

REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8344

AN ACT PENALIZING THE REFUSAL OF HOSPITALS AND MEDICAL CLINICS TO ADMINISTER APPROPRIATE INITIAL MEDICAL TREATMENT AND SUPPORT IN EMERGENCY OR SERIOUS CASES, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE BATAS PAMBANSA BILANG 702, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "AN ACT PROHIBITING THE DEMAND OF DEPOSITS OR ADVANCE PAYMENTS FOR THE CONFINEMENT OR TREATMENT OF PATIENTS IN HOSPITALS AND MEDICAL CLINICS IN CERTAIN CASES"

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:*

SECTION 1. Section 1 of Batas Pambansa Bilang 702 is hereby amended to read as follows:

"SECTION 1. In emergency or serious cases, it shall be unlawful for any proprietor, president, director, manager or any other officer, and/or medical practitioner or employee of a hospital or medical clinic to request, solicit, demand or accept any deposit or any other form of advance payment as a prerequisite for confinement or medical treatment of a patient in such hospital or medical clinic or to refuse to administer medical treatment and support as dictated by good practice of medicine to prevent death or permanent disability: *Provided*, That by reason of inadequacy of the medical capabilities of the hospital or medical clinic, the attending physician may transfer the patient to a facility where the appropriate care can be given, after the patient or his next of kin consents to said transfer and after the receiving hospital or medical clinic agrees to the transfer: *Provided, however*, That when the patient is unconscious, incapable of giving consent and/or unaccompanied, the physician can transfer the patient even without his consent: *Provided, further*, That such transfer shall be done only after necessary emergency treatment and support

have been administered to stabilize the patient and after it has been established that such transfer entails less risks than the patient's continued confinement: *Provided, furthermore,* That no hospital or clinic, after being informed of the medical indications for such transfer, shall refuse to receive the patient nor demand from the patient or his next of kin any deposit or advance payment: *Provided, finally,* That strict compliance with the foregoing procedure on transfer shall not be construed as a refusal made punishable by this Act."

SEC. 2. Section 2 of Batas Pambansa Bilang 702 is hereby deleted and in place thereof, new sections 2, 3, and 4 are added, to read as follows:

"SEC. 2. For purposes of this Act, the following definitions shall govern:

"(a) 'Emergency' - a condition or state of a patient wherein based on the objective findings of a prudent medical officer on duty for the day there is immediate danger and where delay in initial support and treatment may cause loss of life or cause permanent disability to the patient.

"(b) 'Serious case' - refers to a condition of a patient characterized by gravity or danger wherein based on the objective findings of a prudent medical officer on duty for the day when left unattended to, may cause loss of life or cause permanent disability to the patient.

"(c) 'Confinement' - a state of being admitted in a hospital or medical clinic for medical observation, diagnosis, testing, and treatment consistent with the capability and available facilities of the hospital or clinic.

"(d) 'Hospital' - a facility devoted primarily to the diagnosis, treatment and care of individuals suffering from illness, disease, injury or deformity, or in need of obstetrical or other medical and nursing care. It shall also be construed as any institution, building or place where there are facilities and personnel for the continued and prolonged care of patients.

"(e) 'Emergency treatment and support' - any medical or surgical measure within the capability of the hospital or medical clinic that is administered by qualified health care professionals to prevent the death or permanent disability of a patient.

"(f) 'Medical clinic' - a place in which patients can avail of medical consultation or treatment on an outpatient basis.

"(g) 'Permanent disability' - a condition of physical disability as defined under Article 192-C and Article 193-B and C of Presidential Decree No. 442, as amended, otherwise known as the Labor Code of the Philippines.

"(h) 'Stabilize' - the provision of necessary care until such time that the patient may be discharged or transferred to another hospital or clinic with a reasonable probability that no physical deterioration would result from or occur during such discharge or transfer.

"SEC. 3. After the hospital or medical clinic mentioned above shall have administered medical treatment and support, it may cause the transfer of the patient to an appropriate hospital consistent with the needs of the patient, preferably to a government hospital, specially in the case of poor or indigent patients.

"SEC. 4. Any official, medical practitioner or employee of the hospital or medical clinic who violates the provisions of this Act shall, upon conviction by final judgment, be punished by imprisonment of not less than six (6) months and one (1) day but not more than two (2) years and four (4) months, or a fine of not less than Twenty thousand pesos (P20,000), but not more than One hundred thousand pesos (P100,000) or both, at the discretion of the court: *Provided, however,* That if such violation was committed pursuant to an established policy of the hospital or clinic or upon instruction of its management, the director or officer of such hospital or clinic responsible for the formulation and implementation of such policy shall, upon conviction by final judgment, suffer imprisonment of four (4) to six (6) years, or a

fine of not less than One hundred thousand pesos (P100,000), but not more than Five hundred thousand pesos (P500,000) or both, at the discretion of the court."

SEC. 3. Section 3 of Batas Pambansa Bilang 702 is hereby repealed.

SEC. 4. Section 4 of Batas Pambansa Bilang 702 shall become Section 5 thereof and shall be amended to read as follows:

"SEC. 5. The Department of Health shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to carry out the provisions of this Act."

SEC. 5. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved, August 25, 1997.