

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS
Third Regular Session

House Bill No. **6286**



Introduced by **REP. KAKA BAG-AO, REP. LENI ROBREDO,**
REP. BOLET BANAL, and REP. TEDDY BAGUILAT, JR.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Our Constitution states that Congress must give highest priority to the enactment of measures that protect and enhance the right of all Filipinos to human dignity, reduce social and economic inequalities, and remove cultural inequities.

Throughout the years, legislators have authored several proposed laws that have sought to correct injustices experienced by citizens, especially those who belong to marginalized sectors of society. These laws usually target major issues that confront farmers, fisherfolk, urban poor, indigenous peoples, and other groups. However, we must also turn our attention to daily realities that are often taken for granted. These are instances that affect and cut across various sectors in their everyday lives as they interact with different levels of government.

In many public offices, citizens who attempt to access frontline services are sometimes turned away by security personnel only because they failed to wear the attire prescribed by strict dress codes, which are not necessarily integral to the transactions being undertaken. In public meetings like legislative hearings and sessions, ordinary Filipinos—farmers, fisherfolk, urban poor, and indigenous peoples—who simply wish to observe proceedings on matters that affect them are denied entry because they were wearing slippers instead of shoes. These examples may seem to be trivial and minimal compared to the seemingly larger issues we face. They may often fail to capture the attention of policymakers and public officials in the course of their duties, but they are still concrete and clear circumstances that provide us with a real glimpse of everyday inequalities that affect citizens.

Strict dress codes discriminate against the poorest Filipinos who cannot afford to buy clothing and footwear that comply with the stringent prescriptions of some government offices and institutions. These impositions prevent many ordinary citizens from accessing services that they should rightfully enjoy. These unjust requirements hinder many ordinary citizens from seeing firsthand how government works for them and from participating in development initiatives by barring them from attending meetings that are supposedly open to the public.

In the interest of social justice and equality, unnecessary prescriptions in attire in government offices for citizens must be dismantled. Let us not allow strict dress codes to block opportunities for marginalized Filipinos to access services and to attend public meetings. Let us provide them with the chance to exercise their rights without impediments that judge them by what they wear and, in effect, how little they have. We must be reminded that we should first and foremost respond to the needs of those who have less in life. Let us truly open the doors of government to the people whom we serve.

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



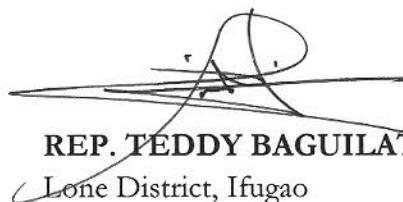
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AN ACT
PROHIBITING GOVERNMENT OFFICES AND AGENCIES FROM DENYING
CITIZENS ACCESS TO FRONTLINE SERVICES AND ATTENDANCE IN
PUBLIC MEETINGS ON THE BASIS OF ATTIRE

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

SECTION 1. Short Title. This Act shall be known as the “*Open Door Policy Act of 2015*.”

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. The State recognizes the need to value the dignity of every human person and the promotion of social justice in all phases of national development. Furthermore, the Constitution also mandates Congress to give highest priority to the enactment of measures that protect and enhance the right of all the people to human dignity, reduce social and economic inequalities, and remove cultural inequities.

SECTION 3. Coverage. This Act shall apply to all government offices and agencies including the national government and all its agencies, departments, bureaus, offices and instrumentalities, constitutional commissions and constitutionally mandated bodies, local governments and all their agencies including legislative bodies, government-owned or -controlled corporations, state universities and colleges, and all offices in the Congress of the Philippines including the offices of Senators and Representatives that provide frontline services and/or hold public meetings as defined in this Act. Dress codes for public officials and employees in the course of their duties in their respective government offices or agencies will not be affected or prohibited by this Act.

SECTION 4. Definition of Terms. For the purposes of this Act, the following terms shall be defined as follows:

- a. *Frontline Service* refers to the process or transaction between citizens as clients and government offices or agencies involving applications for any privilege, right, permit, reward, license, concession, or for any modification, renewal, or extension of the enumerated applications and/or requests which are acted upon in the ordinary course of business of the office or agency concerned.
- b. *Simple Transactions* refer to requests or applications submitted by clients of a government office or agency which only require ministerial actions on the part of the public officer or employee, or that which present only inconsequential issues for the resolution by an officer or employee of said government office. Such requests or applications are acted upon by the assigned officer or employee during the period stated in the Citizen's Charter, as provided by Republic Act No. 9485 or the Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007, which shall not be longer than five (5) working days.
- c. *Public Meetings* refers to meetings, hearings, or sessions conducted by any government office or agency, including legislative bodies, that are open to the public, where citizens act as guests, observers, or participants, whichever the case may be.
- d. *Strict Dress Code* refers to rules and regulations that prescribe particular clothing and footwear that effectively prevent citizens from accessing frontline services from government offices and agencies or attending public meetings.
- e. *Marginalized Sectors* refer to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of citizens in Philippine society including, but not limited to farmers, peasants, landless rural workers, fisherfolk, workers in the formal sector, workers in the informal sector, urban poor, rural poor, indigenous peoples and cultural communities, and disaster survivors.

SECTION 5. Prohibition of Strict Dress Codes in Government Frontline Service Offices.

All government institutions with frontline service offices shall be barred from implementing strict dress codes that prevent citizens, especially those belonging to marginalized sectors, from making inquiries or undertaking simple transactions. The said institutions shall not be allowed to prescribe the types of clothing and footwear that can or cannot be worn by citizens whom they are serving in their respective frontline service offices; *Provided*, That the attire of the citizen acting as a client is not integral or essential to the transactions being undertaken

SECTION 6. Prohibition of Strict Dress Codes in Public Meetings. All government institutions, including legislative bodies, shall be barred from implementing strict dress codes

that prevent citizens, especially those belonging to marginalized sectors, from attending public meetings as guests, observers, or participants.

SECTION 7. Administrative Liability. Failure to comply with this Act shall be tantamount to gross neglect of duty and shall constitute grounds for administrative and disciplinary sanctions against any public officer or employee who deliberately and knowingly implements a strict dress code which shall prevent any citizen from accessing government frontline services or attending public meetings.

SECTION 8. Implementing Rules and Regulations. The Civil Service Commission (CSC), in consultation with the Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor (PCUP) and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act.

SECTION 9. Separability Clause. If any section or part of this Act is held unconstitutional, no other section or provision shall be affected.

SECTION 10. Repealing Clause. All provisions of existing laws, presidential decrees or issuances, executive orders, letters of instruction, administrative orders, rules and regulations contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SECTION 11. Effectivity. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,