

# Lawmaker pushes private nurses' pay hike

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AS the government lifted the ban on deployment of nurses, Quezon City Fifth District Rep. **Alfred Vargas** pushed for an increase in their salary and those of other health care workers in the private sector to give them “more reasons” to stay in the country.

Vargas pushed for House Bill 7784 or the “Salary Increase for Private Sector Medical Workers Act,” which seeks to upgrade the minimum monthly salary of nurses and other medical workers in the private sector to a rate equal to their public sector counterparts. Under the bill, salaries of health care workers occupying higher positions would also be adjusted accordingly.

The entry-level salary of government nurses had been raised this year from Salary Grade (SG) 11 or about P22,000 to SG-15 or around P32,000 under Republic Act 11466 or the new “Salary Standardization Law.”

Vargas pointed out that according to data from the Department of Labor and Employment, entry-level nurses in the private sector only earn around P10,000 monthly.

“Our nurses and other health care workers in private institutions are criminally underpaid. The pandemic has only emphasized their important role not only in providing needed health care service but in addressing public health concerns such as Covid-19 (coronavirus disease 2019),” he said.

“There is no better time to give them proper compensation for their work. This would also help convince them to stay and continue caring for their fellow Filipinos,” he added.

The Philippine Overseas Employment Agency had set a 5,000 cap on the deployment of health workers to ensure enough would stay to address the pandemic. Vargas said this shows the urgent need to ensure that health workers employed locally are fairly compensated.

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