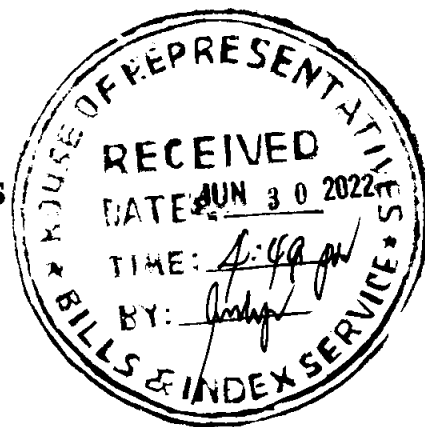


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 370



INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVE MARISSA "DEL MAR" P. MAGSINO

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A WELFARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM TO
FAMILIES LEFT BEHIND BY OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The goodbyes that are said with tears in the eyes, the long embrace made one last time before yearly visits turn into reunions that are few and far between, the backs wheeling suitcases turned against weeping kids who have no idea how long and painful the separation would be. These are scenes in airports as modern-day heroes fulfill the role they have to play in ensuring that they have food on the table and roof above the heads of their loved ones.

We know of the long letters penned in cramped living quarters, sealed with a kiss of longing. Many of us have seen the face of this heroism. Mothers and fathers inching their way to the Immigration Desks of airports while pretending not to hear the loud cries of children begging not to be left behind. Of *panganays* who need to leave home so they could send their siblings to school if only to secure a better future for them. This is the side of the Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) tale that we are most aware of.

We forget the other end of the bargain – the families left behind who, while undoubtedly having their lives improve one way or another, are left to fend for themselves and adjust to the change of having their loved one be separated from them. There is a cost to leaving them behind – one that sometimes is too hefty. Gaps widen between parents and children who only get to see each other once every few years; of spouses living with the fear of being widowed in an instant due to the risks of employment.

And they are who this measure seeks to give refuge to. For the material wealth that OFWs offer their families, also have concomitant effects on the families they shower with comfort. This bill proposes to establish OFW Family Centers which will provide welfare assistance and counseling to the families of OFWs.

For families who are nearing lifetime reunification, this bill seeks provide venue and programs for the interaction of OFWs and their families.

Households left behind, will not be *left behind*. This proposed measure will ensure that they will not be left alone as they fight the monsters of separation. We must see to it that the sacrifices that OFWs make will not be the ultimate cost of the destruction of their families, who they are working hard for.

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


MARISSA "DEL MAR" P. MAGSINO

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

1 Section 1. *Short Title.*—This Act shall be known as the "Left-Behind Household
2 of OFWs Act."

3 Sec.2. *Declaration of Policy.*— It is declared policy of the State to strengthen
4 the solidarity of the family and actively promote its total development. The State
5 recognizes the Filipino Family as the foundation of the nation.

6 Towards this end, the Administrator shall take such actions as are necessary to
7 the maximum extent practicable, to sustain harmony of the family 10 and prepare
8 families for future reintegration of OFWs.

9 Sec.3. *Definition of Terms.*— For purposes of this Act, the term:

10 (A)"Administration" means the Overseas Workers and
11 WelfareAdministration or "OWWA";

12 (B) "Administrator" means the Administrator of OWWA;

13 (C)"Center" means the Overseas Filipino Workers Family Center;
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15

1 (D) "Left-Behind Household" means families left behind by Overseas
2 Filipino Workers to work abroad; and

3 (E) "Overseas Filipino Worker" or "OFW" means any Filipino citizen who
4 is temporarily working in any country outside the Philippines.

5 Sec. 4. *OFW Family Centers.* –

6 (A) *Centers.* - The Administrator shall establish OFW Family Centers
7 nationwide, using the facilities of its regional offices, or any of the
8 regional offices of the Philippine Overseas Employment
9 Administration and the Department of Social and Welfare
10 Development. The purpose of each Center is –

11 (1) To provide welfare assistance and counseling serves to the
12 families of OFWs;

13 (2) To serve as coordinating office to non-government organizations
14 and associations that cater to the plight of OFWs; and

15 (3) To serve as a link of left-behind households to various services
16 and/or agencies of the government on overseas employment.

17 (B) *Location of Centers.* - Each Center shall be strategically located in
18 every municipality where there is a large population of families who have
19 relative working abroad.

20 (C) *Jurisdiction.* - The responsibilities of each Center shall be centered on the
21 welfare of left-behind families of OFWs.

22 Sec. 5. *Left-Behind Household Organizations.* - OWWA shall facilitate the
23 establishment of organizations or support groups of families left behind by migrant
24 workers. It shall also provide a venue for the interaction of members of families of
25 migrant workers.

26 Sec. 6. *Report to Congress.* - Three (3) years from the passage of the
27 provisions of this Act, the OWWA shall report to Congress the number of cases
28

1 brought to the various Centers and the intervention provided. A yearly
2 statistical report shall be submitted to the Department of Labor and Employment
3 and other concerned agencies.

4 Sec. 7. *Appropriations.* - To carry out the provisions of this Act, such sums as
5 may be necessary are hereby authorized to be appropriated from the National
6 Treasury.

7 Sec. 8. *Separability Clause.* - If any provision of this Act is held invalid or
8 unconstitutional, the same shall not affect the validity and effectivity of the other
9 provisions hereof.

10 Sec. 9. *Repealing Clause.* - All laws, decrees, orders, and issuances, or portions
11 thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, are hereby repealed,
12 amended or modified accordingly.

13 Sec. 10. *Effectivity Clause.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
14 publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,