



Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Quezon City
TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session



House Bill No. 2602

Introduced by CIBAC Party-List Representative
EDUARDO “BRO. EDDIE” C. VILLANUEVA

EXPLANATORY NOTE

1 The protection of the rights and welfare of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs)
2 and overseas Filipinos (OFs) remains one of the paramount responsibilities of the
3 Philippine government. While the Philippines has long institutionalized mechanisms
4 for legal and consular support through the Legal Assistance Fund (LAF) and the
5 Agarang Kalinga at Saklolo para sa mga OFWs na Nangangailangan (AKSYON) Fund,
6 these mechanisms have often been hindered by bureaucratic limitations, funding
7 inflexibility, and gaps in jurisdiction—especially in times of crisis.

8
9 This bill, which has been approved on Third Reading by the House of
10 Representatives, seeks to amend key provisions of Republic Act No. 8042 (Migrant
11 Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995) and Republic Act No. 11641 (Department
12 of Migrant Workers Act) to expand the scope and responsiveness of the LAF and
13 AKSYON Fund.

14
15 Through this measure:

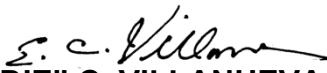
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17 • The LAF retained by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and the AKSYON
18 Fund administered by the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) may now
19 both be used to cover a wider range of legal and consular needs of OFWs and
20 overseas Filipinos, from the investigation and arrest stage to trial and appeal,
21 including labor and criminal complaints against abusive employers;
 - 22
23 • Provisions are added to explicitly allow urgent fund releases for hiring foreign
24 legal counsel and covering litigation-related costs without being hindered by
25 procurement laws such as Republic Act No. 9184;
 - 26
27 • The DFA and DMW are mandated to coordinate in extending assistance in
28 countries without Migrant Workers Offices (MWOs);
- 29

- The Commission on Audit (COA) is directed to audit fund usage annually, ensuring transparency and accountability;
- Both agencies are required to submit annual reports to Congress and the Oversight Committee to ensure continued legislative scrutiny and fund efficiency.

These reforms are a response to longstanding operational delays and rigidities that have often left OFWs helpless in legal proceedings abroad. By institutionalizing more flexible, accessible, and sustained legal aid mechanisms, this Act ensures that no overseas Filipino stands alone in the face of injustice—from detention to court trials, and even through appeals.

Ultimately, this bill underscores the State’s commitment to fulfilling its constitutional duty to protect labor—especially those working in foreign lands who have contributed so much to the Philippine economy and society.

The passage of this measure is a crucial and compassionate response to the real, lived challenges faced by Filipino migrants. Its full implementation will bring the Philippine government closer to its vision of a whole-of-nation, whole-of-world support system for all OFWs and overseas Filipinos in distress.


EDUARDO “BRO. EDDIE” C. VILLANUEVA
Representative, CIBAC Partylist



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HOUSE BILL NO. 2602

Introduced by CIBAC Party-List Representative
EDUARDO "BRO. EDDIE" C. VILLANUEVA

AN ACT
EXPANDING THE USE OF THE LEGAL ASSISTANCE FUND AND THE
AGARANG KALINGA AT SAKLOLO PARA SA MGA OFWS NA
NANGANGAILANGAN (AKSYON) FUND, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE
SECTION 26 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8042, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE
"MIGRANT WORKERS AND OVERSEAS FILIPINOS ACT OF 1995," AS
AMENDED, AND SECTION 14 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11641, OTHERWISE
KNOWN AS THE "DEPARTMENT OF MIGRANT WORKERS ACT"

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

1 SECTION 1. Section 26 of Republic Act No. 8042, otherwise known as the
2 "Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995," as amended, is hereby
3 further amended to read as follows:
4

5 "SEC. 26. Uses of the Legal Assistance Fund. - The Legal Assistance Fund
6 created under the preceding section, **WHICH HAS BEEN RETAINED BY THE**
7 **DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (DFA) PURSUANT TO SECTION 14 OF**
8 **REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11641, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "DEPARTMENT OF**
9 **MIGRANT WORKERS ACT"**, shall be used [exclusively] to provide legal **AND**
10 **CONSULAR ASSISTANCE** services to [migrant workers and] **OTHER** overseas
11 Filipinos [in distress] in accordance with the guidelines, criteria and procedures **TO BE**
12 promulgated **BY THE DFA** [in accordance with Section 24 (a) hereof]. The
13 expenditures to be charged against the **LEGAL ASSISTANCE** Fund shall include the
14 fees for the foreign lawyers to be hired [by the Legal Assistant for Migrant Workers
15 Affairs] to represent [migrant workers] **OVERSEAS FILIPINOS** facing charges,
16 **EXPENSES FOR THE** [or in] filing **OF LABOR AND/OR CRIMINAL** cases against
17 erring or abusive employers **OR OTHER PERSONS** abroad, bail bonds to secure the
18 temporary releases and other litigation expenses: **PROVIDED, THAT THE LEGAL**
19 **ASSISTANCE FUND SHALL, AT ALL TIMES, BE MADE AVAILABLE FROM THE**
20 **TIME OF THE INVESTIGATION, DETENTION, ARREST OR INDICTMENT OF THE**

1 **OVERSEAS FILIPINOS ALL THE WAY TO THE TRIAL PROPER, AND AT ALL**
2 **LEVELS OF APPEAL THEREAFTER:** Provided, **FURTHER**, That at the end of every
3 year, the Department of Foreign Affairs shall include in its report to Congress, as
4 provided for under Section 33 of this Act, the status of the Legal Assistance Fund,
5 including the expenditures from the said fund duly audited by the Commission on Audit
6 (COA): Provided, further**MORE**, That the hiring of foreign legal counsels **AND OTHER**
7 **RELEASES OF FUNDS FOR OTHER EXPENSES RELATED TO THE PROVISIONS**
8 **OF THIS SECTION**, when circumstances warrant urgent action, shall be exempt from
9 the coverage of Republic Act No. 9184 or the Government Procurement Act.

10
11 **THE ABOVEMENTIONED PROVISION SHALL SIMILARL APPLY TO THE**
12 **UTILIZATION OF THE AGARANG KALINGA AT SAKLOLO PARA SA MGA OFWS**
13 **NA NANGANGAILANGAN (AKSYON) FUND BY THE DEPARTMENT OF**
14 **MIGRANT WORKERS FOR CASES REQUIRING LEGAL ASSISTANCE, IN**
15 **ACCORDANCE WITH REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11641.**

16
17 **IN COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES WHERE THERE ARE NO MIGRANT**
18 **WORKERS OFFICES YET, THE DFA SHALL EXTEND LEGAL AND OTHER**
19 **FORMS OF ASSISTANCE TO OFWS LOCATED IN SAID AREAS."**
20

21 SEC. 2. Section 14 of Republic Act No. 11641, otherwise known as the
22 "Department of Migrant Workers Act," is hereby amended to read as follows:
23

24 **"SEC. 14. Agarang Kalinga at Saklolo para sa mga OFW na**
25

26 Nangangailangan (AKSYON) Fund. - The Agarang Kalinga at Saklolo para sa
27 mga OFWs na Nangangailangan (AKSYON) Fund is hereby established to provide
28 legal and other forms of assistance to OFs, separate from the funds managed by the
29 DFA. The DFA shall retain ATN and Legal Assistance Funds for the benefit of other
30 Filipinos overseas and for consular assistance services. An appropriate amount shall
31 initially be provided for the AKSYON Fund in the General Appropriations Act of the
32 year following its enactment into law and an appropriate amount for every year
33 thereafter to provide assistance to OFWs at Foreign Service Posts where MWO have
34 been established and staffed.
35

36 **"THE EXPENDITURES TO BE CHARGED AGAINST TH AKSYON FUND**
37 **SHALL INCLUDE THE FEES FOR THE FOREIGN LAWYERS TO BE HIRED TO**
38 **REPRESENT OF WS FACING CHARGES, EXPENSES FOR THE FILING OF**
39 **LABOR AND/OR CRIMINAL CASES AGAINST ERRING OR ABUSIVE**
40 **EMPLOYERS OR OTHER PERSONS ABROAD, BAIL BONDS TO SECURE THE**
41 **TEMPORARY RELEASES AND OTHER LITIGATION EXPENSES: PROVIDED,**
42 **THAT THE AKSYON FUND SHALL, AT ALL TIMES, BE MADE AVAILABLE FROM**
43 **THE TIME OF THE INVESTIGATION, DETENTION, ARREST OR INDICTMENT OF**
44 **THE OFWS ALL THE WAY TO THE TRIAL PROPER, AND AT ALL LEVELS OF**
45 **APPEAL THEREAFTER: PROVIDED, FURTHER, THAT AT THE END OF EVERY**
46 **YEAR, THE DEPARTMENT OF MIGRANT WORKERS SHALL REPORT TO THE**
47 **CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE CREATED UNDER SECTION 25 OF**
48 **THIS ACT THE STATUS OF THE AKSYON FUND, INCLUDING THE**
49 **EXPENDITURES FROM THE SAID FUND DULY AUDITED BY THE COMMISSION**
50 **ON AUDIT (COA): PROVIDED, FURTHERMORE, THAT THE HIRING OF FOREIGN**

1 **LEGAL COUNSELS AND OTHER RELEASES OF FUNDS FOR OTHER**
2 **EXPENSES RELATED TO THE PROVISIONS OF THIS SECTION, WHEN**
3 **CIRCUMSTANCES WARRANT URGENT ACTION, SHALL BE EXEMPT FROM**
4 **THE COVERAGE OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9184 OR THE GOVERNMENT**
5 **PROCUREMENT REFORM ACT.**

6
7 Within thirty (30) days from the promulgation of this Act, the Secretary, in
8 consultation with relevant stakeholders, shall issue the necessary guidelines regarding
9 the use of the AKSYON Fund.

10
11 A sufficient sum shall be appropriated to the DFA to perform functions of the
12 MWO in Foreign Service Posts where there is yet no such office."

13
14 SEC. 3. The Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Migrant
15 Workers shall, in consultation with the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration and
16 other stakeholders, within sixty (60) days after the effectivity of this Act, formulate the
17 necessary rules and regulations for its effective implementation.

18
19 SEC. 4. All laws, presidential decrees, orders, issuances, rules and regulations
20 or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed,
21 amended or modified accordingly.

22
23 SEC. 5. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the
24 Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

25
26 Approved,
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