

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 2533



Introduced by **REPRESENTATIVE AUDREY KAY T. ZUBIRI**

AN ACT
MANDATING SHIPOWNERS, SHIP CREW, AND CONCERNED GOVERNMENT
AGENCIES TO PROVIDE FOR AND ENSURE THE SAFETY OF PASSENGERS
AT SEA, AND PROVIDING PENALTIES FOR VIOLATIONS THEREOF

EXPLANATORY NOTE

With over 50 million passengers reported by the Philippine Ports Authority as of 2022¹, water transport infrastructure plays a vital role in the Philippines, not only because of its cultural and historical significance but also because it remains as one of the most practical and affordable modes of transportation in the country. As an archipelagic nation comprising of over 7,000 islands, maritime mobility becomes a strategically key means of national connectivity and economic development.

Nevertheless, despite the country's abundant land and water forms, the Philippine maritime and port industry continues to face persistent challenges. While the country has made strides in producing maritime-related services, the sector has yet to achieve its full potential due to longstanding issues—among them is passenger safety, inadequate and poor infrastructure, and minimal government investment.

According to a 2023 Statistical Report by the Maritime Industry Authority², from January 2023 to December 2023, more than half of reported maritime accidents (51.67% or 97 cases) were recorded for passenger vessels. In the same report, the MARINA reported ship collision and ship sinking as two of the major maritime incidents reported from 2019 to 2023.

¹ 2023 MARINA Statistical Report, p. 24, <https://marina.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/MARINA-Stat-Report-2023-adjusted.pdf>

² 2023 MARINA Statistical Report, p. 21, *Ibid.*

One of the deadliest maritime accidents in the country was the case of the MV Doña Paz in December 1987 leaving more than 4,000 passengers and only 24 survivors.³

The prevalence of maritime accidents in passenger vessels even today underscores the urgent need for stronger policy direction and implementation of stronger safety standards in the maritime industry.

Under this proposed measure, vessels covered by this Act are required to comply with mandatory minimum safety standards and measures and the provision of standard safety equipment. To further safeguard passengers, this bill also expressly prohibits overloading, ensuring that maritime transport remains safe and secure for all.

In view of the foregoing, the approval of this bill is urgently sought.


AUDREY KAY T. ZUBIRI
Representative, 3rd District of Bukidnon

³ Caltex Philippines Inc. v. Sulpicio Lines, et.al., G.R. No. 131166, September 30, 1999.

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

1 **SECTION 1. *Short Title.*** - This Act shall be known as the "Maritime Passenger Safety
2 Act."

3
4 **SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.*** - It is hereby declared the policy of the State to:

5
6 a. Enhance and ensure the safety and quality of passenger-transport services in the
7 country through the provision on board the ship of adequate safety equipment, strict observance
8 by ship owners, ship crew, and passengers of minimum safety measures and standards, and the
9 provision of qualified and competent crew personnel to man and operate the vessels;

10
11 b. Provide for the effective supervision and regulation of operations of all water
12 transport utilities in the country, particularly those engaged in the commercial carriage of
13 passengers by sea, through the rationalization of functions and responsibilities of various
14 government agencies involved in the enforcement of maritime safety laws; and

15
16 c. Provide the basis for the criminal liability of shipowners and crew members of
17 ships for any injuries suffered by, or loss of lives of their passengers resulting from their

malicious or culpable negligence in the course of performance of their contracts of carriage with such passengers.

SEC. 3. *Scope.* - The provisions of this Act shall apply to:

a. All vessels engaged in the carriage of passengers and goods for hire regardless of tonnage, including such vessels of foreign registry temporarily used in Philippine waters;

b. All types of vessels required to be registered in the Philippines under existing laws; and

c. Warships, naval vessels, non-motorized bancas, sailboats and other watercrafts of less than three (3) gross registered tonnage (GRT) shall not be covered by this Act.

SEC. 4. *Mandatory Minimum Safety Standards and Measures.* - All vessels covered by the provisions of this Act shall strictly observe the following:

a. The showing of a film, at least of ten (10) minutes length and dubbed in the local dialects of the points of origin and destination of the vessel, pertaining to the ship's safety, health and sanitation in such places in the vessel, and in such times that will ensure that most if not all passengers on board have effectively seen and heard the same;

b. All watertight doors, portholes, ramps and manholes shall be securely locked and checked prior to leaving port and must be regularly inspected during the voyage;

c. During any emergency, the posting of crew members and other personnel of the vessel on strategic areas or points in the vessel as may be indicated in its general emergency plan for the purpose of assisting the passengers to, or prioritizing and ensuring their safety;

d. The clearing, at all times, of all passageways of any obstruction. Safe and convenient storage for passengers' hand carried luggages must be provided; and

e. The wearing of prescribed uniform and identification cards by the ship's officers and crew, including security personnel, while they are on duty.

SEC. 5. *Provision of Standard Safety Equipment.* - All vessels covered by the provisions of this Act shall at all times be provided with:

- a. Life vests of life jackets on board the vessel in the quantity of twenty (20) units or pieces more than the passenger load capacity of such vessel as determined and authorized by the MARINA imprinted with the vessel's name, conspicuously stored in any locker and must be readily accessible for use in any case of emergency;
- b. Lifeboats or rubber boats on board the vessel in the quantity of two (2) units more than what is sufficient to accommodate the passenger load capacity of such vessel, including the crew members of the vessel, imprinted with the vessel's name conspicuously located in strategic points or areas of the vessel, and must be readily accessible for use in any case of emergency;
- c. At least (2) accessible emergency exits or escape openings in all general areas, and the location of such shall be indicated by luminous signs visible in all passenger areas showing the proper direction thereto;
- d. Independent red blinking lights as a part of, and indicating each emergency exit or escape opening for the purpose of assisting the passengers in identifying such exits in cases of emergency;
- e. Emergency lights, in good working condition, in all passenger accommodations, passageways and stairways that shall automatically switch on in any case of power failure in the vessel; and
- f. Sketches of the vessel indicating the locations of lifejackets and lifeboats, firefighting equipment, emergency exits, and the major sections of the vessel, passageways and stairways, including the vessels general emergency plan, must be conspicuously displayed in the passenger lounges and inside cabins and suites.

SEC. 6. *Passenger Overloading.* - No vessel shall:

- a. Leave a port unless its manifest or passenger list has been prepared and made available by the concerned ship officer;
- b. Leave the port carrying more than or in excess of its authorized passenger load capacity;
- c. Accept persons or passengers without a valid ticket issued by the shipowner or its authorized agent; and
- d. Allow selling or issuance of tickets on board.

1 **SEC. 7. *Delineation of Functions.*** - Notwithstanding existing laws, rules and
2 memoranda and issuances the Maritime Industry Authority or MARINA shall promulgate rules
3 and regulations for the effective implementation of the provisions of this Act.
4

5 The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) shall assist the MARINA the enforcement of this
6 Act and its implementing rules and regulations. For this purpose, it shall be primarily
7 responsible for enforcing the provisions of this Act before any vessel leaves, or as it calls on,
8 any port, and whenever, allowed by law, or when necessary, in the interest of the safety of the
9 passengers, while any such vessel in on its voyage at sea.
10

11 **SEC. 8. *Penalties.*** - Any violation of the provisions of this Act shall be punished
12 accordingly:
13

- 14 a. Any violation of the provisions of Section 4 of this Act shall be punished with a fine
15 not less than Fifty Thousand Pesos (P50,000.00) but not more than One Hundred
16 Thousand Pesos (P100,000.00) to the ship owners or judicial entity concerned. For the
17 third violation of the same provisions, the ship owners and other responsible officers,
18 as the case may be, shall be punished by imprisonment of two (2) years and one (1)
19 day;
20 b. Any violation of the provisions of Section 5 of this Act shall be punished with a fine
21 not less than One Hundred Thousand Pesos (P100,000.00) but not more than Two
22 Hundred Thousand Pesos (P200,000.00) to the shipowners or juridical entity concerned.
23 For the third violation of the same provisions, the shipowners and other responsible
24 officers, as the case may be, shall be punished by an imprisonment of three (3) years
25 and one (1) day;
26 c. Any violation of the provisions of Section 6 of this Act shall be punished with a fine
27 not less than One Hundred Thousand Pesos (P100,000.00) but no juridical entity, or
28 employee or agent concerned. For the third violation of the same provisions, the ship
29 owners and other responsible officer, or agent or employee, as the case may be, shall
30 be punished by an imprisonment of three (3) years and one (1) day.
31

32 **SEC. 9. *When Injuries or Deaths Occur.*** - Whenever less grave or serious physical
33 injuries or death of any passenger occur as a direct and efficient cause of any violation of
34 Section 4, 5 and 6 of this Act as may be shown by evidence in a judicial proceeding, the

1 responsible persons of the entity shall be punished with imprisonment of not less than six (6)
2 years but not more than twelve (12) years, without prejudice to the penalties imposed in the
3 abovementioned sections.
4

5 **SEC. 10. *Jurisdiction of Courts.*** - The jurisdiction over a case arising from any
6 violations of this Act shall be in accordance with the pertinent provisions of Batas Pambansa
7 Bilang 129 as amended: *Provided*, That if the violation occurred at sea, the court whose seat is
8 the most proximate in distance to such location of the vessel at sea shall have jurisdiction.
9

10 **SEC. 11. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** - Within sixty (60) days from the
11 effectivity of this Act, the Department of Transportation (DOTr), in coordination with its
12 relevant attached agencies, MARINA, Philippine Coast Guard, and private sector shipping
13 practitioners, shall promulgate the necessary Implementing Rules and Regulations for the
14 effective implementation of this Act.
15

16 **SEC. 12. *Repealing Clause.*** - All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations
17 or other issuance, or parts thereof, inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified
18 accordingly.
19

20 **SEC. 13. *Separability Clause.*** - If any portion of provision of this Act is declared
21 unconstitutional, the remainder of this Act of any provisions not affected thereby shall remain
22 in force and effect.
23

24 **SEC. 14. *Effectivity.*** - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in
25 the Official Gazette or at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation in the Philippines.

Approved,