

## BREAKING NEWS



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# House bill strengthening PH immunization program passed on 2nd reading

By CNN Philippines Staff (/cnn-website/search/?queryStr=CNN Philippines Staff)

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FILE PHOTO

**Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, February 2)** — The House of Representatives approved on second reading a measure seeking to expand the country's mandatory immunization program to cover all life stages.

House Bill 8558, or the proposed "Mandatory Immunization Program Act," would repeal the Mandatory Infants and Children Health Immunization Act of 2011 in order to include all ages and cover more vaccine-preventable diseases.

Among the vaccines listed under the bill's coverage are for the rotavirus, the Japanese encephalitis, the pneumococcal disease (specifically the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine or PCV), the human papilloma virus, and for measles, rubella, tetanus, and diphtheria or MRTD.

These are on top of those already enumerated under the 2011 law, which include tuberculosis, diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis, poliomyelitis, measles, mumps, rubella or German measles, hepatitis-B, and H. influenza type B or HIB.

The measure would require the creation of a National Immunization Technical and Advisory Group, which would serve as an advisory body to the Department of Health on matters related to the program. It states that other diseases apart from those cited may be added by the Secretary of Health, but only upon the recommendation of the advisory group.

Under the bill, the government is mandated to provide free vaccines in public hospitals and facilities. The DOH is also directed to conduct nationwide information campaigns on the importance of giving basic immunization.

No penalties are listed in the current version of the bill for those who decline vaccination.

Its principal author, Rep. Angelina "Helen" Tan, welcomed its approval on second reading, as she stressed the apparent need to enhance the country's efforts towards disease prevention.

"The timing for the approval of this significant health measure cannot be more perfect as the country is looking forward toward the introduction of COVID-19 vaccine, which is likely to become available in the country anytime soon," Tan said.

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