

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **3199**



Introduced by Representative **MARLYN L. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) have long been heralded as the modern-day heroes of the Philippines. Their remittances significantly contribute to national economic growth, accounting for billions of pesos annually and sustaining countless Filipino households. However, while the economic impact of labor migration is clear, the social costs borne by the families left behind—particularly spouses, children, and elderly dependents—are often overlooked and insufficiently addressed.

This bill, entitled the “Left-Behind Household of OFWs Act,” seeks to establish a comprehensive welfare and social assistance program for families left behind by OFWs through the creation of OFW Family Centers nationwide. These centers should provide psychosocial support, welfare services, and government agency linkages to assist families in coping with the challenges of transnational family arrangements, and to prepare them for the eventual reintegration of the OFW into the family and community.

The Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, under Article XV, Section 1, recognizes the Filipino family as the foundation of the nation and mandates the State to strengthen its solidarity and promote its total development. Similarly, Article II, Section 12 affirms the State’s duty to protect and strengthen the family as a basic autonomous social institution. These constitutional principles serve as the moral and legal framework for this measure, which aims to safeguard the well-being of OFW families by addressing not only their economic needs but also their emotional and social vulnerabilities.

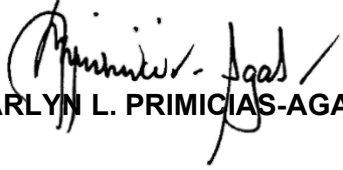
The Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995 (Republic Act No. 8042, as amended by R.A. No. 10022) emphasizes the State’s responsibility to ensure the welfare and protection of migrant workers and their families. However, while that law focuses largely on the rights and protection of the OFWs themselves, there remains a critical gap in institutionalized support for those they leave behind. This proposed legislation aims to close that gap by mandating the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) to establish and operate OFW Family Centers using the resources of its regional offices and in coordination with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), and relevant local government units.

These centers serve three main purposes: (1) to provide welfare assistance and counseling to left-behind households; (2) to serve as coordinating hubs for non-governmental and civil society organizations that serve OFW communities; and (3) to act as liaison offices to various government services that relate to overseas employment and family welfare.

The bill also mandates OWWA to facilitate the formation of support groups or community organizations among families of OFWs. These organizations will foster peer support, mental health awareness, and community resilience—important factors in mitigating the social impact of long-term family separation.

Finally, this bill calls for periodic reporting to Congress and relevant executive departments, ensuring transparency, data-driven intervention, and accountability in the implementation of the program. It authorizes the appropriation of necessary funds from the National Treasury, recognizing that investment in Filipino families is an investment in national development.

In view of the vital role of OFWs in our society and economy, and the equally important need to care for their families left at home, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.


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

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 "Left-Behind Household of OFWs Act."*

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

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

Sec.3. Definition of Terms - For purposes of this Act, the term:

- (A) "Administration" means the Overseas Workers and Welfare Administration or "OWWA".
- (B) "Administrator" means the Administrator of OWWA.
- (C) "Center" means the Overseas Filipino Workers Family Center.

- (D) "Left-Behind Household" means families left behind by Overseas Filipino Workers to work abroad; and
- (E) "Overseas Filipino Worker" or "OFW" means any Filipino citizen who is temporarily working in any country outside the Philippines.

Sec. 4. OFW Family Centers. -

- (A) *Centers.* - The Administrator shall establish OFW Family Centers nationwide, using the facilities of its regional offices, or any of the regional offices of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration and the Department of Social and Welfare Development. The purpose of each Center is -
 - (1) To provide welfare assistance and counseling services to the families of OFWs.
 - (2) To serve as coordinating office to non-government organizations and associations that cater to the plight of OFWs; and
 - (3) To serve as a link between left-behind households to various services and/or agencies of the government on overseas employment.
- (B) *Location of Centers.* - Each Center shall be strategically located in every municipality where there is a large population of families who have relative working abroad.
- (C) *Jurisdiction.* - The responsibilities of each Center shall be centered on the welfare of left-behind families of OFWs.

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

Sec. 6. Report to Congress. - Three (3) years from the passage of the provisions of this Act, the OWWA shall report to Congress the number of cases brought to the various Centers and the intervention provided. A yearly statistical report shall be submitted to the Department of Labor and Employment and other concerned agencies.

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

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

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

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

Approved,