

Incentive to fully-vaxxed families proposed

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Actor-politician **Alfred Vargas** is proposing a one-time P15,000 worth of incentives to every Filipino family whose members are fully vaccinated against Covid-19.

The Quezon City congressman on Wednesday announced that he filed House Bill 10644, which seeks to introduce the cash assistance program under the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). Vargas noted that the amount will be on top of the agency's ongoing social amelioration activities.

"This measure not only alleviates the sufferings of our fellow Filipinos in this two-year global pandemic, but it also helps solve the problem by encouraging science-backed vaccination and accelerating our achievement of herd immunity," Vargas said.

His "Ayuda sa Bakuna bill" proposed that the program will cover all eligible Filipino families, as long as living and qualified members have complied with the government's prescribed Covid-19 vaccination program. He explained that he filed the bill as a response to the dynamic nature of the pandemic and amid the growing threat of the Omicron variant in the Philippines.

In the bill's explanatory note, Vargas stated that stronger social safety nets must be put in place to support multiple marginalized sectors and protect them from poverty.

He believes his proposed program will help reduce vaccine hesitancy, which continues to hamper the government's efforts to control Covid-19.

The national government failed to meet its target of fully vaccinating 54 million Filipinos by the end of 2021, but officials expressed confidence that they will meet their goal within January.

In December 2021, the Department of Health (DoH) identified five regions with low vaccination rates. These are Regions 3 (Central Luzon), 4A (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon), 6 (Western Visayas), 7 (Central Visayas), and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

The 17 mayors in the National Capital Region are set to implement local ordinances that will restrict the movements and activities of unvaccinated people in Metro Manila while the region is under Alert Level 3 or higher levels.

The new policy will restrict unvaccinated people to their houses and will bar them in public areas like restaurants.