

Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
Quezon City

**16<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS**  
Second Regular Session



**HOUSE BILL NO. 5730**

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**Introduced by Representative REGINA ONGSIAKO REYES**  
**Lone District, Marinduque**

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**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

The history of Ang Mahal na Birhen ng Awa (Our Lady of Prompt Succor) can be traced back to 1700s. In 1621, the Jesuits brought an old image of the Immaculate Conception when they first set their foot in Marinduque. During the same era, Moro pirates are known to have raided vulnerable coastlines settlements, in order to plunder and capture natives. Thus, the early churches, like the Boac Cathedral was constructed with fortified walls and heavily-built gates to protect its perimeter. The church served as not only as a spiritual abode but also as an early warning system, that served as a lookout for approaching intruders with its carillons sounding alarm to the area.

It is said that by mid-1700s, an intense battle between the Moro Pirates and the natives occurred. For four days, the locals stood firm on the vicious attacks from the buccaneers. On the fifth day due to starvation and lack of sleep, the people eventually lose hope and believed that only a miracle can save them. Oral history tells that as the pirates are approaching the walls, an unknown woman which looks similar to the Our Lady of Immaculate Conception appeared by the walls of the church. This apparition halted the advancing bandits from destroying the fortifications, causing the Moro pirates to immediately leave in fear. From then on, the locals called the image of the Holy Immaculate Conception as Birhen ng Biglang-Awa as a reminder of the time when the locals were saved during their most desperate moment.

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Several stories of the miracles of the Our Lady of Prompt Succor had been known and passed down through the years. These include numerous apparitions of the Our Lady of Immaculate Conception and testimonials of devotees who was healed from their sickness.

The feast of the Mahal na Birhen ng Biglang Awa takes place every year on November 11. While every 10<sup>th</sup> of May marks the celebration of Our Lady's canonical coronation on 1958, and the establishment of the Diocesan Shrine by the year 2008.

During this time, local devotees and tourists bear witness to the lively and pious festivity in the municipality of Boac. Blue and white motif banners and decorations can be seen everywhere while the cathedral bells resonates throughout the whole town. Vibrant and colorful parades of the image of Birhen ng Biglang Awa adds to the festive sensation in the air while thanksgiving masses and novenas are held inside the Boac Cathedral. These undertakings commemorate the marvels and grace of the Patroness of Marinduque.

This bill, therefore, aims to declare the Diocesan Shrine of Mahal na Birhen ng Biglang Awa located in the municipality of Boac, Province of Marinduque as a pilgrimage site and tourist destination mandating the Department of Tourism, in coordination with the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA), Department of Public Works and Highways and other concerned agencies of the government, and in consultation with the Provincial Government of Marinduque to formulate with a comprehensive development plan for the improvement of the Diocesan Shrine of Mahal na Birhen ng Biglang Awa.

With this declaration, it is hoped that the number of tourists and pilgrims participating in the feasts of the Birhen ng Biglang Awa and other religious occasions will greatly increase. Moreover, this will greatly help boost the tourism industry of not only in the municipality of Boac, but the whole province of Marinduque.

In view of the foregoing, the enactment of this bill into law is earnestly sought.



**REGINA ONGSIAKO REYES**

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**AN ACT**  
**DECLARING THE DIOCESAN SHRINE OF MAHAL NA BIRHEN NG**  
**BIGLANG AWA (OUR LADY OF PROMPT SUCCOR) LOCATED IN**  
**THE MUNICIPALITY OF BOAC, PROVINCE OF MARINDUQUE, AS**  
**A PILGRIMAGE SITE AND TOURIST DESTINATION, PROVIDING**  
**FOR ITS DEVELOPMENT AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS**  
**THEREFOR**

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

**SECTION 1.** The Diocesan Shrine of Mahal na Birhen ng Biglang Awa (Our Lady of Prompt Succor) located in the Municipality of Boac, Province of Marinduque is hereby declared a pilgrimage site and a tourist destination. As such, it shall be accorded with priority development by the Department of Tourism (DOT) and other concerned agencies subject to the rules and regulations governing the development of pilgrimage sites and tourist destinations.

**SECTION 2.** The DOT, in coordination with the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), and other concerned agencies of the government, shall, immediately after the approval of this Act, prepare a development plan involving the construction, installation, and/or maintenance of such appropriate facilities



and infrastructure that shall improve the overall feature of the area thereby ensuring the accessibility and security of the pilgrims and tourists; *Provided*, that the said development plan shall ensure the preservation and conservation of the historical significance of the area.

**SECTION 3.** The Department of Tourism (DOT) and its attached agencies shall take immediate steps in implementing the tourist development plan that will suit the needs of the Diocesan Shrine of Mahal na Birhen ng Biglang Awa and shall incorporate the same in the Department's overall development plans and programs for national implementation.

**SECTION 4.** The DOT, in consultation with the Provincial Government of Marinduque, shall likewise promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the proper implementation of this Act.

**SECTION 5.** The Secretary of the DOT shall include in the Department's program the implementation of this Act, the funding of which shall be charged against the internally generated funds of the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA) and/or appropriations in the Annual General Appropriations Act.

**SECTION 6.** This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after completion of its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

**APPROVED.**

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