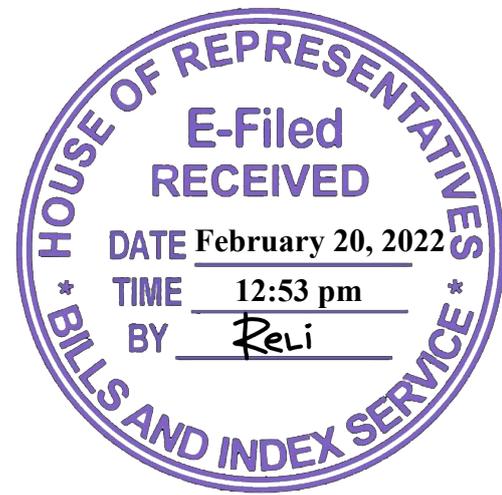


Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Third Regular Session

House Bill No. 10810



INTRODUCED BY
REP. ALFRED VARGAS

AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR ALLOWANCES AND BENEFITS FOR PUBLIC SOCIAL
WORKERS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Social workers stand at the frontlines of promoting the welfare of our communities and deserve not only recognition for their diligence, but also fairness and social protection. Amidst the pandemic, social workers ensure that social services are safely and efficiently delivered to our fellow Filipinos, especially to poor and far-flung communities.

Despite the risks of infection and the social and economic challenges posed by the ongoing public health crisis, social workers in the public service have shown their commitment and dedication to helping the marginalized endure and face their struggles during the pandemic. They have stayed loyal and true to their profession's goal of facilitating and strengthening the mutual adjustments between individuals and their social environment for the good of society.

Indeed, social workers in the public service exemplify the State's devotion to its constitutional policy of "promot[ing] a just and dynamic social order that will ensure the prosperity [...] and free the people from poverty." They are an integral part of our government's strides to provide adequate social services and an improved quality of life for all.

The roles of social workers in the Philippines in response to the pandemic are varied. Some of them are part of public health institutions as medical social workers. Some of them help in the implementation of the Social Amelioration Program (SAP), monitored by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD); in the information dissemination campaigns by the academe to improve knowledge and skills; in taking part in combating violence against children and women; and in providing services for the elderly

and people with disability. These are on top of additional services implemented by civil society.¹

In our efforts to recognize and justly compensate the heroism and service of our frontline workers, the government has enacted Republic Act No. 11469 or the “Bayanihan to Heal as One Act,” and Republic Act No. 11494 or the “Bayanihan to Recover as One Act,” which provide the legal basis for COVID-19 active hazard duty pay (AHDP) and special risk allowance (SRA). There are, however, gaps in these important landmark legislations and social workers are denied the treatment they rightfully deserve.

This measure recognizes these statutory gaps and the challenges that public social workers face amidst the pandemic, especially on the delivery of social services to the people.

To augment and strengthen these efforts and to properly acknowledge and compensate our heroes, it is imperative to increase the benefits and allowances that our public social workers receive during this public health crisis.

This bill seeks to provide allowances and benefits to public social workers during the state of public health emergency amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Included are fixed monthly special risk allowances; active hazard duty pays; PhilHealth coverage on all work-related medical expenses; life insurance, accommodation, transportation and meals or their cash equivalent; and just compensation worth One Million Pesos (Php1,000,000.00), in case of death, One Hundred Thousand Pesos (Php100,000.00), in case of severe COVID-19 sickness, and Fifteen Thousand Pesos (Php15,000.00), in case of mild or moderate COVID-19 case.

Public social workers perform vital and valuable work in the delivery of social services to the Filipino people amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. They are heroes, promoting the good and welfare of our communities through a profession rooted on selflessness. This fact has especially rang true during these difficult times. It is the hope of this measure to provide better working conditions and more just and equitable benefits for social workers in the country, which would, in turn, inspire them as they accomplish their duties with care and compassion.

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



ALFRED VARGAS

¹ International Federation of Social Workers, ‘The Role of Social Workers Across ASEAN Countries in Response to COVID-19 Pandemic’. Available at: <https://www.ifsw.org/the-role-of-social-workers-across-asean-countries-in-response-to-covid-19-pandemic/>.

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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 “*Allowances and Benefits for Social Workers Act.*”

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. - It is hereby declared the policy of the State to ensure that the general welfare of Filipino social workers is promoted through adequate compensation and benefits commensurate to their qualifications and the services they provide, which are critical to the promotion of social change and development, social cohesion, the empowerment and liberation of people, and delivery of social services.

SECTION 3. Coverage. - The provisions and benefits provided under this Act shall be given to all public social workers who are engaged in social services delivery during the state of public health emergency due to the COVID- 19 pandemic as declared by the President of the Philippines. This Act shall cover all registered social workers in government service, including those whose services are engaged through job orders or contracts of service.

SECTION 4. Allowances and Benefits. The following shall be provided to all public social workers covered under Section 3 of this Act:

- (a) A fixed monthly COVID-19 special risk allowance for every month that they are serving during the state of national emergency as declared by the President;

- (b) Active Hazard Duty Pay exclusively for social workers for every month that they are serving during the state of national emergency as declared by the President;
- (c) Assumption of all medical expenses by the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation in case of exposure to COVID-19 or any work-related injury or disease;
- (d) Provision of compensation to public social workers who have contracted COVID-19 in the line of duty, with the following amounts, upon submission of required documents to support claims:
 - 1) In case of death of the social worker, One Million Pesos (Php1,000,000.00) shall be provided to the heirs of the social worker;
 - 2) In case of sickness, for a severe or critical case, One Hundred Thousand Pesos (Php100,000.00) shall be provided to the social worker; and
 - 3) In case of sickness, for a mild or moderate case, Fifteen Thousand Pesos (Php15,000.00) shall be provided to the social worker;
- (e) Provision of life insurance, accommodation, transportation, and meals, or their cash equivalent.

The provision of the foregoing benefits shall have retroactive application from July 1, 2021, and shall be exempt from income tax.

SECTION 5. Appropriation. – The amount necessary for the implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current year available appropriations of the Department of Social Welfare and Development and/or the current year’s Miscellaneous Personnel Benefit Fund, and any sources available as may be identified by Department of Budget and Management. Thereafter, the amount necessary for its continuous implementation shall be included in the Annual General Appropriations.

SECTION 6. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – Within thirty days (30) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Department of Social Welfare and Development and the Department of Budget and Management, in consultation with other government agencies and concerned stakeholders, shall issue the rules and regulations necessary to effectively implement the provisions of this Act.

SECTION 7. Separability Clause. – If any provision is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or provision not otherwise affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

SECTION 8. 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.

SECTION 9. Effectivity. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in at least two (2) newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,