

Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Third Regular Session
House Bill No. 10274



**INTRODUCED BY
REP. ALFRED VARGAS**

**AN ACT
CREATING A NATIONAL EYE SERVICES FOR SENIORS PROGRAM
FOR ELDERLY PERSONS WITH FUNCTIONAL VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Visual impairment among the elderly is a major health problem. As we grow older, the function and capacity of our eyes weaken. Demographic studies have shown that age is the best predictor of blindness and visual impairment. The most common causes of age related visual impairment in the elderly are presbyopia, cataracts, age related macular degeneration, primary open angle glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy.¹

Visual impairment among older people, if left untreated, may lead to physical handicap, increased incidence of fall, depression, social isolation and dependency.² The visually impaired elderly is more likely to become reliant on personal care services and costly medical expenses. Through regular and active assessments for early detection and treatment, the State can effectively assist in maintaining the health, welfare, and quality of life of our elderly.

This bill seeks to establish a National Eye Services for Seniors Program which shall provide comprehensive services to elderly persons who suffer from functional visual impairments. The services will include client assessment, information and referral for health care services, client and family counseling and education, and technical assistance for human services agencies without experience serving the blind or visually impaired.

¹ Loh KY, Ogle J. Age related visual impairment in the elderly. Med J Malaysia. 2004 Oct;59(4):562-8, quiz 569. PMID: 15779599.

² Ibid.

It is the hope of this measure to provide sufficient services for most of the elderly suffering from different levels of visual impairment that hinder their active involvement to society, their families, and their communities. Thus, elderly persons will be eligible for services if they suffer from a visual impairment that substantially interferes with their ability to perform routine daily tasks, even if they are not regarded as “legally blind”.

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



ALFRED VARGAS

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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 “*Senior Vision Services Act*”.

SECTION 2. Definition of Terms – For purposes of this Act, the term:

- a) “Eye services for seniors” means the provision of medical and other needed services to elderly persons who have a functional visual impairment. These services may include, but not be limited to, vision screening; eye examination; information and referral; client and family counseling; referrals for ophthalmological, optometric, or other health care services; provision of corrective eyeglasses; technical assistance and training for human services personnel to serve persons who are blind or visually impaired; and low vision screening;
- b) “Functional visual impairment” means an impairment of sight that substantially interferes with an elderly person’s ability to perform specific daily living skills and tasks. Persons who are not regarded as legally blind, pursuant to this paragraph, but who experience such an impairment of sight, shall be deemed eligible for senior vision services pursuant to this Act;
- c) “Elderly” means an individual over sixty (60) years of age; and
- d) “Secretary” means the Secretary of Health.

SECTION 4. *National Eye Services for Seniors Program.* – There is hereby established a National Eye Services for Seniors program for elderly persons with functional visual impairments. Such program shall be under the direction of the Secretary of Health.

In providing senior vision services, the Secretary shall take into consideration the lack of services for elderly persons in need of senior vision services to establish or to expand existing blind or visually impaired services currently provided or available in municipalities and cities throughout the country. The Secretary shall likewise ensure that due consideration is given to the geographic and existing service demands for senior vision services within a municipality or city.

SECTION 5. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Secretary shall promulgate the implementing rules and regulations necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act.

The Secretary shall submit a report to the House of Representatives and the Senate, prior to, but in no event later than, December thirty-first, in the year following enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, which shall include, but not be limited to:

- a) Financial reports of the program operations established pursuant to this Act;
- b) An analysis of the program's ability to provide such nationwide senior vision services to elderly persons with functional visual impairments;
- c) Recommendations on the continuation of such program and the need for program expansion, if appropriate; and
- d) Other information deemed necessary.

SECTION 6. *Funding.* – The sum of Fifty Million Pesos (P50,000,000.00) is hereby authorized to be appropriated from the National Treasury for the first three (3) years of implementation of this Act immediately following its enactment. Thereafter, the sums necessary for the continuous implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual appropriations of the Department of Health as a separate and distinct item.

SECTION 7. *Separability Clause.* – If, for any reason, any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, parts or provisions of this Act which are not affected shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SECTION 8. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, executive orders, presidential decrees, Implementing Rules and Regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 9. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,