Senate
Office of the Secretary

TWENTIETH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Second Regular Session)

26 NOV -4 P3:44

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SENATE

S. No. 2584

Introduced by Senator Loren Legarda

AN ACT FURTHER AMENDING ARTICLE 99 OF ACT NO. 3815, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE REVISED PENAL CODE, AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10592, TO AUTHORIZE THE SUPERINTENDENTS OF PRISONS AND PENAL FARMS UNDER THE BUREAU OF CORRECTIONS TO GRANT GOOD CONDUCT TIME ALLOWANCES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Every criminal sentence carries a responsibility on the part of the State: to enforce the punishment imposed by law and to recognize the time allowances that the law permits. For a person deprived of liberty (PDL), each day of imprisonment is a day away from family, work, and the opportunity to begin again. When good conduct has been established and the corresponding time credits have been lawfully earned, delays in deciding those credits prolong uncertainty for the PDL and the family waiting at home.

Republic Act No. 10592 strengthened the Good Conduct Time Allowance (GCTA) system in recognition of the role of discipline, rehabilitation, and the prospect of reintegration in correctional administration. GCTA is earned under statutory rules and remains subject to eligibility and verification. Its proper implementation encourages persons in custody to comply with institutional rules and participate in their rehabilitation. For the government, it demands a system that is accurate, timely, and accountable.

This responsibility is especially pressing in our overcrowded national prisons. As of 30 June 2026, the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) reported approximately 52,654 PDLs and an overall congestion rate of 206 percent. Behind these figures are people living in strained facilities, personnel working under difficult conditions, and families affected by the length and uncertainty of confinement. The burden of overcrowding makes the prompt administration of existing legal remedies and allowances all the more important.

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One gap lies in the authority to approve time allowances. Under Article 99 of the Revised Penal Code, as amended by Republic Act No. 10592, the BuCor Director General, the Chief of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, and wardens of provincial and local jails are expressly authorized to grant GCTA. The Superintendents who directly manage BuCor prisons and penal farms are not expressly included. Thus, while facility-level Management, Screening and Evaluation Committees examine conduct and sentence records, the granting authority for BuCor remains concentrated in the Director General.

Central supervision serves an important purpose, particularly where decisions affect the lawful duration of imprisonment. But requiring individual grants from different prisons to pass through one central approving authority can create avoidable administrative delays. The prison officials responsible for the daily management of these facilities are well placed to act on properly evaluated recommendations, provided that clear standards, reliable records, and effective oversight are maintained.

This measure therefore amends Article 99 to authorize BuCor Superintendents, including duly designated Acting Superintendents, to grant time allowances on the written recommendation of their facility's Management, Screening and Evaluation Committee and on the basis of verified records. The Director General retains the power to grant allowances and supervise their administration. A lawful grant at the facility level will no longer require a second approval from the Central Office.

The proposed decentralization is accompanied by safeguards to prevent abuses. The bill requires itemized sentence computations, reasonable decision periods, access to records and correction of errors, and regular reporting and post-approval checks. It provides penalties for deliberate violations, with more serious consequences for aggravated misconduct involving falsification, corruption, or unlawful release or continued detention. It does not increase GCTA credits, expand statutory eligibility, or dispense with the separate legal requirements for release. The integrity of criminal sentences and the protection of the public remain essential.

Ultimately, justice requires fidelity to the whole of the law, including the limits of a sentence and the credits earned through good conduct. People who have served their lawful time should not face additional uncertainty because the approval process has become unnecessarily prolonged. Along with this, every grant must withstand scrutiny and uphold public confidence in the correctional system. For all these, it is hoped that this bill forges a more humane, fair, and effective administration of justice.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.

LOREN LEGARDA

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

Section 1. Article 99 of Act No. 3815, as amended by Republic Act No. 10592, is hereby further amended to read as follows:

"**ART. 99. Who grants time allowances.** – Whenever lawfully justified, the Director **GENERAL** of the Bureau of Corrections, the Chief of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, **THE SUPERINTENDENT OR DULY DESIGNATED ACTING SUPERINTENDENT OF ANY PRISON OR PENAL FARM UNDER THE BUREAU OF CORRECTIONS, WITH RESPECT TO PERSONS DEPRIVED OF LIBERTY UNDER HIS OR HER CUSTODY**, or the warden of a provincial, district, municipal, or city jail shall grant allowances for good conduct.

ANY GRANT OF TIME ALLOWANCES BY A SUPERINTENDENT OR DULY DESIGNATED ACTING SUPERINTENDENT SHALL BE BASED ON THE WRITTEN RECOMMENDATION OF THE FACILITY'S MANAGEMENT, SCREENING AND EVALUATION COMMITTEE AND THE VERIFIED RECORDS OF THE PERSON DEPRIVED OF LIBERTY. Such allowances, once granted, shall not be revoked."

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Section 2. *Safeguards for Decentralized Grants.* – The following safeguards shall apply to time allowances granted by Superintendents or duly designated Acting Superintendents under Article 99 of the Revised Penal Code:

a) *Accurate computations.* – Each recommendation shall have an itemized computation showing the sentence or sentences being served, relevant dates of custody, time credits previously granted, and additional credits earned. The Management, Screening and Evaluation Committee (MSEC) shall verify the computation against existing official records, using a uniform form prescribed by the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor). No separate clearance from the BuCor Central Office shall be required.

b) *Timely decisions.* – The Superintendent or duly designated Acting Superintendent shall act on a complete recommendation within 15 working days of receipt. If records are incomplete or inconsistent, the official shall identify the specific deficiency in writing within five working days, and the committee shall promptly address it. The person deprived of liberty shall not be required to submit a new application solely because of errors or omissions in government records.

c) *Access to records.* – The facility shall maintain an updated record of each person's earned and granted time credits. Upon request, the person deprived of liberty or counsel shall receive an itemized statement without charge and may seek correction of inaccurate entries through a simple procedure established by the BuCor.

d) *Reporting and spot checks.* – The facility shall report each approved grant and its computation to the BuCor Central Office within five working days for entry in a central register. At least once every three months, the BuCor Central Office shall check a sample of approved grants and shall examine credible reports of errors or irregularities. These checks shall take place after approval and shall not operate as another approval requirement. Suspected misconduct shall be referred for appropriate investigation, without prejudice to the irrevocability of lawfully granted allowances.

e) *Acting Superintendents and release requirements.* – An Acting Superintendent may exercise granting authority only under a written designation specifying the facility and period covered, and may not further delegate such authority. The grant of time allowances shall not dispense with any separate legal requirement for release from custody.

Section 3. *Prohibited Acts and Penalties.* – Any public officer or employee who knowingly falsifies or conceals material records, knowingly grants or recommends unlawful time allowances, solicits or receives improper benefits, or willfully withholds

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lawfully earned credits for an improper purpose shall suffer the penalties prescribed under Section 6 of Republic Act No. 10592.

Where the violation involves falsification of official records or corruption, or where the offender knowingly causes the unlawful release or continued detention of a person deprived of liberty, the penalty shall be *prision mayor*, a fine of five hundred thousand pesos (₱500,000) to one million pesos (₱1,000,000), and perpetual disqualification from public office, without prejudice to liability under other applicable laws.

Good-faith clerical or computational errors shall not constitute an offense under this section, without prejudice to their correction and appropriate administrative accountability.

Section 4. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Department of Justice, in coordination with the Bureau of Corrections and the Department of the Interior and Local Government, shall promulgate such rules and regulations as may be necessary for its effective implementation.

The implementing rules shall prescribe a standard computation form and simple procedures for updating records, correcting errors, and carrying out the spot checks required under Section 2. They shall rely on existing facility personnel and records and shall not create any additional approval stage at the BuCor Central Office.

Section 5. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining provisions or parts not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 6. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations, and other issuances or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

Section 7. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,

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