

Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City

FIFTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 5841



Introduced by: **REPRESENTATIVE ABIGAIL FAYE C. FERRIOL**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

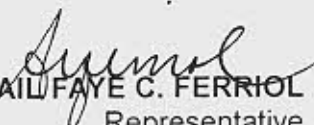
Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) have been hailed as the country's modern day heroes.

Millions of our countrymen have gone abroad with the hopes of seeking greener pastures. They have made huge sacrifices in pursuing a risky if not dangerous undertaking for the chance of improving their families' plight. We are all familiar with their life stories consisting of leaving behind loved ones, missing the childhood of their children and incurring huge debts – all for the opportunity to provide for their families and kin, and escape poverty.

In the Filipinos' collective pursuit of a better life for themselves and their families, the country's economy became an unwitting beneficiary. There is no doubt that the remittance of OFWs is an important and valuable component of our economy. The money lovingly sent by the OFWs have the OFWs' families and the country as direct and indirect beneficiaries respectively.

Notwithstanding the important role of OFWs, they remain victims of abuse and corruption, especially in the course of their travel. Unscrupulous airport personnel subject them to harassment and extortion, exploiting the procedures and process in place. One of the recent woes of OFWs is the offloading at the airport terminals. This practice has not spared even those with legitimate and complete travel documents.

It is the aim of this measure to curb the injustice experienced by the OFWs at the country's airports. By establishing help desks manned by advocates of OFWs' rights, it is hoped that instances of abuse and harassment will be minimized. It is imperative that OFWs have access to immediate assistance and redress in the course of their travel. Providing OFWs with an efficient service during their travel is one of the ways we could repay our modern day heroes for their sacrifices.


ABIGAIL FAYE C. FERRIOL
Representative
Kalinga Party list

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AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8042, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE MIGRANT WORKERS AND OVERSEAS FILIPINOS ACT OF 1995, AS AMENDED, CREATING OFW ADVOCATES HELP DESK IN AIRPORT TERMINALS

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

SECTION 1. A new Section 14-A. of Republic Act No. 8042, as amended, is hereby added to read as follows:

Section 14-A. OFW Advocates Help Desk. - It is the right of OFWs to be protected from abuse and harassment in the course of their travel. The OFW Advocates Help Desk is tasked to provide immediate assistance to OFWs in enforcing their rights and seeking redress in cases of abuse and maltreatment. The establishment and operations of the help desk shall be a joint undertaking of various government agencies including, but not limited to, the Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Labor and Employment, Commission on Filipinos Overseas, Overseas Workers Welfare Administration and Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, as well as representatives of sectoral groups representing OFWs. A help desk shall be placed in each terminal of the country's airports that offers international flights. The help desk shall be open for twenty-four (24) hours daily including Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, and shall be staffed by the selected personnel of the aforementioned agencies and sectoral groups. These personnel must be equipped with the knowledge on the rights of OFWs contained in international conventions, treaties and domestic laws. They should also be up-to-date with the existing rules, procedures and policies involving travel and immigration.

SEC 2. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* - The departments and agencies charged with carrying out the provisions of this Act, in consultation with the Senate Committee on Labor and Employment and the House of Representatives Committee on Overseas Workers Affairs, shall, within sixty (60) days after the effectivity of this Act, formulate the necessary rules and regulations for its effective implementation.

SEC. 3. *Funding.* - The departments, agencies, instrumentalities, bureaus, offices and government-owned and controlled corporations charged with carrying out the provisions of this Act shall include in their respective programs the implementation of this Act, the funding of

which shall be included in the General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 4. *Separability Clause.* – If, for any reason, any section or provision of this Act is declared to be unconstitutional or invalid, the other sections or provisions thereof which are not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SEC. 5. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

SEC. 6. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect thirty (15) days after its complete publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,