



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

20th CONGRESS
1st Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **3491**



Introduced by Representative SITTIE SHAHARA "BAI DIMPLE" I. MASTURA

AN ACT
SEPARATING THE CITY OF COTABATO FROM THE LONE LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT
OF THE PROVINCE OF MAGUINDANAO DEL NORTE TO CONSTITUTE
THE LONE LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT OF THE CITY OF COTABATO

EXPLANATORY NOTE

On September 17, 2022, Republic Act No. 11550 otherwise known as "*An Act Dividing the Province of Maguindanao into Two (2) Provinces, namely: Maguindanao del Norte and Maguindanao del Sur*" was ratified and put into effect the establishment and operation of the newly-created Provinces of Maguindanao del Norte and Maguindanao del Sur.

In as much as each province is constitutionally guaranteed with at least one representative to Congress, Section 9 of RA 11550 provided for the creation of a legislative district for each province comprising of the municipalities under Section 3 of the same Act; and the City of Cotabato, though administratively independent was grouped with the Province of Maguindanao del Norte for purposes of congressional representation.

At the onset, this arrangement seems practical but is untenable even in the short-term however, given that among all the independent component cities in the Philippines, the City of Cotabato is the most populated with 325,079 inhabitants based on the results of the 2020 Census of Population and Housing.

It should also be recalled that the City of Cotabato separated from Region 12 and opted to join the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) at the time when they were given the opportunity to manifest such independence through a referendum called for the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law.

Today the inhabitants of the City wish to invoke Sec. 5 (3) Article VI of the 1987 Constitution which guarantees their right to equal representation in Congress, and we quote:

"Sec. 5. (3) Each legislative district shall comprise, as far as practicable, contiguous, compact and adjacent territory. Each city with a population of at least two hundred fifty thousand, or each province, shall have at least one representative."

This bill therefore seeks to separate the City of Cotabato from the Lone Legislative District of Maguindanao del Norte to constitute the Lone Legislative District of the City of Cotabato not only because it makes sense, and practical; but more so because as a matter of right, the inhabitants of the City of Cotabato, fellow Filipinos, deserve their own voice in Congress.

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



SITTIE SHAHARA "BAI DIMPLE" I. MASTURA
Representative
Maguindanao del Norte, Lone District



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

SECTION 1. Lone Legislative District. – The City of Cotabato is hereby separated from the Lone Legislative District of the Province of Maguindanao del Norte to constitute the Lone Legislative District of the City of Cotabato, which shall commence in the next national and local elections after the effectivity of this Act.

SEC. 2. Incumbent Representative. – The incumbent Representative of the present Lone Legislative District of the Province of Maguindanao del Norte with the City of Cotabato shall continue to represent the said district until the expiration of the term of office.

SEC. 3. Rules and Regulations. – The Commission on Elections shall issue the necessary rules and regulations to implement this Act within thirty (30) days after its effectivity.

SEC. 4. Repealing Clause. – All laws, rules and regulations which are inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

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

Approved,