

NATION

House bill seeks mandatory COVID-19 vaccination in PH

By: **Christia Marie Ramos - Reporter** / @CMRamosINQ INQUIRER.net / 02:22 PM April 26, 2021

MANILA, Philippines — A bill mandating the COVID-19 vaccination in the Philippines has been filed in the House of Representatives.

Cavite Rep. Elpidio Barzaga Jr. filed House Bill No. 9252, which seeks to amend the COVID-19 Vaccination Program Act of 2021 to make mandatory the inoculation of individuals “as may be determined” by the Department of Health (DOH).

Under the bill, the vaccination of these individuals shall be given for free at any government hospital or health center provided that “inoculation must, at all times, be science and evidence based.”

“[A] mass COVID-19 vaccination program in the Philippines, to as much percentage of the population is needed. This can only be achieved by enacting legislation to mandate and promote COVID-19 vaccination, address vaccine hesitancy and instill public confidence in the personal, family and community benefits of immunization,” Barzaga said in the bill’s explanatory note.

“It will be tragic if we have safe and effective vaccines available but people refuse to take them,” he added.

The measure, however, exempts “persons with medical conditions” as determined by the DOH or by a licensed medical doctor.

“Medical doctors shall have the discretion, subject to disciplinary action by the Philippine Medical Association, to determine whether a person should get a medical exemption,” according to the bill.

“[T]he medical basis for the exemption shall be clearly indicated and must be consistent with the standard of medical care for that indication... That the medical exemption may be reviewed by the DOH to ensure that they are being provided consistent with the standard of medical care for a particular medical condition,” it added.

The government has so far administered vaccines to over 1 million Filipinos, with the prioritization of healthcare workers, senior citizens, and persons with comorbidities.

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