

**NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE )  
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES )  
First Regular Session )**



22 JUL 14 P1:51

**SENATE**  
**Senate Bill No. 599**

RECEIVED BY:

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**Introduced by Senator Juan Miguel F. Zubiri**

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

**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed some points of vulnerability in the country's healthcare system. The development and acquisition of vaccines has been one of the main problems of the country while we are battling the COVID-19 pandemic. We had to wait for other countries to develop vaccines and to have an available supply before we are able to distribute such to our countrymen. Roll-out of vaccination could have been sooner, and more lives could have been saved if only we had the capacity to develop and manufacture our own vaccines.

This bill seeks to address this shortcoming by establishing a Virology Institute of the Philippines that would focus on virus research, development, of diagnostics, vaccines and therapeutics, and other key development areas for virology science and technology.

The establishment of the Virology Institute of the Philippines is very important in our country's goal to strengthen our defense system against potential disease-causing agents that will affect not only people, but also plants and animals. This would also provide us with the capacity to develop our own vaccines, eliminating the need to depend on other countries in times of need.

As we continue to move forward with development programs for the economy of our country, it is important that we also take steps in improving our facilities for research and development, especially in matters of health and medicine to make sure that we can give the best services to the Filipino people.

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



**JUAN MIGUEL F. ZUBIRI**

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**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  
2 the Philippines (VIP) Act.”

3  
4        **SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.*** – It is the policy of the State to protect and  
5 promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them.  
6 The State recognizes that science and technology is essential for national development  
7 and progress.

8        To this end, the State shall formulate and implement policies that shall address  
9 current health issues, such as the quality and adequacy of health and medical human  
10 resources, health institutions, and delivery of health services, and shall give priority to  
11 research, the development and promotion of innovations in both technology and services,  
12 the use of safe and indigenous health-promoting practices, and their appropriating  
13 utilization by the health sector.

14        In this regard, the State shall prioritize the establishment of an institute that will  
15 conduct in-depth studies on viruses and their potential disease-causing agents that affect  
16 people, plants and animals, in order to provide the scientific bases for the treatment of  
17 viral diseases, and for the formulation of policies that shall prevent the transmission of  
18 these diseases within the community and national context.

19

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 in plants, animals, and humans:

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

13  
14           **SEC. 4. Definition of Terms.** – As used in this Act:

- 15          (a) *Bacteriophage* refers to any group of viruses that infect specific bacteria,  
16          usually causing their disintegration or dissolution;
- 17          (b) *Biosafety* refers to a condition in which the probability of harm, injury and  
18          damage resulting from the intentional and unintentional introduction or use of  
19          a regulated article is within acceptable and manageable levels;
- 20          (c) *Biosecurity* refers to the strategic and integrated approach to analyzing and  
21          managing relevant risks to plant, animal and human life, and health and  
22          associated risks for the environment. It is based on recognition of the critical  
23          linkages between sectors and the potential for hazards to move within and  
24          between sectors, with system-wide consequences;
- 25          (d) *Diagnostics* refer to methods, tests, techniques and tools in viral diagnosis for  
26          plants, animals and humans;
- 27          (e) *Therapeutics* refer to anti-viral, bacteriophages, nanotechnology treatment  
28          approach, nucleic acid-based treatment, remedial agents, drugs for the  
29          treatment of viral diseases and infections of plants, animals and humans;
- 30          (f) *Vaccine* refers to a product that induces or stimulates active acquired immunity  
31          by producing antibodies to a specific infectious agent. It helps the body's  
32          immune system to recognize and fight pathogens like viruses or bacteria; and
- 33          (g) *Virology* refers to the scientific discipline concerned with the study of the  
34          biology of viruses and viral diseases of plant, animal, and human medical  
35          importance and pandemic potential, including the distribution, pathogenicity,  
36          viral cytopathicity, biochemistry, physiology, molecular biology, biotechnology,

1 ecology, tropism, spillover and interspecies transmission, evolution, and clinical  
2 aspects of viruses.

3  
4 **SEC. 5. *Creation of the Virology Science and Technology Institute of the***  
5 ***Philippines*** . – The Virology Science and Technology Institute of the Philippines (VIP) is  
6 hereby created and shall be an attached agency under the Department of Science and  
7 Technology (DOST) for purposes of policy and program coordination to ensure alignment  
8 in national policies and priorities.

9 The VIP shall serve as the premier research and development institute in the field  
10 of virology, encompassing all kinds of viruses and viral diseases in plants, animals and  
11 humans. It shall be a venue for scientists, research institute and other organizations in  
12 the Philippines and abroad, to work collaboratively to study viruses of agricultural,  
13 industrial, clinical and environmental importance.

14  
15 **SEC. 6. *Mandate***. – The VIP shall implement policies, plans, programs, and  
16 projects for the development of virology science and technology in the country and the  
17 promotion of scientific and technological activities for both the public and private sectors.  
18 It shall ensure that the results of these activities are properly applied towards self-reliance  
19 and utilized to accelerate economic and social development towards the protection of the  
20 citizens and resources.

21  
22 **SEC. 7. *Powers, Functions, and Duties***. – To accomplish its mandate, the VIP  
23 shall have the following powers, functions and duties:

- 24 (a) Serve as the lead convener in the formulation of the National Virology Research  
25 Agenda, in consultation with all concerned stakeholders, that will encompass  
26 researches involving viruses of plant, animal and humans;
- 27 (b) Undertake scientific and technological research and development in the field of  
28 virology;
- 29 (c) Conduct product research and development in the areas of diagnostics,  
30 therapeutics, and vaccines in cooperation with the private sector and concerned  
31 government agencies;
- 32 (d) Promote and undertake the transfer of the results of scientific research and  
33 development in collaboration with government agencies, industry and the  
34 academe;
- 35 (e) Promote, advocate and oversee virology research ethics, biosafety, and  
36 biosecurity;

- 1 (f) Develop and maintain an information system on virology science and technology  
2 for use by both the public and private sectors;
- 3 (g) Develop and implement, together with other entities concerned, programs for  
4 strengthening scientific and technological capabilities in virology and relevant  
5 disciplines through human resource development, infrastructure, and institution  
6 building;
- 7 (h) Undertake policy research, technology assessment, and other related studies on  
8 virology;
- 9 (i) Provide laboratory and technical services on virology;
- 10 (j) Promote and advocate the national programs on virology science and technology;  
11 and
- 12 (k) Establish linkages with local and international partners.
- 13

14 **SEC. 8. *Organizational Structure.*** – The VIP shall be headed by a Director and  
15 two (2) Deputy Directory for Research and Development, and Support, Policy, and  
16 Linkages.

17 The VIP shall be composed of the following divisions:

- 18 1. Virus Research  
19 2. Diagnostics and Therapeutics Research  
20 3. Vaccines Research  
21 4. Technical Services and Training  
22 5. Policy, Planning, and Linkages  
23 6. Finance and Administration.

24 The Deputy Director for Research and Development shall oversee the operations  
25 of the Virus Research, Diagnostics, and Therapeutics Research, and Vaccines Research  
26 Divisions. The Deputy Director for Support, Policy and Linkages shall oversee the  
27 operations of the Technical Services and Training, Policy, Planning, and Linkages, and  
28 Finance and Administration Divisions.

29 The VIP shall have technical and administrative support staff and consultants. The  
30 consultants may come from the public and private sectors on a consultancy or contractual  
31 basis, and shall be granted honoraria or allowances in accordance with existing rules and  
32 regulations.

33 Subject to the approval of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), the  
34 VIP shall determine its organizational structure, create new divisions or units as it may  
35 deem necessary, and appoint its officers and employees.

1 For this purpose, the VIP shall, in consultation with the DBM, determine the  
2 necessary position qualifications and standards for its personnel following civil service  
3 laws, rules and regulations.

4  
5 **SEC. 9. *Qualifications of the VIP Director and Deputy Directors.*** – Upon  
6 the recommendation of the Governing Board, the President of the Philippines shall appoint  
7 the Director of the VIP who must possess a bachelor’s degree in the field of microbiology  
8 and a postgraduate degree in virology, and should have at least three (3) year’s  
9 experience in the field of diagnostic virology. The Director of the VIP shall have the rank  
10 of Director IV, Salary Grade (SG)-28, and shall exercise overall responsibility over the  
11 activities of the VIP, including the supervision over VIP staff. The Director of the VIP shall  
12 report to the President of the Republic of the Philippines and the Secretary of the  
13 Department of Science and Technology the results of the various diagnostics assays and  
14 research studies undertaken by the VIP.

15 Each of the Deputy Directors of the VIP shall have a rank of Director III, SG-27,  
16 Each must possess a Bachelor’s Degree in Microbiology or in a similar field and at least a  
17 Master’s Degree in Virology.

18 **SEC. 10. *The Governing Board.*** – The Governing Board shall be the policy-  
19 making body for the scientific and technological activities of the VIP, composed of the  
20 following:

21 Chairperson:

22 (a) Secretary of the DOST;

23 Co-Chairpersons:

24 (b) Secretary of the Department of Health (DOH);

25 (c) Secretary of the Department of Agriculture;

26 Members:

27 (d) Undersecretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources;

28 (e) Undersecretary for Technology for Research and Development of the DOST;

29 (f) Undersecretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) for International  
30 Economic Relations;

31 (g) Chairperson of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED);

32 (h) Director of the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM);

33 (i) Director General of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA);

34 (j) Director of VIP;

35 (k) Executive Director of the University of the Philippines-National Institute of  
36 Health;

- 1 (l) Representative from the National Academy of Science and Technology;  
2 (m) Representative from the National Research Council of the Philippines; and  
3 (n) Three (3) representatives from the Private Sector appointment by the President  
4 of the Philippines, as nominated by the Governing Board. These representatives  
5 shall have distinguished themselves in the fields of medical virology, genomics,  
6 plant virology, animal virology, epidemiology, genetic engineering and other  
7 related disciplines.

8 The VIP secretariat shall serve as the Secretariat to the Governing Board.  
9

10 **SEC. 11. *Transfer of Unit, Offices and Functions.*** – All offices and units under  
11 the DOST, system which functions are related to virology shall be transferred to the VIP.

12 All powers, functions, assets, capital, records, funds, receivables, equipment and  
13 facilities of the DOST units or its division shall be transferred to the VIP. The DOST shall  
14 conduct an audit and inventory of assets, liabilities and human resources of the  
15 transferred offices and units under the DOST system to the VIP. All transferred and new  
16 employees under the DOST System shall be subject of the qualification standards  
17 provided for in the laws, rules and regulations of the Civil Service Commission.  
18

19 **SEC. 12. *Engagement of Balik Scientists and Foreign Experts.*** – The VIP  
20 may engage the services of Balik Scientists and foreign experts who shall work together  
21 with the local scientists and experts, following the terms of reference and compensation  
22 structure in accordance with Republic Act No. 11035, or the “Balik Scientist Program Act”  
23 and other existing laws.  
24

25 **SEC. 13. *International Cooperation.*** – The VIP shall establish strategic  
26 partnerships with the world’s leading scientists, virology centers and institutes, and  
27 conduct innovative and pioneering researches that will advance the frontiers of virology  
28 in the country. It may enter into a memorandum of agreement or understanding with  
29 international partners, upon the approval of its Governing Board and in compliance with  
30 existing laws, rules, regulations and issuances of the DFA. The DFA shall provide legal  
31 and other forms of assistance to the VIP.

32 The Regional Office of the World Health Organization (WHO) in the Philippines  
33 shall also be consulted upon approval of the Governing of the VIP.  
34

35 **SEC. 14. *Interdepartmental Cooperation.*** – The VIP shall collaborate with  
36 the DOH, Department of Finance, FDA, RITM and other relevant government agencies,



1 in accessing and mobilizing available information, reports, technical expertise, equipment,  
2 materials and supplies as may be required to implement this Act.

3 The scientific findings of the VIP shall be integrated in other plans relating to  
4 disease control and prevention and in plans of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging  
5 Infectious Diseases, as created by Executive Order No. 168 s. 2014 or its successor body,  
6 for the management of public health emergencies relating to infectious diseases.

7

8 **SEC. 15. *Private-Public Partnerships (PPP).*** – The Department of Trade and  
9 Industry (DTI), the DOH, Public-Private Partnership Center and the DOST shall  
10 collaborate in seeking Private-Public Partnerships (PPPs) for the development of new  
11 industries, products and services where the VIP shall be the main research and  
12 development unit.

13 The DOST may also request the assistance of other national and local government  
14 agencies in seeking PPPs where the VIP shall be the main research and development unit.

15

16 **SEC 16. *Promotion of Virology Industry.*** – The DOST, in partnership with the  
17 DTI and the DOH shall jointly develop an industry roadmap for products and services that  
18 can be created, improved, or optimized by research from the VIP. As far as practicable,  
19 the industry roadmap shall include the use of local materials in the development of new  
20 products. The industry developed or established resulting from the VIP researches shall  
21 be included in the national government priority for incentives.

22

23 **SEC. 17. *Promotion of Knowledge-transfer and Research in the***  
24 ***Academe .*** – The VIP shall promote the creation of hubs and programs for virology  
25 research and development in the academe, particularly in state universities and colleges  
26 (SUCs). Towards this end, the VIP shall assist SUCs in the creation of virology courses  
27 and programs, open internships and scholarships for qualified students of higher  
28 education institutions (HEIs), and collaborate with HEIs in the creation of virology  
29 research centers.

30 The CHED shall collaborate with the DOST in the promotion of HEI-VIP  
31 partnerships.

32

33 **SEC. 18. *Protection of VIP-developed Intellectual Property.*** – The  
34 Governing Board of the VIP shall ensure that all technologies developed exclusively by  
35 the VIP with full funding from Filipino tax payers shall be protected by intellectual property  
36 laws in accordance with Republic Act No. 10055 or the “Technology Transfer Act of 2009”

1 and other applicable laws. Any patent or property right award granted to the VIP shall be  
2 held by and in the name of the Philippine Government. In the case of partnerships, where  
3 the VIP is a collaborating research partner, the Governing Board shall ensure that  
4 technologies co-developed by the VIP shall also be co-attributed to the Philippine  
5 Government, with the corresponding intellectual protection.  
6

7 **SEC. 19. *Procurement of Specialized Materials, Equipment and Services.***

8 – The VIP shall undertake the procurement of specialized materials, equipment, and  
9 services to be used by the VIP in its operation and administration, in the most expeditious  
10 manner, and adopt the most suitable or appropriate method of procurement that it deem  
11 fit based on its identified needs and requirements depending on the existing conditions  
12 and requirements that justify the use of a particular alternative modality provided for by  
13 Republic Act No. 9184 or the “Government Procurement Reform Act” and its 2016 Revised  
14 IRR.  
15

16 **SEC. 20. *Official Site of the VIP.*** – A lot with an area equivalent to at least five  
17 (5) hectares under the administration of the Bases Conversion Development Authority  
18 (BCDA) within the New Clark Economic Zone in Tarlac Province shall be allocated  
19 exclusively for the VIP, its research facilities, and laboratories. The biosafety  
20 infrastructure shall be designed based on risk assessment standards and guidelines of  
21 the WHO for handling specific pathogens and the establishment of virology laboratories  
22 in developing countries.  
23

24 **SEC. 21. *Entitlement to Magna Carta Benefits.*** – Qualified employees of the  
25 VIP shall be covered by Republic Act No. 8439, otherwise known as “Magna Carta for  
26 Scientists, Engineers, Researchers and Other Science and Technology Personnel in  
27 Government.”  
28

29 **SEC. 22. *Virology Research Fund.*** – All donations, contributions, grants,  
30 bequests, or gifts in cash or in-kind, received by the VIP from various sources shall be  
31 placed into a fund, to be known as the Virology Research Fund and such donations shall  
32 be exempt from donor’s tax: *Provided, That,* acceptance of grants, bequests,  
33 contributions, and donations from foreign governments shall be subject to the approval  
34 of the President of the Philippines upon recommendations of the Secretary of DOST and  
35 the Secretary of DFA.  
36

1           **SEC. 23. Authority to Solicit, Negotiate, and Receive Donations, Grants,**  
2 **Gifts, Legacies, Endowments and Contributions.** – The VIP may solicit, negotiate  
3 with, and receive from any public or private domestic or foreign sources legacies, gifts,  
4 donations, grants, endowments, contributions or other transfers of ownership and/or  
5 possession of real or personal properties of all kinds in favor and for the benefit of the  
6 VIP, which shall all be part of the special account in the general fund.

7  
8           **SEC. 24. Tax Exemptions** – Donations, grants, gifts, endowments, legacies, and  
9 contributions used actually, directly and exclusively for the purpose of the VIP shall be  
10 exempt from donor's tax and the same shall be considered as allowable deduction from  
11 gross income for purposes of computing the taxable income of the donor, in accordance  
12 with Sec. 34 (H)(2)(a) of the National Internal Revenue Code of 1997, as amended.  
13 Likewise, such other transfers of ownership and/or possession of real or personal  
14 properties of all kinds shall be exempt from all taxes.

15  
16           **SEC. 25. Annual Report.** The VIP shall submit its annual report to the President  
17 and to the Committees on Science and Technology in both House of Congress, not later  
18 than the 30<sup>th</sup> of March of every year following the effectivity of this Act. The annual report  
19 shall provide a full and detailed account of the status of the implementation of this Act  
20 and policy recommendations.

21  
22           **SEC. 26. Joint Congressional Oversight Committee.** – There shall be a Joint  
23 Congressional Oversight Committee on the implementation of this Act, which shall be  
24 jointly chaired by the Chairpersons of the Committees on Science and Technology of the  
25 Senate and House of Representatives. It shall be composed of the Chairpersons of the  
26 Senate Committees of Health and Demography, and Agriculture, Food and Agrarian  
27 Reform, the Chairpersons of the Committees on Health and Agriculture and Food of the  
28 House of Representatives and two (2) members from each House representing the  
29 minority who shall be appointed by the Senate of the President and the Speaker of the  
30 House of Representatives.

31           **SEC. 27. Appropriations.** – The initial amount for the implementation of this Act  
32 shall be charged against the current year's appropriations of the DOST. Thereafter, the  
33 funding of which shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

34  
35           **SEC. 28. Transitory Provisions.** –

1 (a) The functions and assets of the DOST units enumerated herein shall be  
2 transferred to the VIP within three (3) years without need of conveyance  
3 and transfer of assignment.

4 (b) To the greatest extent possible and in accordance with existing laws, all  
5 employees of the affected offices, agencies and units shall be absorbed  
6 by the VIP. Personnel hired on a permanent basis and with appointments  
7 attested by the CSC who may be affected by the transition of DOST units  
8 to VIP, or who will not be absorbed in the new positions of the new  
9 staffing pattern of the different offices in the VIP, shall have the option  
10 to:

- 11 1. Be transferred to other units or offices within the DOST in accordance  
12 with civil service law, rules and regulations; or,
- 13 2. Avail of the applicable retirement benefits and separation incentives  
14 as provided under R.A. No. 6656 and other relevant laws.

15 (c) Incumbent DOST officials and employees may be considered to assume  
16 positions in the VIP, subject to competency evaluation and CSC  
17 regulations.

18 (d) Research grants acquired during the transition of DOST transferred units  
19 to VIP shall be utilized solely for the grants' intended purposes for each  
20 of the affected units or offices.

21 (e) Existing contracts and agreements entered into by the affected offices  
22 with third parties prior to the enactment of this Act shall remain valid.  
23

24 **SEC. 29. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – The DOST Secretary shall,  
25 in consultation with DBM, DOH, Civil Service Commission, and other relevant government  
26 agencies, promulgate the necessary rules and regulations within one hundred twenty  
27 (120) days from the effectivity of this Act.  
28

29 **SEC. 30. *Separability Clause.*** – If an portion of provision of this Act is declared  
30 invalid or unconstitutional, other provisions hereof shall remain in full force and effect.  
31

32 **SEC. 31. *Repealing Clause.*** – All laws, decrees, orders, rules and regulations or  
33 other issuances or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby  
34 repealed or modified accordingly.  
35

1           **SEC. 32. *Effectivity.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its  
2 publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

3

4           *Approved,*