


NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
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SENATE

S. No. 489

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by Senator Loren B. Legarda

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING THE PHILIPPINE VIROLOGY SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
INSTITUTE AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The entire world was unprepared for the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic. The extensive social and economic issues brought on by this health crisis have severe effects, especially on the poor.

Recently, all seven continents have been affected by the SARS-CoV2 virus. As of 28 June 2022, the World Health Organization reported that there have been 542,188,789 confirmed cases with a total of 6,329,275 deaths globally. In the Philippines, the Department of Health reported that as of 28 June 2022, there are a total of 3,702,319 confirmed cases in the country, out of which 60,531 have died.

Through efforts in research and development, COVID-19 vaccines have been produced. The Department of Health reported that as of 28 June 2022, there are a total of 153,714,245 doses administered, with 68,191,235 people vaccinated with the first dose, 70,580,562 people that have the complete dose, and 14,942,448 administered booster doses.

On another note, the Philippines was also affected by the African Swine Fever, a highly contagious viral disease in pigs, with its first case detected in 2019. The

Department of Agriculture reported that there were 3,657 barangays in 678 cities and municipalities, in 51 provinces affected since the onslaught in 2019. As of 31 March 2022, the active cases of ASF are now only in two regions, four provinces, seven municipalities, and 20 barangays. However, the problem remains.

The appropriate clinical and public health management of viruses that breach the species barrier is one of the numerous issues that these outbreaks have brought up. It is evident that the country is lacking on research and knowledge on viral pathogenesis, risk factors for infection, and the natural history of diseases.

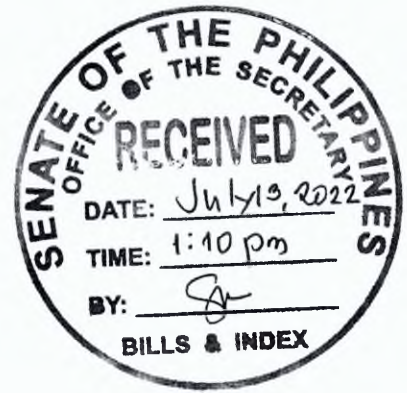
The country is facing issues with novel, emerging, and re-emerging viruses that are affecting humans, livestock, and plants. These can be addressed through effective research and development. Therefore, a research institute that caters to the field of virology is vital for long-term protection.

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



LOREN LEGARDA

NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
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**AN ACT
ESTABLISHING THE PHILIPPINE VIROLOGY SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
INSTITUTE AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

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

1 Section. 1. *Short Title.* – This act shall be known as the “Virology Institute of the
2 Philippines (VIP) Act of 2022”.

3 Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State:

- 4 a. To protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill
5 health consciousness among them;
- 6 b. To undertake appropriate health, manpower development, and
7 research, responsive to the country’s health needs and problems;
- 8 c. To recognize that science and technology are essential for national
9 development and progress;
- 10 d. To give priority to research and development, invention, innovation,
11 and their utilization; and
- 12 e. To support indigenous, appropriate, and self-reliant scientific and
13 technological capabilities, and their application to the country’s
14 productive systems and national life.

15 To this end, it is recognized that the establishment of an institute that will conduct
16 research and development activities and in-depth study on the viruses affecting the
17 lives of its people and resources is vital for the protection of the health of its people
18 and the preservation of the national life.

1 Sec. 3. *Objectives* - This Act seeks to establish a Virology Institute that shall
2 focus on the following key development areas for virology science and technology
3 applications to ensure the State's sustained progress:

- 4 a. Research on viruses using a modern approach such as molecular biology
5 and its application or biotechnology;
- 6 b. Development of diagnostics, vaccines, and therapeutics (Molecular
7 Biotechnology);
- 8 c. International cooperation and network of databases of virus infections;
- 9 d. Operation of a virus gene bank, virus genome laboratory, and virus
10 reference laboratory to focus on viruses circulating in the Philippines for
11 disease prevention and epidemiological studies; and
- 12 e. Operation of a virus high containment laboratory dedicated to the study
13 of highly infectious and highly pathogenic viruses.

14 Sec. 4. *Definition of Terms*. - As used in this Act, the following terms shall mean:

- 15 a. *Virology* - is the scientific discipline concerned with the study of the
16 biology of viruses and viral diseases, including the distribution,
17 pathogenicity, viral cytopathicity, biochemistry, physiology,
18 molecular biology, biotechnology, ecology, tropism, spillover or
19 interspecies transmission, evolution, and clinical aspects of viruses.
- 20 b. *Diagnostics* - relates to methods, tests, techniques, and tools in viral
21 diagnosis for humans, animals, and plants.
- 22 c. *Therapeutics* - anti-viral, nanotechnology treatment approach, nucleic
23 acid-based treatment, remedial agents, drugs for the treatment of
24 viral diseases and infections for humans, animals, and plants.
- 25 d. *Vaccines* - products that induce or stimulate active acquired
26 immunity by producing antibodies to a specific infectious agent. It
27 helps the body's immune system to recognize and fight pathogens
28 like viruses or bacteria.

29 Sec. 5. *Creation of the Virology Science and Technology Institute of the Philippines*. -
30 To carry out the provisions of this Act, a research and development institute under
31 the Department of Science and Technology called the Virology Science and
32 Technology Institute of the Philippines (VIP) shall be created.

1 The VIP shall serve as the premier research and development institute in the field of
2 virology, encompassing all areas in viruses and viral diseases in humans, plants, and
3 animals. It shall act as a venue for scientists, both here and abroad, to work
4 collaboratively to study viruses of agricultural, industrial, clinical, and environmental
5 importance.

6 The Institute shall establish strategic partnerships with the world's leading
7 scientists, virology centers, and institutes and conduct innovative and pioneering
8 researches that will advance the frontiers of virology in the country.

9 *Sec. 6. Mandate.* - The VIP shall implement policies, plans, programs, and
10 projects for the development of virology science and technology in the country and
11 the promotion of scientific and technological activities for both the public and private
12 sectors, and ensure that the results of these activities are properly applied towards
13 self-reliance and utilized to accelerate economic and social development towards the
14 protection of the citizens and its resources.

15 *Sec. 7. Powers, Functions, and Duties.* - To accomplish its mandate, the VIP shall
16 have the following powers, functions, and duties:

- 17 a. Serve as the lead convener of the Virology research agenda as part of the
18 National Unified Health Research Agenda (NUHRA);
- 19 b. Undertake scientific and technological research and development
20 (R&D) in the field of virology;
- 21 c. Conduct product R&D in the areas of diagnostics, therapeutics, and
22 vaccines;
- 23 d. Promote and undertake the transfer of the results of scientific research
24 and development to concerned government agencies, industry, and
25 academe;
- 26 e. Develop and maintain an information system on virology science and
27 technology for use by both the public and private sectors;
- 28 f. Develop and implement, together with other entities concerned,
29 programs for strengthening scientific and technological capabilities in
30 virology and relevant discipline through human resource development,
31 infrastructure, and institution building;

- 1 g. Undertake policy research, technology assessment, and other related
- 2 research on virology;
- 3 h. Provide laboratory and technical services on virology;
- 4 i. Promote and advocate the national programs on virology science and
- 5 technology; and
- 6 j. Establish linkages with local and international partners.

7 Sec. 8. *Organizational Structure.* - The VIP shall be an attached agency of the
8 Department of Science and Technology (DOST) for purposes of policy and program
9 coordination, and to ensure alignment in national policies and priorities. It shall be
10 headed by a Director and two (2) Deputy Directors, one (1) for Research and
11 Development, and another one (1) for Support, Policy, and Linkages.

12 The VIP shall be composed of the Office of the Director, Office of the Deputy
13 Director for Research and Development, Office of the Deputy Director for Support,
14 Policy, and Linkages, and the following divisions:

- 15 a. Virus Research
- 16 b. Diagnostics and Therapeutics Research
- 17 c. Vaccines Research
- 18 d. Technical Services and Training
- 19 e. Policy, Planning, and Linkages
- 20 f. Finance and Administration

21 The Deputy Director for Research and Development shall head the first three
22 (3) divisions while the Deputy Director for Support, Policy, and Linkages shall head
23 the next three (3) divisions.

24 Subject to the approval of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM),
25 the VIP shall determine its organizational structure and create new divisions or units
26 as it may deem necessary and shall appoint officers and employees of the VIP
27 following the civil service laws, rules, and regulations.

28 For this purpose, the Institute shall draw up the necessary position
29 qualifications and standards for its personnel following the Civil Service Law, rules
30 and regulations, in consultation with the DBM.

1 Sec. 9. *The Governing Board.* – The Governing Board shall be the principal policy-
2 making body for the scientific and technological activities of the Institute. It shall be
3 composed of the following:

- 4 a. Chairperson, Secretary of DOST
- 5 b. Co-chairperson, Undersecretary for R&D, DOST
- 6 c. Members:
 - 7 i. Undersecretary of Department of Health (DOH)
 - 8 ii. Undersecretary of Department of Agriculture (DA)
 - 9 iii. Director of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
10 Philippines (CDC PHL)
 - 11 iv. Executive Director of Philippine Council for Health Research
12 & Development (PCHRD)
 - 13 v. Executive Director of Philippine Council for Agriculture,
14 Aquatic, and Natural Resources Research and Development
15 (PCAARRD)
 - 16 vi. Executive Director of Philippine Council for Industry, Energy,
17 and Emerging Technology Research & Development
18 (PCIEERD)
 - 19 vii. Director of Philippine Virology Science and Technology
20 Institute (VIP)
 - 21 viii. Director of University of the Philippines-National Institutes of
22 Health (UP-NIH)
 - 23 ix. Three (3) representatives from the Private Sector elected by
24 the ex-officio Board Members

25 Sec. 10. *Transfer of Offices and Units.* – All offices and units under the DOST
26 system that are handling matters related to virology shall be transferred to the VIP.
27 The transfer of an office or unit shall include the functions, appropriations, funds,
28 records, equipment, facilities, choses in action, rights, other assets, and liabilities, if
29 any, of the transferred office or unit as well as the personnel thereof, as may be
30 necessary.

1 Sec. 11. *Engagement of Balik Scientists and Foreign Experts.* – The Institute may
2 engage *Balik* scientists and foreign experts following the terms of reference and
3 compensation structure of the *Balik Scientist Program*.

4 Sec. 12. *International Cooperation.* – The VIP may enter into a memorandum of
5 agreement or memorandum of understanding with international partners, upon the
6 approval of its Governing Board.

7 Sec. 13. *Official Site of VIP.* – A lot with an area equivalent to at least five (5)
8 hectares under the administration of the Bases Conversion and Development
9 Authority (BCDA) within the New Clark Economic Zone in Tarlac shall be allocated
10 exclusively for the Institute, its research facilities, and laboratories. The biosafety
11 infrastructure shall be designed based on risk assessment for handling specific
12 pathogens following the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines on the
13 establishment of a virology laboratory in developing countries.

14 Sec. 14. *Entitlement to Magna Carta Benefits.* – Qualified employees of VIP and
15 its attached units shall be covered by Republic Act No. 8439, otherwise known as
16 “Magna Carta for Scientists, Engineers, Researchers and Other Science and
17 Technology Personnel in Government”.

18 Sec. 15. *Annual Report.* – The VIP shall submit to the President and the
19 Committee on Science and Technology in both Chambers of the Congress not later
20 than the 30th of March of every year following the effectivity of this Act. The report
21 shall provide a detailed account of the status of the implementation of this Act and
22 recommended legislation, where applicable and necessary.

23 Sec. 16. *Virology Research Fund.* – There is hereby created a Virology Research
24 Fund to be used exclusively for the implementation of the Virology Institute Strategic
25 Plan, which shall be administered by the VIP following, existing government
26 budgeting, accounting, and auditing rules and regulations. The Fund shall be sourced
27 from the following:

- 28 a. The initial amount of Two Billion Pesos (PHP
29 2,000,000,000.00) to be taken from the current fiscal year’s
30 appropriation, in case the General Appropriation Act (GAA)
31 was approved before this law is enacted.

- 1 b. The income produced from its operations, technology
2 transfer, and licensing agreements.
- 3 c. Loans, contributions, grants, bequests, gifts, and donations
4 whether local or foreign sources. Provided, that acceptance of
5 grants, bequests, contributions, and donations from foreign
6 governments shall be subject to the approval of the President
7 upon the recommendation of the Secretary of the DOST and
8 Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). The
9 Secretary of DOST, with the approval of the NEDA and
10 subsequently, the Department of Finance (DOF), is hereby
11 granted the authority to enter into loan agreements with
12 foreign financial institutions.

13 Sec. 17. *Use of Income.* – The VIP shall be authorized to use all of the income
14 generated from its operations, as well as donations, bequests, and grants for the
15 upgrading of its physical and human resources, and for the augmentation of its
16 budget, in case of a shortfall.

17 Sec. 18. *Appropriations.* – The sum of Two Billion Pesos (PHP 2,000,000,000.00)
18 is hereby appropriated as an initial operating fund for the operation of the Institute,
19 taken from the current fiscal year’s appropriation. Thereafter, the amount needed for
20 its operation shall be included in the General Appropriations Act.

21 Sec. 19. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within one hundred twenty (120)
22 days from the effectivity of this Act, the DOST in coordination with DBM, Civil Service
23 Commission, and other relevant government agencies, shall promulgate the necessary
24 rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

25 Sec. 20. *Separability Clause.* – Any portion or provision of this Act that may be
26 declared unconstitutional or invalid shall not have the effect of nullifying the other
27 portions or provisions hereof as long as such remaining portion or provision can still
28 subsist and be given effect in their entirety.

29 Sec. 21. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, orders, rules, and regulations, or
30 other issuances or any parts thereof which are inconsistent with the provisions of this
31 Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

1 Sec. 22. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
2 publication in the Official Gazette or any two (2) newspapers of general circulation in
3 the Philippines.

Approved,