



**Republic of the Philippines**  
**Department of Social Welfare and Development**

IBP Road, Batasan Pambansa Complex, Constitution Hills, Quezon City 1126  
Telephone Nos. (632) 931-8101 to 07; Telefax (632) 931-8191

E-mail: [osec@dswd.gov.ph](mailto:osec@dswd.gov.ph)

Website: <http://www.dswd.gov.ph>

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**HONORABLE EUFRANIO C. ERIGUEL, M.D.**

Chairperson  
Committee on Health  
House of Representatives  
Quezon City

Dear **Honorable Congressman Eriguel:**

This has reference to House Bill No. 5437 entitled, "An Act Establishing a Free Medicine Assistance Program for the Poor and Providing Funds Therefor" authored by Representative Mark A. Villar.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development wishes to express its support on the intention of the bill to make essential medicines available to the poorest of the poor.

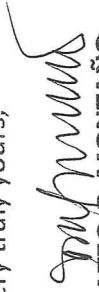
To contribute to the bill's enhancement, we are also recommending:

1. The use of the National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction (NHTS-PR) in validating whether individuals initially identified by the Department of Health (DOH) to benefit from the program actually belong to poor households. The NHTS-PR uses observable and verifiable characteristics to classify households as poor and non-poor thus, reduces discrepancies in the selection of program beneficiaries.
2. Pursuant to the devolution of social services, due reference should also be made to the Local Social Welfare and Development Offices (LSWDOs) especially since implementation of the program will be done in the congressional districts.
3. The bill must take into account the provisions of Republic Act No. 6675 (*The Generics Act of 1988*) and Republic Act No. 9502 (*The Universally Accessible Cheaper and Quality Medicines Act of 2008*) to address possible duplications. Gaps in the implementation of these laws may also be considered in enhancing the provisions of HBN 5437.

4. The specific participation of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) and Food and Drugs Authority (FDA), as DOH attached agencies, must also be presented in the bill to ensure efficient program coordination and cooperation.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,

  
MATEO G. MONTAÑO  
Officer-in-Charge