

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 3124



Introduced by Representative JB BERNOS

AN ACT
PROMOTING LOCAL EMPLOYMENT AND RETENTION OF FILIPINO
GRADUATES AND YOUNG PROFESSIONALS IN THE PROVINCES THROUGH
COMMUNITY-BASED WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, ENTERPRISE SUPPORT,
AND CAREER PATHWAYS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Philippines continues to face the challenge of internal migration, where graduates and young professionals leave their hometowns in search of employment opportunities in urban centers. This trend has led to labor shortages in rural areas, underutilization of local talent, and deepening regional inequality. As a result, provincial economies are deprived of the innovation, energy, and potential contributions of their homegrown youth.

The "Balik-Bayanihan sa Probinsya Act" seeks to address this imbalance by creating enabling environments for dignified, sustainable, and place-based employment across the provinces. Rather than offering temporary incentives or financial aid alone, this proposed legislation strengthens local ecosystems for work and enterprise by aligning education, labor, and development policies.

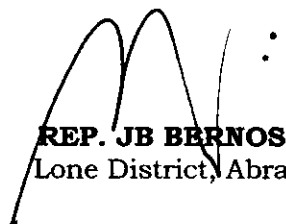
This measure promotes four major goals: (1) retaining young talent in rural and provincial areas through career development programs and job creation strategies; (2) enabling the return of young professionals to their hometowns with pathways for employment or entrepreneurship; (3) supporting local governments, schools, and employers in building provincial talent pipelines; and (4)

institutionalizing cooperation among government agencies to mainstream these efforts into ongoing mandates.

The bill leverages existing structures—such as Local Government Units, Public Employment Service Offices, State Universities and Colleges, and Regional Development Councils—without creating new bureaucracies. It calls for coordinated action from agencies like DOLE, DTI, DICT, CHED, and TESDA to support local career development, digital infrastructure, and industry partnerships.

With this Act, the State affirms its commitment to regional equity, inclusive growth, and human capital retention. By transforming the way we invest in young professionals across the country, this measure envisions a Philippines where opportunity does not require migration, and success can be found closer to home.

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



REP. JB BERNOS
Lone District, Abra

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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-Bayanihan sa Probinsya Act.”

Sec. 2. Declaration of Policy. The State affirms the importance of regional equity, inclusive development, and human capital retention in strengthening the Philippine economy. Recognizing the persistent migration of graduates and professionals to urban centers, this Act seeks to create sustainable, skills-based employment ecosystems in the provinces to encourage young Filipinos to stay, build careers, or return home to serve their communities.

Sec. 3. Objectives. This Act aims to: 

- a. Promote professional opportunities and dignified work in rural and provincial areas; 
- b. Encourage fresh graduates to remain in their hometowns through structured career development and enterprise pathways; 
- c. Facilitate the return of young professionals from cities by building enabling environments for employment and entrepreneurship; and

- d. Foster collaboration between government, academe, industry, and civil society for place-based economic development.

Sec. 4. Program Framework. The “Balik-Bayanihan Program” shall include the following strategic components:

- A. Provincial Talent Hubs - Each participating province shall establish or designate a Provincial Talent Hub through its Local Government Unit (LGU) or State University and College (SUC). These hubs shall:
 - a. Provide career coaching, job matching, and local labor market information;
 - b. Facilitate continuing education and professional development through Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), or digital learning;
 - c. Offer co-working spaces and mentorship programs for freelancers, startups, and returning professionals.
- B. Local Career Pathways and Job Creation - LGUs, in partnership with regional industries and educational institutions, shall:
 - a. Identify and promote career pathways in tourism, agriculture, digital services, crafts, and local public service;
 - b. Integrate place-based internships, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training in senior high school and tertiary education;
 - c. Encourage alignment of curriculum with local labor demands.
- C. Rural Employment Linkages - The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), in collaboration with Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and LGUs, shall establish a Rural Employment and Enterprise Partnership (REEP) Program to link young workers with:
 - a. MSMEs and cooperatives;
 - b. Remote work and digital economy opportunities;
 - c. Tourism and heritage-based enterprises; and
 - d. Agribusiness, environmental restoration, and local manufacturing.
- D. Return-to-Province Career Tracks - Local governments and national agencies shall:
 - a. Maintain and publish priority hiring rosters for local government and partner institutions;
 - b. Offer reintegration support services such as licensing facilitation, remote work infrastructure, or enterprise incubation;

- c. Work with Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) to enable digital professionals to thrive in rural areas via broadband support and shared tech facilities.

Sec. 5. Institutional Mechanisms. To ensure efficient implementation without the need for new bureaucratic structures, the following existing institutions shall carry out the mandates of this Act:

A. Local Government Units (LGUs)

- a. Shall integrate local talent retention and employment strategies into their Local Development Plans, Annual Investment Plans, and Tourism and Enterprise Development Plans.
- b. May designate a focal person or unit (e.g., the Public Employment Service Office or PESO) to coordinate all local activities under this Act, in collaboration with the Provincial Governor and Mayor.
- c. Shall partner with local chambers, cooperatives, and educational institutions in identifying and supporting local career opportunities.

B. Public Employment Service Office (PESO)

- a. Shall serve as the lead coordinating office at the city/municipal/provincial level for job matching, local labor market analysis, and implementation of return-to-province employment facilitation.
- b. Shall maintain a database of returning graduates and jobseekers, as well as local employers and in-demand occupations.

C. State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) shall establish Graduate Engagement Programs to:

- a. Promote employment opportunities in local communities through research, extension services, or public-private partnerships.
- b. Create provincial graduate directories, alumni matching, and career guidance that promotes local options.
- c. Support students in developing capstone projects, theses, or enterprises aligned with provincial development goals.

D. Regional Development Councils (RDCs)

- a. Shall incorporate “Balik-Bayanihan” objectives into their Regional Development Plans and serve as a platform to align national and local programs in workforce development, digital infrastructure, and micro-, small-, and medium-scale enterprises (MSME) support.

- b. Shall work with DTI, DOLE, DICT, CHED, TESDA, and other agencies to ensure synergy of existing programs.
- E. National Government Agencies - The following agencies shall mainstream this Act into their ongoing mandates:
 - i. DOLE – oversee local job promotion strategies, labor market analytics, and job referral networks;
 - ii. TESDA – provide skills retooling and certifications aligned with provincial growth sectors;
 - iii. CHED – align scholarship and academic programs with place-based employment pathways;
 - iv. DTI – assist in MSME development and access to markets;
 - v. DICT – ensure digital infrastructure and remote work hubs are established in target areas;
 - vi. DILG – support LGU capacity-building for policy integration and reporting.

Sec. 6. Role of Educational Institutions. SUCs and HEIs shall establish Provincial Graduate Engagement Programs, including:

- a. Incentivized local research and extension projects;
- b. Alumni mentorship and community service fellowships;
- c. Graduation-to-employment pipelines through partnerships with local employers.

Sec. 7. Government Support Measures

- a. LGUs shall integrate Local Talent Retention Plans into their development and investment plans.
- b. National government shall provide technical assistance, regulatory support, and infrastructure funding—particularly for digital connectivity, training facilities, and talent hubs.

Sec. 8. Monitoring and Evaluation. DOLE and Department of Economy, Planning, and Development (DEPDEV) shall publish an Annual Local Employment and Migration Report, tracking provincial workforce retention, graduate absorption rates, and return-to-province transitions.

Sec. 9. Appropriations. The amount necessary for the implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act. Priority shall be given to underserved provinces and those with high youth out-migration.

Sec. 10. Separability Clause. If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the remainder shall not be affected thereby.

Sec. 11. Repealing Clause. All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, rules, and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Sec. 12. Effectivity. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,