

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Constitution Hills, Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS

First Regular Session

House Bill No. 2584



Introduced by: **REPRESENTATIVE EDWIN L. OLIVAREZ**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The National Capital Region (NCR) or Metro Manila encompasses an area of 619.57 square kilometers and a population of 12,877,253 or 12.8 percent of total population as of 2015. It is the country's most densely populated region with a population density of 21,000/km² and second most populous region of the Philippines next to Region IV-A. It is also the 9th most populous metropolitan area in Asia and the 5th most populous urban area in the world.

The region contributes 36 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product based on the Philippine Statistics Authority 2018 data. Its economic power makes the region the country's premier center for finance and commerce.

In 2014, there are an estimated four million slum dwellers living in Metro Manila. Homelessness is also a major problem in Metro Manila. However, these are being addressed by creating in-city relocation housing, and by relocating informal settler families in low-density housing built in the nearby provinces of Batangas, Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna and Rizal.

Nonetheless, the present Covid-19 pandemic has shown that these congested areas are vulnerable and a major public health concern since they are the epicenters of the pandemic. It also brought forth the issues of the lack of viable and sustainable

employment in rural areas, unbalanced regional development, and unequal distribution of wealth.

The Constitution provides that the State shall promote a just and dynamic social order that ensures the prosperity and independence of the nation and free the people from poverty. Furthermore, the State shall promote full employment, a rising standard of living, and a improved quality of life for all; and, promote comprehensive rural development.

It is imperative for the State to promote countryside development to reverse the migration to NCR and other congested metropolitan centers through balanced regional development and agricultural development of the rural areas to achieve inclusive, resilient and sustainable rural communities.

The passage of this measure is earnestly sought.



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**AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING THE BALIK PROBINSYA,
BAGONG PAG-ASA PROGRAM, CREATING A COUNCIL
THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

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

SECTION 1. Short Title. – This Act shall be known as the Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pag-asa Program or BP² of 2022.

Section 2. Declaration of Policy. – It shall be the policy of the State to bring to the countryside viable and sustainable employment opportunities, balanced regional development and equal distribution of wealth.

The State shall ensure balanced regional development and equitable distribution of wealth, resources and opportunities through policies and programs that boost countryside development and inclusive growth, provide adequate social services, and promote full employment, industrialization and an improved quality of life in rural areas. Towards this end, the “Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pag-asa (BP²) Program” shall be institutionalized.

Section 3. – *Creation of the Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pag-asa Council.* To ensure whole-of-government action on the implementation of the BP² Program, the Balik Probinsya, Bagong

Pag-asa Council ("Council") is hereby created to be composed of the following:

Chairperson	:	Executive Secretary
Vice Chairperson	:	Secretary for Socio-Economic Planning and Director-General, National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA),
Members	:	Secretary, Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Secretary, Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Secretary, Department of Agriculture (DA), Secretary, Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), Secretary, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Secretary, Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Secretary, Department of Health (DOH), Secretary, Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), Secretary, Department of Finance (DOF), Secretary, Department of Budget and Management (DBM), Secretary, Department of Public Works and Highways, Secretary, Department of Transportation (DOTr), Secretary, Department of Tourism (DOT), Secretary, Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD), Secretary, Department of Education (DepEd),

Chairperson, Commission on
Higher Education (CHED),
Secretary, Department of
Environment and Natural
Resources
(DENR),
Director General, Technical
Education and Skills
Development
Authority (TESDA),
Chairperson, Mindanao
Development Authority; and,
Chairperson, Cooperative
Development Authority (CDA).

A member of the Council shall designate a permanent and alternate representative, who is fully authorized to decide for and on behalf of his or her respective department, agency, or office and perform the functions as hereafter provided.

The Council shall be assisted by a Secretariat, to be headed by the General Manager of the National Housing Authority (NHA) as Executive Director, which shall provide technical and administrative support to the Council. The Secretariat shall be composed of personnel from the NHA and, as may be necessary, from member agencies of the Council.

Section 4. Powers and Functions of the Council. – The Council shall have the following powers and functions:

- a. Formulate within thirty (30) days from the issuance hereof, the guidelines necessary to implement this Act, including the BP² Program Framework as defined herein;
- b. Provide overall direction in the implementation of the BP² Program, including guidance and technical assistance to government agencies and local government units (LGUs) in its implementation;
- c. Approve or modify key areas and components of the BP² Program, as well as ensure the compliance of government agencies involved in its implementation;
- d. Develop a strategic communications plan to educate the people and advocate for supportive policies in the local

- level, in coordination with the Presidential Communications Operations Office;
- e. Identify legislative, regulatory, and policy changes to promote balanced regional development and recommend to the Congress the enactment of such reforms into law;
 - f. Engage, consult and coordinate with LGUs in the formulation of policies, and implementation of the components of the BP² Program that will allow for resource-sharing arrangement through, among others, co-financing mechanism with development partners;
 - g. Enlist the support and assistance of other government agencies, instrumentalities, government -owned or -controlled corporations and state universities and colleges, as well as consult and provide avenues for the private sector, relevant stakeholders, advocacy groups and non-government organizations to participate in the attainment of the objectives of this Order;
 - h. Create sub-groups, technical working groups or committee as may be deemed necessary to implement the objectives of this Act;
 - i. Adopt mechanism, such as but not limited to an online platform, and establishment of BP² desks in all offices of member agencies, to facilitate accessibility to the public, enhance monitoring of implementation, and ascertain the compliance of beneficiaries; and
 - j. Perform other tasks as the President may direct.

Section 5. *The Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pag-asa Program and Its Key Areas.* The BP² program is hereby established as national program of the government and adopted as a continuing strategy to drive inclusive and balanced urban and rural development, ensure rural prosperity and complement initiatives towards attaining resilient and sustainable communities.

The BP² Program Framework shall be divided into key areas, each having measured policy objectives:

- a. Empowerment of Local Industries – introduce a sustainable program for public sector investment and private sector participation that promotes regional development. Support shall be particularly provided to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to foster

the continued growth of the sector, and the rationalization of a purposeful system of fiscal incentives shall be prioritized to develop forward and backward linkages and export- and domestic-oriented enterprises, access to markets and a fully integrated value chain and encourage the transfer of medium and large businesses to provincial hubs.

- b. Food Security and Agricultural Productivity – Encourage and facilitate innovations and technologies for agricultural production, such as modern rice farming techniques, seed production and farm mechanization, conducive to long-term and sustainable rural development. Local agricultural industries shall be supported, and loans sourced from the Agricultural Competitiveness Enhancement Fund, as well as existing incentives given to agriculture cooperatives.

Measures to take advantage of economies of scale in agricultural production, promote value chain development, increase farm incomes, and improve the quality of life of farmers, shall be pursued.

- c. Social Welfare, Health and Employment – Comprehensive assistance packages shall be designed to encourage the voluntary and immediate movement to their respective home provinces of workers and overseas Filipino workers, especially those stranded in the NCR due to the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ).

Local health facilities shall be upgraded, and local health capacity shall be improved to address the health need of the community, such as building more hospitals and clinics, providing more ambulances and enhancing medical scholarship programs, among others.

Educational institutions and technical and vocational schools shall be built in strategic rural areas, state universities and colleges shall be linked to industries, though, among others, conversion of their idle lands into science or technology parks. Access to Open Distance Learning shall also be enhanced in rural communities.

Employment shall be created and restored through various support programs and assistance packages, including resettlement to provincial township sites and community interventions or projects based on area/resettlement site.

- d. Development of Infrastructure – Infrastructure such as means of transport and communications, power resource, and irrigation facilities which support the operation and development of other sectors of the economy shall be developed in all the different regions of the country. The completion of existing and future railway projects to facilitate movement of people, as well as the creation and improvement of transport terminals and construction of public markets in communities, shall be prioritized.

Section 6. *Categorization of the BP² Program Framework Components.* – The components of the BP² Program Framework to be formulated by the Council shall be aligned with the key areas mapped in the preceding Section, and shall be categorized under specific progress points, as follows:

- a. Short-term – Pipeline or existing programs, activities or projects (PAPs) with available funds or appropriations, which can be adapted to support the required interventions under the BP² Program, and which can be readily implemented during the Enhanced and General Community Quarantine. Due priority shall be given to individuals and enterprises qualified under the implementing guidelines mentioned in Section 4 (a) hereof.

For the efficient voluntary movement of individuals and enterprises from NCR to identified rural areas, initial assessment may be provided for assistance, such as but not limited to the following:

- i. Transportation and relocation coursed through the DOTr and DILG which are tasked to coordinate with the LGUs concerned. For this purpose, the Department of National Defense (DND), the

Armed Forces of the Philippines, and all its main service branches, as well as the Philippine Coast Guard, may be called to render the necessary logistical support;

- ii. Transitory support from existing DSWD and NHA programs;
- iii. Livelihood and employment packages that are implemented or may be developed by the DOL and DTI;
- iv. Agri-based support services offered by the DA;
- v. Educational programs, including intern-based learning, through the DepEd, CHED and TESDA;
- vi. Fiscal incentives and transition assistance for MSMEs, including but not limited to tax incentives and fast -tracked processing of licenses and permits, as may be applicable; and
- vii. Other forms of aid as may be necessary or formulated by relevant government agencies.

b. Medium-term – Existing PAPs with available funds or appropriations to support required interventions or new PAPs for funding, which can be implemented when the ECQ or travel restriction is lifted. It may consist of, but is not limited to the following:

- i. Identification of existing special economic zones, as well as development of MSME-oriented industries;
- ii. Livelihood and employment opportunities suitable to rural development;
- iii. Strengthening and prioritizing the National Spatial Strategy integrated in the Philippine Development Plan and spearheaded by the NEDA;
- iv. Integration of institutional assistance such as progression of formal education, improved healthcare services and medical facilities, maintenance and promotion of peace, order, and security; and,
- v. Establishment of new special economic zones in Visayas and Mindanao including the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region.

- c. Long-term – PAPs that require longer time horizons to implement but whose initial steps must already be taken by national government agencies, such as but not limited to the proposed decentralization of powers and seat of governance, p[priority legislation on rationalized and results-based tax incentives for agricultural or tourism industries and the National Land Use Act, and the creation of new urban centers outside of the NCR and existing major urban centers.

Section 7. *Funding.* – The amount necessary for the implementation of this Act shall be charged against existing appropriations of the member agencies of the Council, and from sources to be identified by the DBM, subject to existing budgeting, accounting and auditing laws, rules and regulations. To the extent permitted by law, agency heads are hereby authorized to realign items in their respective appropriations to fund PAPs approved as part of the BP² Program. Funding requirements for the succeeding years shall be included in the respective budgets of government agencies implementing the BP² Program.

Section 8. *Reporting.* – The Council shall submit to the President, a bi-annual report on the implementation of this Act, including its accomplishments in terms of short-, medium- and long-term goals and budget utilization.

Section 9. *Separability Clause.* – If any part or section shall be declared unconstitutional or invalid, such declaration shall not affect the other parts or sections of this Act.

Section 10. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, rules and regulations inconsistent with any provision of this Act shall be deemed repealed or modified accordingly.

Section 11. *Effectivity.* – This shall take effect after fifteen (15) days from its publication in two (2) national newspaper of the general circulation or in the Official Gazette.

Approved.