chemical, radiological, or nuclear agent or agents, whether naturally occurring, unintentional, or deliberate;
(E) Conduct of periodic evaluations of national and local preparedness and response capabilities which shall include drill and exercises to ensure medical surge capacity for events without notice.

SEC. 4. Creation of Task Force on Public Emergencies. – (A) A task force under the control of the Secretary of Health shall be established in order to conduct research necessary for the creation of the Strategy. The Task Force shall be composed of representatives from:

1. The Department of Health (DOH);
2. The Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG);
3. The National Security Adviser; and
4. The Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC).

(B) The Task Force shall:

1. Monitor emerging issues and concerns as they relate to medical and public health preparedness and response for at-risk individuals in the event of a public health emergency;
2. Identify and minimize gaps, duplication and other inefficiencies in medical and public health preparedness and response activities and the actions necessary to overcome these obstacles;
3. Disseminate and update novel and best practices of outreach to and care of at-risk individuals before, during, and following public health emergencies in as timely a manner as is practicable, including from the time a public health threat is identified; and
4. Ensure that public health and medical information distributed by the government during a public health emergency is delivered in a manner that takes into account the range of communication needs of the intended recipients, including at-risk individuals.

SEC. 5. Creation of Medical Reserve Corps. – The Secretary of Health shall establish a medical reserve corps composed of volunteer health professionals. The Medical Reserve Corps shall be called into duty if needed during public health emergencies.

SEC. 6. Medical Supplies and Equipment During Public Health Emergencies. – The Department of Health (DOH) shall identify the medical supplies and equipment, such as pharmaceutical agents (e.g. medicines, vaccines, sera and anti-toxins), personal protective equipment (PPE), and other related innovations it considers advisable in the interest of preparing for or controlling a pandemic. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) shall ensure that such medical supplies and equipment are readily available during a public health emergency.
The DTI shall also ensure that there are local manufacturers available in the country to meet the supply demands of such medical supplies and equipment.

SEC. 7. Control of Pharmaceutical Agents and Medical Supplies. – In the event of a pandemic, the Department of Health may control, restrict and regulate the use and rationing of pharmaceutical agents and/or medical supplies and equipment it considers essential during a public health emergency.

SEC. 8. Authorization of Appropriations. – To carry out the provisions of this Act, there are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary for each fiscal year.

SEC. 9. Separability Clause. – If any provision or part thereof is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

SEC. 10. Repealing Clause. – 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 is hereby repealed, modified, or amended accordingly.

SEC. 11. Effectivity Clause. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or at least a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,