



SENATE

S. No. 2893

(Recommending its approval in substitution of Senate Bill Nos. 196,  
281,489, 599, 941, 981, 1130, 1161, 1322, 1363, 1818, 1890 and 1928,  
taking into consideration House Bill No. 6452)

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PREPARED AND SUBMITTED JOINTLY BY THE COMMITTEE ON  
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (UPON THE  
RECOMMENDATION OF ITS SUB-COMMITTEE ON  
VIROLOGY INSTITUTE OF THE PHILIPPINES);  
COMMITTEES ON WAYS AND MEANS; AND, FINANCE  
WITH SENATORS GO, ESTRADA, LEGARDA, ZUBIRI,  
GATCHALIAN, REVILLA JR., VILLAR (M), EJERCITO,  
VILLANUEVA, PADILLA, TULFO, LAPID, VILLAR (C),  
CAYETANO (A), CAYETANO (P), AND TOLENTINO AS  
AUTHORS THEREOF

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AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COLLABORATIVE AND  
COMPLEMENTARY RESEARCH AND  
DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM ON VIROLOGY,  
CREATING FOR THE PURPOSE THE VIROLOGY  
INSTITUTE OF THE PHILIPPINES, 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  
2           the “Virology Institute of the Philippines (VIP) Act”.

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

6           To this end, the State shall adopt a One Health  
7 approach, recognizing the interconnectedness of humans,  
8 animals, plants, and their shared environment. The State  
9 shall formulate and implement policies to address One  
10 Health issues, prioritizing research and development,  
11 promoting innovations in both technology and services,  
12 ensuring the quality and adequacy of human resources,  
13 strengthening biosafety standards, and promoting the use  
14 and appropriate utilization of safe and indigenous  
15 practices.

16           In this regard, the State shall prioritize the  
17 establishment of an institute to lead in-depth studies on  
18 pathogens and potential disease-causing agents affecting

1 people, plants, animals, and the environment. This  
2 institute shall provide the scientific basis for the diagnosis,  
3 treatment, and prevention of diseases, as well as for the  
4 development of policy recommendations. It shall conduct  
5 research and development on disease-causing pathogens,  
6 including diagnostics, therapeutics, and vaccines, from  
7 discovery to the pre-clinical phase of development.

8       SEC. 3. *Objectives.* – This Act seeks to establish a  
9 virology institute that shall focus on research and  
10 development to address pathogens and potential  
11 disease-causing agents affecting plants, animals, and  
12 humans. Its mandate shall include, but is not limited to,  
13 the following:

14       (a) Undertaking discovery programs in the field of  
15 virology and related disciplines, including molecular  
16 biology, bioinformatics, and other related fields of research;

17       (b) Conducting vaccine research from discovery to  
18 the pre-clinical phase of development;

1 (c) Conducting research and development of  
2 prototype diagnostics and therapeutics on viruses and  
3 other pathogens;

4 (d) Collaborating, coordinating, and disseminating  
5 evidence-based policies on virology and vaccine science to  
6 stakeholders;

7 (e) Establishing linkages with local and  
8 international networks through cooperation and  
9 collaboration with institutions engaged in virus and  
10 pathogen research and development;

11 (f) Training and engaging with experts for capacity  
12 building of virology and vaccine research;

13 (g) Investing on virology infrastructure, including  
14 high-containment facilities, biobanks, and genome  
15 laboratories, for the research of potential emerging and  
16 re-emerging outbreaks; and

17 (h) Providing technical assistance and laboratory use  
18 to support research communities.

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

2           (a) *Bacteriophage* refers to any group of viruses that  
3 infect specific bacteria, usually causing their disintegration  
4 or dissolution;

5           (b) *Biosafety* refers to containment principles,  
6 technologies, and practices that are implemented to  
7 prevent unintentional exposure to biological agents or their  
8 inadvertent release;

9           (c) *Diagnostics* refers to the development of tools  
10 such as medical devices, techniques, and procedures used  
11 for the identification of viruses and other pathogens that  
12 cause diseases in plants, animals, and humans;

13           (d) *Discovery programs* refer to the first stage of  
14 research focused on identifying and developing new vaccine  
15 candidates by exploring novel antigens, immune targets,  
16 and technologies to combat infectious diseases;

17           (e) *High-containment facilities* refer to facilities that  
18 are necessary for carrying out research activities involving  
19 high-risk pathogens, such as avian influenza and other

1 hemorrhagic diseases that pose a serious public health  
2 burden;

3 (f) *One Health* is a collaborative, multisectoral, and  
4 transdisciplinary approach – working at the local, regional,  
5 national, and global levels – with the goal of achieving  
6 interconnectedness among people, animals, plants, and  
7 their shared environment;

8 (g) *Pathogen* refers to any microorganism, such as  
9 but not limited to a virus, bacterium, fungus, or protozoan  
10 that can cause diseases in a host;

11 (h) *Pre-clinical stages and/or phases* refer to the  
12 stage of research and development that occur before a drug  
13 or vaccine is tested on humans, which aim to assess the  
14 safety, efficacy, and biological mechanism of a candidate  
15 drug or vaccine in controlled laboratory settings;

16 (i) *Therapeutics* refer to bacteriophages,  
17 nanotechnology treatment approach, nucleic acid-based  
18 treatment, remedial agents, or drugs for the treatment of

1 viral diseases and infections in plants, animals, and  
2 humans;

3 (j) *Vaccine* refers to a product that induces or  
4 stimulates active acquired immunity by producing  
5 antibodies for a specific infectious agent. It helps the body's  
6 immune system to recognize and fight pathogens like  
7 viruses or bacteria; and

8 (k) *Virology* refers to the scientific discipline  
9 concerned with the study of the biology of viruses and viral  
10 diseases in plants, animals, and humans, with medical  
11 importance and pandemic potential, including the  
12 distribution, pathogenicity, viral cytopathicity,  
13 biochemistry, physiology, molecular biology, biotechnology,  
14 ecology, tropism, spillover or interspecies transmission,  
15 evolution, and clinical aspects of viruses.

16 SEC. 5. *Creation of the Virology Institute of the*  
17 *Philippines.* – The Virology Institute of the Philippines  
18 (VIP) is hereby created and shall be an attached agency of  
19 the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) for

1 purposes of policy and program coordination to ensure  
2 alignment in national policies and priorities.

3 The VIP shall serve as the lead convenor for research  
4 and development in the field of virology, encompassing all  
5 kinds of viruses and other pathogens in plants, animals,  
6 and humans. It shall be a venue for scientists, researchers,  
7 government agencies, research institutes, and other  
8 organizations in the Philippines and abroad, to work  
9 collaboratively in studying viruses and other pathogens of  
10 agricultural, industrial, clinical, and environmental  
11 importance.

12 SEC. 6. *Powers, Functions, and Duties.* – To  
13 accomplish its mandate, the VIP shall have the following  
14 powers, functions, and duties:

15 (a) Serve as the lead convenor for the formulation of  
16 the National Virology Research Agenda, which shall  
17 encompass researches involving viruses and other  
18 pathogens of plants, animals, and humans;



1           (b) Undertake research and development in the field  
2 of virology;

3           (c) Conduct product research and development in  
4 the areas of diagnostics, therapeutics, and vaccines, in  
5 cooperation with concerned government agencies and the  
6 private sector;

7           (d) Promote and undertake the transfer of the  
8 results of scientific research and development through  
9 collaboration with government agencies, industry, and the  
10 academe;

11          (e) Promote, advocate, and oversee virology research  
12 ethics, biosafety, and biosecurity;

13          (f) Develop and maintain information systems on  
14 virology science and technology for use by both the public  
15 and the private sectors;

16          (g) Develop and implement, together with concerned  
17 government agencies and the private sector, programs for  
18 strengthening scientific and technological capabilities in  
19 virology and relevant disciplines through human resource

1 development, infrastructure, and institution and capability  
2 building;

3 (h) Undertake policy research and other  
4 policy-related studies on virology;

5 (i) Provide laboratory and technical services on  
6 virology;

7 (j) Promote and advocate for national programs on  
8 virology science and technology;

9 (k) Establish linkages with local and international  
10 partners;

11 (l) Foster linkage and alignment with the private  
12 sector for public-private partnership, in accordance with  
13 existing laws and regulations;

14 (m) Establish joint research programs and share  
15 expertise and resources with the Research Institute for  
16 Tropical Medicine (RITM) and other relevant institutions;

17 (n) Ensure seamless collaboration with RITM and  
18 other pertinent research bodies to delineate specific roles

1 and responsibilities, ensuring that the research agenda is  
2 complementary rather than duplicative;

3 (o) Foster an environment of equity in research and  
4 development by prioritizing collaborative projects that  
5 advance scientific progress for the mutual benefit of all  
6 involved institutions; and

7 (p) Perform such other powers and functions such  
8 as, but not limited to, clinical research and clinical trials,  
9 as may be deemed necessary and incidental for the  
10 effective implementation of this Act.

11 *SEC. 7. Director and Deputy Directors.* – The VIP  
12 shall be headed by a Director assisted by two (2) Deputy  
13 Directors: one (1) for Research and Development, and one  
14 (1) for Support, Policy, and Linkages.

15 The Deputy Director for Research and Development  
16 shall oversee the operations of the Virus Research,  
17 Diagnostics and Therapeutics Research, Vaccines  
18 Research, and Technical Services and Training for  
19 Virology. The Deputy Director for Support, Policy, and

1 Linkages shall oversee the operations of the Policy,  
2 Planning, Linkages, and Finance and Administration.

3       Upon the recommendation of the VIP Board, as  
4 provided in Section 8 of this Act, the President of the  
5 Philippines shall appoint the Director who must possess a  
6 bachelor's degree in the field of microbiology or biology, a  
7 doctorate degree in virology or other related specialization,  
8 and have at least five (5) years of experience in the field of  
9 virology. The Director shall have the rank of Director IV,  
10 Salary Grade (SG) 28, and shall exercise overall  
11 responsibility over the activities of the VIP. The Director  
12 shall report the results of research and development  
13 studies to the VIP Board.

14       The Deputy Directors shall have a rank of Director  
15 III, SG-27. The Deputy Director for Research and  
16 Development must possess a bachelor's degree in the field  
17 of microbiology or biology, at least a master's degree in  
18 virology or other related specialization, and have at least  
19 three (3) years of experience in the field of virology; while

1 the Deputy Director for Support, Policy, and Linkages  
2 must possess at least a master's degree and at least three  
3 (3) years of experience relevant to the position.

4 SEC. 8. *The VIP Board.* – There is hereby created a  
5 VIP Board that shall be the policy-making body for the  
6 scientific and technological activities of the VIP. The VIP  
7 Board shall be chaired by the Secretary of the DOST and  
8 co-chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Health  
9 (DOH) and the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture  
10 (DA). The members shall be composed of the following:

11 (a) Undersecretary of the Department of  
12 Environment and Natural Resources (DENR);

13 (b) Undersecretary of the Department of Foreign  
14 Affairs (DFA);

15 (c) Chairperson of the Commission on Higher  
16 Education (CHED);

17 (d) Director General of the Food and Drug  
18 Administration (FDA);

19 (e) Director of the RITM;

1 (f) Director of VIP;

2 (g) Executive Director of the University of the  
3 Philippines-National Institute of Health (UP-NIH);

4 (h) President of the National Academy of Science  
5 and Technology;

6 (i) Executive Director of the National Research  
7 Council of the Philippines; and

8 (j) Two (2) representatives from the private sector  
9 appointed by the President of the Philippines, as  
10 nominated by the VIP Board. They must be Filipino  
11 citizens with recognized competence in the fields of medical  
12 virology, genomics, plant virology, animal virology,  
13 epidemiology, genetic engineering, or other related  
14 disciplines.

15 The chairperson, co-chairpersons, and members shall  
16 each designate a permanent representative in the Board,  
17 who must possess sufficient and relevant experience. The  
18 permanent representative shall be duly authorized to act  
19 on behalf of his/her principal, in the principal's absence.

1           The Chairperson of the VIP Board shall have voting  
2 rights in case of a tie.

3           SEC. 9. *Secretariat.* – There is hereby created a  
4 Secretariat to support the VIP in carrying out its functions.  
5 The VIP Board shall provide for the institutional setup,  
6 qualifications, and compensation of employees composing  
7 the Secretariat, in accordance with existing laws, rules,  
8 and regulations.

9           SEC. 10. *Salary, Staffing Pattern, and Qualifications.*  
10 – Subject to the approval of the Department of Budget and  
11 Management (DBM), the VIP shall determine its  
12 organizational structure, create divisions or units as it may  
13 deem necessary, and appoint its officers and employees, in  
14 accordance with existing Civil Service Commission (CSC)  
15 laws, rules, and regulations.

16           The VIP shall have technical and administrative  
17 support staff and consultants. The consultants may be  
18 hired from the public and the private sectors on a  
19 consultancy or contractual basis.

1           SEC. 11. *Inter-Agency Cooperation.* – The VIP shall  
2 collaborate with the DOH, RITM, FDA, DA, DENR, DFA,  
3 CHED, UP-NIH, Department of Finance, and other  
4 relevant government agencies, in accessing and mobilizing  
5 available information, reports, technical expertise,  
6 equipment, materials, and supplies as may be required to  
7 implement this Act.

8           The RITM shall retain its current functions under  
9 the DOH and shall collaborate with the VIP. It shall  
10 continue to provide expertise in the detection and  
11 identification of emerging infectious diseases and  
12 laboratory support. In line with its current mandate and in  
13 close collaboration with the VIP, the RITM shall conduct  
14 research, surveillance, and diagnostics for newly identified  
15 pathogens to formulate effective strategies for the  
16 prevention and control of emerging diseases.

17           The scientific findings of the VIP, RITM, and other  
18 concerned agencies shall be integrated in the plans  
19 relating to disease control and prevention of the



1 Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases,  
2 as created by Executive Order No. 168 s. 2014, and the  
3 National Task Force to prevent the entry of animal-borne  
4 diseases, as created by Executive Order No. 105, s. 2020, or  
5 its successor body, for the management of public health  
6 emergencies relating to infectious diseases.

7       SEC. 12. *Engagement of Balik Scientists and Foreign*  
8 *Experts.* – The VIP may engage the services of Balik  
9 Scientists and foreign experts, who shall work together  
10 with local scientists and experts, following the terms of  
11 reference and compensation structure in accordance with  
12 Republic Act No. 11035 or the “Balik Scientist Act” and  
13 other existing laws.

14       SEC. 13. *International Cooperation.* – The VIP shall  
15 establish strategic partnerships with the world’s leading  
16 scientists, virology centers and institutes, international  
17 organizations, and non-government organizations, and  
18 conduct innovative and pioneering research that will  
19 advance the frontiers of virology and vaccine research and

1 development in the country. It may enter into a  
2 memorandum of agreement or understanding with  
3 international partners including, but not limited to, the  
4 World Health Organization (WHO) and World  
5 Organization for Animal Health (WOAH), upon the  
6 approval of its VIP Board, and in compliance with existing  
7 laws, rules, regulations, and issuances of the DFA. The  
8 DFA shall provide legal and other forms of assistance  
9 related to international cooperation with the VIP.

10       SEC. 14. *Promotion of the Virology Industry.* – The  
11 VIP, in partnership with the DOH, RITM, DA, Department  
12 of Trade And Industry (DTI), and other concerned  
13 agencies, shall jointly develop an industry roadmap for  
14 products and services that can be created and improved by  
15 research from the VIP. This roadmap shall include an  
16 outline of how the research and development activities of  
17 the VIP will contribute to achieving vaccine self-reliance.  
18 As far as practicable, the industry roadmap shall include  
19 the use of local materials in the development of new

1 products and services. The developed or established  
2 industry resulting from the VIP research shall be included  
3 in the national government's priority industries for  
4 incentives.

5       SEC. 15. *Private-Public Partnerships.* – The VIP, DTI,  
6 and Public-Private Partnership Center shall collaborate in  
7 seeking Private-Public Partnerships (PPPs) for the  
8 development of new industries, products, and services,  
9 including the clinical phase of vaccine production. The VIP  
10 may also request the assistance of other national and local  
11 government agencies in seeking PPPs.

12       SEC. 16. *Promotion of Virology in the Academe.* – The  
13 VIP shall assist State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in  
14 the creation of virology courses and programs, and in  
15 opening internships and scholarships for qualified students  
16 of higher education institutions (HEIs). It shall also  
17 collaborate with HEIs in the creation of virology research  
18 hubs and centers.

1           SEC. 17. *Protection of VIP-developed Intellectual*  
2 *Property.* – The VIP Board shall ensure that all  
3 technologies developed exclusively by the VIP shall be  
4 protected by intellectual property laws, in accordance with  
5 Republic Act No. 10055 or the “Philippine Technology  
6 Transfer Act of 2009”, Republic Act No. 8293 or the  
7 “Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines”, and other  
8 applicable laws.

9           SEC. 18. *Procurement of Specialized Materials,*  
10 *Equipment, and Services.* – The VIP shall undertake the  
11 procurement of specialized materials, equipment, and  
12 services to be used in its operation and administration, in  
13 accordance with Republic Act No. 12009 or the “New  
14 Government Procurement Act”, and other existing laws,  
15 rules, and regulations.

16           SEC. 19. *Official Site of VIP.* – A lot with an area  
17 equivalent to at least five (5) hectares under the  
18 administration of the Bases Conversion and Development  
19 Authority (BCDA) within the New Clark Economic Zone in

1 Tarlac Province shall be allocated exclusively for the VIP,  
2 its research facilities, and laboratories. The biosafety  
3 infrastructure shall be designed based on risk assessment  
4 standards and guidelines of the WHO and the WOAHP for  
5 handling specific pathogens and the establishment of  
6 virology laboratories in developing countries.

7 To safeguard the well-being and security of the  
8 human, plant, and animal populations within the VIP  
9 facilities area, the VIP shall coordinate with the  
10 Department of National Defense (DND) regarding the  
11 establishment and security of the said facilities.

12 SEC. 20. *Entitlement to Magna Carta Benefits.* –  
13 Qualified employees of the VIP shall be covered by  
14 Republic Act No. 8439 otherwise known as the “Magna  
15 Carta for Scientists, Engineers, Researchers and Other  
16 Science and Technology Personnel in Government”, as  
17 amended, and other rules and regulations issued by  
18 appropriate government agencies.

1           SEC. 21. *Authority to Negotiate, Receive Donations,*  
2 *Grants, Gifts, Legacies, Endowments, and Contributions.* –  
3 The VIP may negotiate with and receive from, any public  
4 or private domestic or foreign sources, donations, grants,  
5 gifts, legacies, endowments, contributions, or other  
6 transfers of ownership and/or possession of real or personal  
7 properties of all kinds in favor and for the benefit of the  
8 VIP.

9           SEC. 22. *Virology Research Fund.* – All donations,  
10 grants, gifts, legacies, endowments, contributions, and  
11 bequests, in cash or in kind, received by the VIP from  
12 various sources, shall be placed into a fund, to be known as  
13 the Virology Research Fund, in accordance with accounting  
14 and auditing standards, rules, and regulations: *Provided,*  
15 That acceptance of donations, grants, gifts, legacies,  
16 endowments, contributions, and bequests from foreign  
17 governments shall be subject to the approval of the  
18 President of the Philippines, upon the recommendation of  
19 the VIP Board.

1           SEC. 23. *Tax Exemptions.* – Donations, grants, gifts,  
2   endowments, and contributions actually, directly, and  
3   exclusively used for the purpose of the VIP shall be exempt  
4   from donor’s tax and considered as allowable deduction  
5   from gross income for purposes of computing the taxable  
6   income of the donor, in accordance with Section 34(H)(2)(a)  
7   of Republic Act No. 8424 or the National Internal Revenue  
8   Code of 1997, as amended. Such other transfers of  
9   ownership and/or possession of real or personal properties  
10  of all kinds shall be exempt from all taxes.

11          SEC. 24. *Annual Report.* – The VIP shall submit its  
12  annual report to the President and to the Committees on  
13  Science and Technology of both Houses of Congress, not  
14  later than the 30th of March of every year. The annual  
15  report shall provide a full and detailed account of the  
16  status of the implementation of this Act and policy  
17  recommendations.

18          SEC. 25. *Appropriations.* – The initial amount for the  
19  implementation of this Act shall be charged against the

1 current year's appropriations of the DOST. Thereafter,  
2 such funding shall be included in the annual General  
3 Appropriations Act.

4       SEC. 26. *Transitory Provisions.* –

5       (a) All offices and units under the DOST system  
6 whose functions are related to virology research programs  
7 shall be absorbed by the VIP and transferred accordingly  
8 within three (3) years. It shall include all functions, assets,  
9 capital, records, funds, receivables, equipment, and  
10 facilities of the concerned DOST offices and units. The  
11 DOST shall conduct an audit and inventory of assets,  
12 liabilities, and human resources of the transferred offices  
13 and units under the DOST system to the VIP.

14       To the greatest extent possible and in accordance  
15 with Republic Act No. 6656 or “An Act to Protect the  
16 Security of Tenure of Civil Service Officers and Employees  
17 in the Implementation of Government Reorganization” and  
18 other existing laws, all employees of the affected offices  
19 and units shall be absorbed by the VIP. Personnel hired on



1 a permanent basis and with appointments attested by the  
2 CSC who may be affected by the transition of DOST offices  
3 and units to the VIP, or who will not be absorbed in the  
4 new staffing pattern of the different offices and units in the  
5 VIP, shall have the option to:

6 (1) Be transferred to other offices or units within the  
7 DOST in accordance with civil service law, rules, and  
8 regulations; or

9 (2) Avail of the applicable retirement benefits and  
10 separation incentives as provided under Republic Act No.  
11 6656 and other relevant laws.

12 (b) Incumbent DOST officials and employees may be  
13 considered to assume positions in the VIP, subject to  
14 competency evaluation and CSC regulations. All  
15 project-based personnel of the DOST doing virology-related  
16 research and development shall be subject to the  
17 qualification standards provided in the laws, rules, and  
18 regulations of the CSC.

1           (c) Research grants acquired during the transition of  
2 DOST offices and units transferred to VIP shall be utilized  
3 solely for the grants' intended purposes for each of the  
4 affected offices and units.

5           (d) Existing contracts and agreements entered into  
6 by the affected personnel with third parties prior to the  
7 enactment of this Act shall remain valid.

8           SEC. 27. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – The  
9 DOST Secretary, in consultation with DOH, RITM, DA,  
10 DBM, CSC, and other relevant government agencies, shall  
11 promulgate the necessary rules and regulations within  
12 ninety (90) days from effectivity of this Act.

13           Failure to promulgate the rules and regulations of  
14 this Act shall not prevent its implementation upon  
15 effectivity.

16           SEC. 28. *Separability Clause.* – If any portion of this  
17 Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, other provisions  
18 hereof shall remain in full force and effect.

1           SEC. 29. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, orders,  
2 rules, regulations, or other issuances or parts thereof  
3 inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby  
4 repealed or modified accordingly.

5           SEC. 30. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen  
6 (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a  
7 newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,