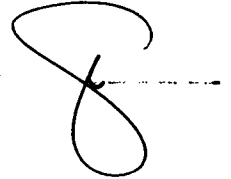


NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Third Regular Session)

25 JAN 27 P 2:02

SENATE
S. No. 2955



Introduced by Senator Jinggoy Ejercito Estrada

AN ACT

TO EXPAND FREE LEGAL ASSISTANCE TO ALL INDIGENT FILIPINOS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE CHAPTER 5, TITLE III, BOOK IV OF EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 292, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "ADMINISTRATIVE CODE OF 1987" APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

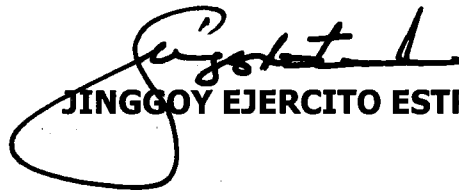
EXPLANATORY NOTE

The proposed legislation addresses a critical need to bridge the justice gap for indigent Filipinos, ensuring equal access to legal services. Many individuals from underprivileged sectors face systemic barriers in navigating the legal system, including financial constraints and lack of legal knowledge. This measure seeks to alleviate these challenges by institutionalizing free legal assistance, beginning with the statutory definition of "indigent" for the Public Attorney's Office (PAO).

This proposal aims to modernize the definition of indigency and establish mechanisms for widespread implementation. It eliminates ambiguities that may arise from discretionary interpretations of indigency criteria, aligning them with updated poverty thresholds and socio-economic realities. Such an amendment would provide a robust legal framework, empowering the Public Attorney's Office (PAO) to serve more Filipinos effectively and equitably.

This bill reflects the constitutional mandate to uphold justice for all, particularly marginalized communities. With poverty affecting a significant portion of the population, many Filipinos lack the means to defend their rights or access proper legal representation. By broadening the scope of indigency, the government can ensure that those affected by financial hardships, marginalized communities, and victims of socio-economic inequalities are adequately served. The measure not only reinforces the rule of law, but also strengthens public trust in the justice system. Its passage is a pivotal step in fostering an inclusive society where every Filipino can exercise their rights and access fair representation.

In this light, the immediate passage of this bill is highly recommended.



JINGGOY EJERCITO ESTRADA

SENATE

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AN ACT
TO EXPAND FREE LEGAL ASSISTANCE TO ALL INDIGENT FILIPINOS,
AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE CHAPTER 5, TITLE III, BOOK IV OF
EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 292, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE
"ADMINISTRATIVE CODE OF 1987" APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR,
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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 the "*Hustisya Para sa Lahat*
2 *Act*".

3 Sec. 2. A new section 14-B is hereby inserted in Chapter 5, Title III, Book IV of
4 Executive Order No. 292, otherwise known as the "Administrative Code of 1987" which
5 shall read as follows:

6 **"SEC. 14-B. INDIGENT DEFINED. - FOR THE**
7 **PURPOSE OF THIS ACT, "INDIGENT" SHALL REFER TO**
8 **ANY INDIVIDUAL WHO FALLS INTO ANY OF THE**
9 **FOLLOWING CATEGORIES:**

10 **"(A) THOSE WHOSE NET INCOME FALLS BELOW THE**
11 **MOST RECENT OFFICIAL CITY, MUNICIPAL OR**
12 **PROVINCIAL POVERTY THRESHOLD AS PUBLISHED**
13 **BY THE PHILIPPINE STATISTICS AUTHORITY (PSA);**

14

15

1 **"(B) THOSE IDENTIFIED AS POOR AND NEAR POOR**
2 **BASED ON THE NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD TARGETING**
3 **SYSTEM (NHTS) OF THE DSWD; OR**

4 **"(C) THOSE VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS WHO ARE**
5 **LIVING UNDER PRECARIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES, SUCH**
6 **AS THOSE WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE INFORMAL**
7 **ECONOMY, INFORMAL SECTORS, INDIGENOUS**
8 **PEOPLES, AND THOSE LIVING IN GEOGRAPHICALLY**
9 **ISOLATED AND DISADVANTAGED AREAS.**

10 **"OWNERSHIP OF LAND SHALL NOT CONSTITUTE A**
11 **GROUND FOR DISQUALIFICATION OF AN APPLICANT**
12 **FOR FREE LEGAL ASSISTANCE."**

13 Sec. 3. A new section 14-C is hereby inserted in Chapter 5, Title III, Book IV of
14 Executive Order No. 292, otherwise known as the "Administrative Code of 1987" which
15 shall read as follows:

16 **"SEC. 14-C. DOCUMENTARY REQUIREMENTS. -**
17 **TO ENSURE THAT ONLY QUALIFIED BENEFICIARIES**
18 **SHALL BENEFIT FROM THIS ACT, THE APPLICANT**
19 **SHALL BE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE ANY OF THE**
20 **FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS:**

21 **"(A) CERTIFICATE OF INDIGENCY FROM THE**
22 **DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND**
23 **DEVELOPMENT (DSWD), ITS LOCAL DISTRICT**
24 **OFFICE, OR THE MUNICIPAL SOCIAL WELFARE AND**
25 **DEVELOPMENT OFFICE HAVING JURISDICTION OVER**
26 **THE RESIDENCE OF THE APPLICANT; OR**

27 **"(B) CERTIFICATE OF INDIGENCY FROM THE**
28 **BARANGAY CHAIRMAN HAVING JURISDICTION OVER**
29 **THE RESIDENCE OF THE APPLICANT."**

30 Sec. 4. *Appropriations.* - The amounts necessary for the effective implementation
31 of this Act shall be included under the appropriations of the Public Attorney's Office
32 (PAO) under the annual General Appropriations Act.

1 *Sec. 5. Implementing Rules and Regulations.* - Within sixty (60) days from the
2 effectivity of this Act, the PAO, in coordination with the DSWD and the PSA shall
3 promulgate the implementing rules and regulations necessary to implement this Act.

4 *Sec. 6. Separability Clause.* – If any part, section or provision of this Act is
5 declared invalid or unconstitutional, the sections or provisions which are not affected
6 shall remain valid and subsisting.

7 *Sec. 7. Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, executive orders, ordinances,
8 rules, regulations, other issuances or parts thereof, which are inconsistent with this
9 Act, are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

10 *Sec. 8. Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
11 complete publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,