

(H. B. 1901)
(Conference)

(No. 52)

(Approved January 30, 2006)

AN ACT

To create the “International Medical Care Council” for the purpose of increasing the traffic of international patients to Puerto Rico and promoting health tourism and for other related purposes.

STATEMENT OF MOTIVES

Tourism and health are two closely related concepts. Both directly affect the economy of Puerto Rico and are fundamental in the implementation of the public policy of the Government. They also constitute a binomial of constant interaction.

It is well known that the tourist activity on our Island represents an enormous economic potential for the government. Health and medicine, on the one hand, constitute elements that should be taken into consideration when planning tourist activities. One of the oldest forms of tourism is to travel for health reasons in search of better and more advanced medical treatments that are not available at the place of permanent domicile. In this sense, the full development of the tourist medical industry opens the doors to the influx of tourists from nearby jurisdictions that do not have available the technological and health advances existing in Puerto Rico.

On the other hand, some countries with advanced development have established a branch of public health known as “emporiatics,” devoted to the study of the relationship between health and tourism. Said branch deals with health protection and care of tourists within the traditional role of

medicine. Emporiatics is a growing practice within the various tourist modalities. The international evolution since 1998 indicates that this segment is no longer a promising tourist offer but that it has rather become a well established reality.

In the measure that Puerto Rico is projected at the international level in an effective manner as a place where foreign patients shall most certainly receive medical and health services of excellence, other incidental areas shall be benefited.

At present, there are several countries that base part of their economic development on the practice of medical tourism. Among these, India is at the forefront since it attracts thousands of patients who travel to said nation to receive treatment in hospitals and medical offices. Among the countries whose citizens participate actively in the search for treatment in other countries are the Canadians and Europeans, who often find that in their respective countries medical service, although good, is very costly or requires a long waiting period.

This Act is directed towards creating an International Medical Care Council to promote and develop medical tourism to place Puerto Rico in the international map as an alternative for medical excellence for the foreign patient and, as consequence to increase tourist traffic in our Island.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF PUERTO RICO:

Section 1.- This Act shall be known as an “An Act to Create the International Medical Care Council.”

Section 2.- The International Medical Care Council is hereby created (hereinafter the Council), attached to the Department of Health for the purpose of developing strategies that propitiate the establishment of programs, offers, and services to promote medical tourism in Puerto Rico.

Section 3.- The Council shall be constituted by seven (7) members. It shall be chaired by the Director of the Tourism Company. The other members of the Council shall be the Secretary of Economic Development, the Secretary of Health, the President of the Surgeons Association, the President of the Hospitals Association of Puerto Rico, the Secretary of the Department of State, and the President of the Association of Nursing Professionals.

Section 4.- The Council shall be constituted within forty-five (45) days after the approval of this Act, and shall adopt its Regulations within ninety (90) days of its constitution, and shall initiate an Action Plan addressed to developing and promoting health tourism in Puerto Rico and to increase the traffic of international patients.

Section 5.- The government dependencies that are part of this Council are hereby authorized to contribute, in accordance to their capacities, the physical, financial and personnel resources to defray and enable its operation. Furthermore, the Council is authorized to receive donations from public and private entities, which shall be used to comply with the purposes of this Act.

Section 6.- The Chairperson shall render a report to the Legislature no later than July 1 of each year on the progress made in the implementation of the purposes set forth in this Act, in accordance with the Action Plan it has adopted.

Section 7.- This Act shall take effect one hundred and twenty (120) days after its approval.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify to the Secretary of State that the following Act No. 52 (H.B.1901) of the 3rd Session of the 15th Legislature of Puerto Rico:

AN ACT to create the “International Medical Care Council” for the purpose of increasing the traffic of international patients to Puerto Rico and promoting health tourism and for other related purposes,

has been translated from Spanish to English and that the English version is correct.

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, today 10th of May of 2006.

Francisco J. Domenech
Director