

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

'22 SEP 19 P 1 :08

RECEIVED BY



SENATE

S. B. No. 1322

Introduced by **SENATOR JOEL VILLANUEVA**

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING THE PHILIPPINE VIROLOGY SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR,
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The COVID-19 pandemic and the African Swine Fever, two unprecedented events in the past two years, have exposed the gaps in our government programs and policies and emphasized the need to establish a virology and vaccine institute.

In response, Congress allotted P983 million in the 2022 National Budget for the establishment of the Virology Science and Technology Institute of the Philippines. It was envisioned to be the country's premier virology facility that will help the government study and address novel, emerging, and re-emerging viruses.¹

To better prepare the country for future similar emergencies and protect our people's health and welfare, this proposed measure seeks to institutionalize the establishment of a Virology Institute under the Department of Science and Technology. It shall serve as the premier research and development institute in the field of virology, encompassing all areas in viruses and viral diseases in humans, plants, and animals. It shall also act as a venue for scientists, both in the Philippines and abroad, to work collaboratively to study viruses of agricultural, industrial, clinical, and environmental importance.

¹ DBM, FY 2022 National Budget Highlights, Available at <https://www.dbm.gov.ph/index.php/secretary-s-corner/press-releases/list-of-press-releases/2036-recovery-growth-and-sustainability-highlighted-in-the-signed-fy-2022-national-budget> (Accessed on September 5, 2022).

This will ensure that government responses to future pandemics are science- and evidence-based. Further, this will not only protect the lives of our people but also their livelihood, especially farmers who have suffered significant losses from viral diseases that have infected their crops and livestock.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joel Villanueva', with a blue circular stamp or mark to its right.

SENATOR JOEL VILLANUEVA

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Be it enacted by the Senate and the 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 hereby declared the policy of the State:
5

- 6 a) To protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health
7 consciousness among them;
8
9 b) To undertake appropriate health, manpower development, and research,
10 responsive to the country's health needs and problems;
11
12 c) To recognize that science and technology are essential for national
13 development and progress;
14
15 d) To give priority to research and development, invention, innovation, and their
16 utilization; and
17
18 e) To support indigenous, appropriate, and self-reliant scientific and technological
19 capabilities, and their application to the country's productive systems and
20 national life.
21

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

5
6 **SEC. 3. Objectives.** – This Act seeks to establish a Virology Institute that shall
7 focus on the following key development areas for virology science and technology
8 applications to ensure the state's sustained progress:

- 9
10
11 a) To protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health
12 consciousness among them;
13
14 b) Research on viruses using a modern approach such as molecular biology and
15 its application or biotechnology;
16
17 c) Development of diagnostics, vaccines, and therapeutics (Molecular
18 Biotechnology);
19
20 d) International cooperation and network of databases of virus infections;
21
22 e) Operation of a virus gene bank, virus genome laboratory, and virus reference
23 laboratory to focus on viruses circulating in the Philippines for disease
24 prevention and epidemiological studies; and
25
26 f) Operation of a virus high containment laboratory dedicated to the study of highly
27 infectious and highly pathogenic viruses.

28
29 **SEC. 4. Definition of Terms.** – As used in this Act, the following terms shall
30 mean:

- 31
32 a) **Virology** is the scientific discipline concerned with the study of the biology of
33 viruses and viral diseases, including the distribution, pathogenicity, viral
34 cytopathicity, biochemistry, physiology, molecular biology, biotechnology,
35 ecology, tropism, spillover or interspecies transmission, evolution, and clinical
36 aspects of viruses;
37
38 b) **Diagnostics** relates to methods, tests, techniques, and tools in viral diagnosis
39 for humans, animals, and plants;
40
41 c) **Therapeutics** shall include anti-viral, nanotechnology treatment approach,
42 nucleic acid-based treatment, remedial agents, drugs for the treatment of viral
43 diseases and infections for humans, animals, and plants; and
44
45 d) **Vaccines** are products that induce or stimulate active acquired immunity by
46 producing antibodies to a specific infectious agent. It helps the body's immune
47 system to recognize and fight pathogens like viruses or bacteria.
48

1 **SEC. 5. Creation of the Virology Science and Technology Institute of the**
2 **Philippines.** – To carry out the provisions of this Act, a research and development
3 institute under the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) called the Virology
4 Science and Technology Institute of the Philippines (VIP) shall be created.

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

11
12 The Institute shall establish strategic partnerships with the world's leading
13 scientists, virology centers, and institutes and conduct innovative and pioneering
14 researches that will advance the frontiers of virology in the country.

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

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

- 25
26 a) Serve as the lead convener of the virology research agenda as part of the
27 National Unified Health Research Agenda (NUHRA), as defined and mandated
28 under Republic Act No. 10532, otherwise known as the "Philippine National
29 Health Research System Act of 2013;"
30
31 b) Undertake scientific and technological research and development (R&D) in the
32 field of virology;
33
34 c) Conduct product R&D in the areas of diagnostics, therapeutics, and vaccines;
35
36 d) Prepare the Virology Institute Strategic Plan;
37
38 e) Promote and undertake the transfer of the results of scientific research and
39 development to concerned government agencies, industry, and academe;
40
41 f) Develop and maintain an information system on virology science and
42 technology for use by both the public and private sectors;
43
44 g) Develop and implement, together with other entities concerned, programs for
45 strengthening scientific and technological capabilities in virology and relevant
46 disciplines through human resource development, infrastructure, and institution
47 building;
48

- 1 h) Undertake policy research, technology assessment, and other related
2 researches on virology;
3
- 4 i) Provide laboratory and technical services on virology;
5
- 6 j) Promote and advocate the national programs on virology science and
7 technology; and
8
- 9 k) Establish linkages with local and international partners.
10

11 **SEC. 8. Organizational Structure.** – The VIP shall be an attached agency of
12 the DOST for purposes of policy and program coordination, and to ensure alignment
13 in national policies and priorities. It shall be headed by a Director-General and two (2)
14 Deputy Directors-General, in-charge of (i) Research and Development, and (ii)
15 Support, Policy, and Linkages.
16

17 The VIP shall be composed of the Office of the Director-General, Office of the
18 Deputy Director-General for Research and Development, Office of the Deputy
19 Director-General for Support, Policy, and Linkages and the following divisions:
20

- 21 a) Virus Research;
22
- 23 b) Diagnostics and Therapeutics Research;
24
- 25 c) Vaccines Research;
26
- 27 d) Technical Services and Training;
28
- 29 e) Policy, Planning, and Linkages; and
30
- 31 f) Finance and Administration.
32

33 The Deputy Director-General for Research and Development shall head the
34 Virus Research, Diagnostics and Therapeutics Research, and Vaccines Research
35 Divisions. The Deputy Director-General for Support, Policy, and Linkages shall head
36 the Technical Services and Training, Policy, Planning, and Linkages, and Finance and
37 Administration Divisions.
38

39 Subject to the approval of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM),
40 the VIP shall determine its organizational structure and create new divisions or units
41 as it may deem necessary and shall appoint officers and employees of the VIP
42 following the civil service laws, rules, and regulations.
43

44 For this purpose, the Institute shall draw up the necessary position
45 qualifications and standards for its personnel following the civil service law, rules, and
46 regulations, in consultation with the DBM.
47

1 **SEC. 9. Qualifications of the VIP Director-General and Deputy Directors-**
2 **General.** – The VIP and Deputy Directors-General shall be appointed by the President
3 of the Philippines, upon the recommendation of the DOST Secretary.
4

5 The Director-General, with a rank of Undersecretary, shall be a qualified expert
6 possessing at least a Master’s degree in Biology, Microbiology, and/or an allied
7 discipline; preferably with a doctorate degree in medical sciences and/or in virology-
8 related discipline with ten years of experience in diagnostic virology. He or she shall
9 have overall responsibility for the activities, including the supervision of all the staff
10 working in the VIP. In addition, he or she shall be directly responsible for reporting to
11 the DOST Secretary and the President of the Philippines the results of the various
12 diagnostic assays and research studies performed in the Institute.
13

14 Each of the Deputy Directors-General of the VIP shall have a rank of Assistant
15 Secretary. The Deputy Directors-General shall possess at least the education
16 background qualification for the VIP Director-General position.
17

18 The Director-General and the Deputy Directors-General of the VIP shall be
19 appointed by the President for a term of seven years, pursuant to civil service laws,
20 rules, and regulations. Of those first appointed, the Director-General shall hold office
21 for a term of seven (7) years, one Deputy Director-General shall hold office for a terms
22 of five (5) years, and the other Deputy Director-General shall have a term of three (3)
23 years.
24

25 **SEC. 10. The Governing Board.** – The Governing Board shall be the principal
26 policy-making body for the scientific and technological activities of the Institute. It shall
27 be composed of the following:
28

- 29 a) Secretary of DOST as Chairperson;
30
31 b) Undersecretary for R&D of the DOST as Co-chairperson; and
32
33 c) The following as members:
34
35 1) Undersecretary of Department of Health (DOH);
36
37 2) Undersecretary of Department of Agriculture (DA);
38
39 3) Director of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Philippines (CDC
40 PHL);
41
42 4) Executive Director of Philippine Council for Health Research &
43 Development (PCHRD);
44
45 5) Executive Director of Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic, and
46 Natural Resources Research and Development (PCAARRD);
47
48 6) Executive Director of Philippine Council for Industry, Energy and Emerging
49 Technology Research & Development (PCIEERD);

1
2 7) Director-General of the Philippine Virology Science and Technology
3 Institute (VIP);

4
5 8) Director of the University of the Philippines-National Institutes of Health
6 (UP-NIH); and

7
8 9) Three (3) representatives from the private sector appointed by the
9 President of the Philippines, as nominated by the Governing Board.
10 These representatives shall have distinguished themselves in the field of
11 medical virology, genomics, plant virology, animal virology, epidemiology,
12 genetic engineering, and other related disciplines.

13
14 The three (3) private sector representatives shall come from each of the
15 following:

- 16
17 i. An association of medical or allied-health professionals;
18
19 ii. The Philippine Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association or from a
20 recognized pharmaceutical industry;
21
22 iii. An academic institution with research and development activities in
23 the field of medical virology, genomics, plant virology, animal
24 virology, epidemiology, genetic engineering, and other related
25 disciplines.

26 The VIP shall serve as the Secretariat of the Governing Board with the
27 VIP Director-General acting concurrently as the Executive Director of the
28 Secretariat.

29
30 **SEC. 11. *Transfer of Offices and Units.*** – All offices and units under the
31 DOST system that are handling matters related to virology shall be transferred to the
32 VIP.

33
34 The transfer of an office or unit shall include the functions, appropriations,
35 funds, records, equipment, facilities, choses in action, rights, other assets, and
36 liabilities, if any, of the transferred office or unit as well as the personnel thereof, as
37 may be necessary.

38
39 **SEC. 12. *Engagement of Balik Scientists and Foreign Experts.*** – The
40 Institute may engage Balik Scientists and foreign experts following the terms of
41 reference and compensation structure of the Balik Scientist Program.

42
43 **SEC. 13. *International Cooperation.*** – The VIP may enter into a memorandum
44 of agreement or memorandum of understanding with international partners, upon the
45 approval of its Governing Board.

46
47 **SEC. 14. *Official Site of VIP.*** – A lot with an area equivalent to at least five (5)
48 hectares under the administration of the Bases Conversion and Development
49 Authority (BCDA) within the New Clark Economic Zone in Tarlac shall be allocated
50 exclusively for the Institute, its research facilities, and laboratories. The biosafety

1 infrastructure shall be designed based on risk assessment for handling specific
2 pathogens following the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines on the
3 establishment of a virology laboratory in developing countries.
4

5 **SEC. 15. *Entitlement to Magna Carta Benefits.*** – Qualified employees of VIP
6 and its attached units shall be covered by Republic Act No. 8439, otherwise known as
7 “Magna Carta for Scientists, Engineers, Researchers and Other Science and
8 Technology Personnel in Government.”
9

10 **SEC. 16. *Annual Report.*** – The VIP shall submit to the President and the
11 Committee on Science and Technology in both Chambers of the Congress not later
12 than the 30th of March of every year following the effectivity of this Act. The report
13 shall provide a detailed account of the status of the implementation of this Act and
14 recommended legislation, where applicable and necessary.
15

16 **SEC. 17. *Virology Research Fund.*** – There is hereby created a Virology
17 Research Fund to be used exclusively for the implementation of the Virology Institute
18 Strategic Plan, and shall be administered by the VIP following existing government
19 budgeting, accounting, and auditing rules and regulations. The Fund shall be sourced
20 from the following:
21

- 22 a) The initial amount of Two Billion pesos (P2,000,000,000.00) to be taken from
23 the current fiscal year’s appropriation, in case the General Appropriation Act
24 (GAA) was approved before this law is enacted; Provided an amount which
25 shall not be less than One Billion pesos (P1,000,000,000.00) shall be annually
26 included in subsequent General Appropriations Acts;
27
- 28 b) The income produced from its operations, technology transfer, and licensing
29 agreements; and
30
- 31 c) Loans, contributions, grants, bequests, gifts, and donations whether from local
32 or foreign sources; *Provided*, That acceptance of grants, bequests,
33 contributions, and donations from foreign governments shall be subject to the
34 approval of the President upon the recommendation of the Secretary of the
35 DOST and Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA).
36

37 **SEC. 18. *Use of Income.*** – The VIP shall be authorized to use all of the income
38 generated from its operations, as well as donations, bequests, and grants for the
39 upgrading of its physical and human resources, and for the augmentation of its budget,
40 in case of a shortfall.
41

42 **SEC. 19. *Appropriations.*** – The sum of Two Billion Pesos
43 (P2,000,000,000.00) is hereby appropriated as an initial operating fund for the
44 operation of the Institute, taken from the current fiscal year’s appropriation. Thereafter,
45 the amount needed for its annual operation shall be included in the General
46 Appropriation Act.
47

48 **SEC. 20. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – Within one hundred
49 twenty (120) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DOST, in coordination with DBM,
50 Civil Service Commission, and other relevant government agencies, and upon

1 consultation with relevant stakeholders, shall promulgate the necessary rules and
2 regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

3 **SEC. 21. Repealing Clause.** – All laws, decrees, executive orders,
4 proclamations, rules and regulations, and other issuances, or parts thereof which are
5 inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified
6 accordingly.

7
8 **SEC. 22. Separability Clause.** – If, for any reason, any part, section, or
9 provision of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions not
10 affected shall continue to be in full force and effect.

11
12 **SEC. 23. Effectivity.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
13 publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general
14 circulation.

Approved,