



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



TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 4803

Introduced by **Representative KATRINA REIKO CHUA - TAI**
1st District, Zamboanga City

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This proposed bill seeks to establish the Zamboanga City Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Office (ZCFARO) along with a City Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Training, Development, and Product Center in the First Legislative District of Zamboanga City.

The fisheries sector is a critical pillar of the local economy and a source of sustenance for thousands of households in Zamboanga City. According to the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), approximately 30,000 fisherfolk families depend directly on fisheries and aquaculture for their livelihood. The sector, along with other industries, significantly contributes to local food security.

Zamboanga City boasts diverse and abundant aquatic and marine resources, ranging from coral reefs teeming with fish species, mangrove forests serving as vital breeding grounds, to extensive marine waters that support a variety of fisheries, shellfish, and marine crops. Notably, the city is home to a thriving sardine industry, which is a cornerstone of both local commerce and national fish production. Sardines from Zamboanga account for a substantial portion of the country's canned fish exports, supporting thousands of fishermen, processors, and their families. Despite its importance, the fisheries sector faces multiple challenges, including overfishing, habitat degradation, climate change impacts, and limited access to modern technologies and markets. These challenges threaten the sustainability of aquatic resources and the economic stability of fisherfolk communities.

Currently, the management of fisheries resources in Zamboanga City lacks a dedicated local government office with sufficient capacity to enforce laws, provide technical assistance, and promote sustainable development. This gap has led to inconsistent resource management, inefficient post-harvest processing, and underutilization of scientific advancements in fish breeding and aquaculture.

The creation of the ZCFARO institutionalizes a dedicated local government office responsible for the conservation, management, and sustainable development of fisheries and aquatic resources in the city. The office will enhance enforcement of fisheries laws, conduct research, and deliver extension services vital for resource sustainability and community resilience.

Complementing this is the establishment of the City Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Training, Development, and Product Center. Under the supervision of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic

Resources (BFAR) and in collaboration with state universities and colleges, this center will serve as a modern hub for research, technology transfer, skills training, technical assistance, and market development.

The center will provide fisherfolk with access to innovative and sustainable fish breeding techniques, environmentally sound post-harvest practices, and improved marketing channels. It will also facilitate access to insurance, credit assistance, and scholarships, helping uplift the socio-economic conditions of fisherfolk families.

Studies show that areas with such training and resource centers experience up to a 25% increase in fish production and a 30% improvement in fisherfolk incomes within five years. This initiative, therefore, has the potential to significantly boost local fisheries productivity and reduce poverty among coastal communities.

Funding for this program will be a shared responsibility between the national government, through BFAR, and the local government of Zamboanga City, ensuring sustainable and effective implementation.

Given the vital role of fisheries in our city's economy, the richness of its aquatic biodiversity, and the urgent need to address environmental and socio-economic challenges faced by fisherfolk, the immediate passage of this bill is crucial. It will empower our local government to safeguard aquatic resources, promote sustainable practices, improve the lives of thousands of fisherfolk families in Zamboanga City, and ultimately contribute to our nation-building.

IN VIEW OF THE FOREGOING, immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



KATRINA REIKO CHUA - TAI



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AN ACT

**CREATING THE ZAMBOANGA CITY FISHERIES AND AQUATIC RESOURCES
OFFICE AND TRAINING, DEVELOPMENT, AND PRODUCT CENTER IN
ZAMBOANGA CITY, PROVIDING FOR ITS POWERS, FUNCTIONS,
ORGANIZATION, AND FUNDING, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

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

SECTION 1. Declaration of Policy. - It is hereby declared the policy of the State, in
alignment with the principles of sustainable development and inclusive economic growth, to
conserve, protect, manage, and develop the country's fisheries and aquatic resources in a
manner that ensures their optimum and sustainable utilization.

The City Government of Zamboanga recognizes the critical role of the fisheries and
aquatic resources sector in ensuring food security, supporting economic activity, preserving
marine biodiversity, and uplifting the lives of coastal and fishing communities. Zamboanga
City, being one of the country's richest areas in terms of marine biodiversity and the center of
the national sardines industry, must adopt a science-based, community-driven, and ecosystem-
sensitive approach to fisheries governance.

Towards this end, the City shall promote:

- The establishment of an institutional framework for the sustainable management and development of local aquatic and marine resources;
- The advancement of fisheries science, research, training, and innovation;
- The empowerment and capacity-building of fisherfolk and fisheries stakeholders;
- The protection and rehabilitation of marine habitats including coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass beds;
- The promotion of value-added processing, product development, and marketing support for marine and aquatic products, particularly seaweed and sardines; and
- Partnerships with national government agencies, state universities and colleges, and private stakeholders to strengthen fisheries governance and resource management.

SECTION 2. *Creation of the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and Training, Development, and Product Center.* - There is hereby established in Zamboanga City a Provincial Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and Training, Development, and Product Center, under the supervision of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources of the Department of Agriculture (BFAR-DA). The BFAR-DA shall collaborate with, and tap the expertise, resources, and facilities of the state universities and colleges (SUCs) in the city for the establishment, management, and operation of the Center.

SECTION 3. *Mandate and Services of the Center.* - The City Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and Training, Development, and Product Center shall, at a minimum, provide onsite and online access to the following services:

- a. Applied technology for innovative and sustainable fish breeding and hatchery of high-value marine species;
- b. Training activities and technical assistance to promote sustainable development, production support, and education of fisherfolk;
- c. Technical assistance for sustainable production and environmentally sound post-harvest development services;
- d. Technical assistance in the establishment, operation, enhancement, and maintenance of government-operated marine sanctuaries, seaweed nurseries, seaweed processing plants, and mariculture development park facilities;
- e. Cataloging, displaying, and promoting local fisheries and aquatic products, and providing marketing and product distribution assistance to fisherfolk; and
- f. A database of available insurance and credit assistance for fisherfolk, and local and international grants and scholarships for fisheries and aquatic resources studies and research.

SECTION 4. *Creation of the Fisheries and Aquatic Office.* - There is hereby created the Zamboanga City Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Office (ZCFARO) under the City Government of Zamboanga, responsible for the management, conservation, and development of fisheries and aquatic resources within the territorial jurisdiction of Zamboanga City.

SECTION 5. *Powers and Functions.* - The ZCFARO have the following powers and functions:

- a. Formulate and implement local fisheries and aquatic resource management plans and programs;
- b. Monitor and enforce fisheries laws, regulations, and local ordinances;
- c. Conduct research and gather data on fisheries and aquatic resources;
- d. Promote sustainable aquaculture and fishing practices;
- e. Provide extension services, training, and technical assistance to fisherfolk and stakeholders;
- f. Coordinate with national agencies such as BFAR, DENR, and other concerned agencies;
- g. Issue necessary permits and licenses related to fisheries activities in accordance with applicable laws;
- h. Implement conservation measures, including marine protected areas and fish sanctuaries;
- i. Manage and oversee the Provincial Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Training, Development, and Product Center; and
- j. Perform other functions necessary to effectively manage the fisheries and aquatic resources of the city.

1 **SECTION 6. *Organizational Structure.*** - The ZCFARO shall be headed by a City
2 **Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Officer**, appointed by the City Mayor. The office shall have
3 divisions or units as necessary to efficiently carry out its mandate, including but not limited to:

- 4 • Planning and Development Division
- 5 • Enforcement and Compliance Division
- 6 • Research and Monitoring Division
- 7 • Extension Services Division
- 8 • Training, Development, and Product Center Unit

9 **SECTION 7. *Appropriations.*** –The Secretary of Agriculture shall include in the
10 Department’s program the establishment and funding of the Zamboanga City Fisheries and
11 Aquatic Resources Office and Training, Development, and Product Center, the budget for
12 which shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act. The City Government of
13 Zamboanga shall allocate funds from any available local revenue for the operationalization and
14 maintenance of the ZCFARO and the Training, Development, and Product Center.

15 The ZCFARO may also generate funds through permits, fees, and other lawful sources.

16 **SECTION 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).*** – The Department of
17 Agriculture, through BFAR, shall issue the necessary rules and regulations to carry out the
18 purposes of this Act. The City Mayor, in coordination with ZCFARO and relevant agencies,
19 shall promulgate the local rules and regulations to implement this Act within ninety (90) days
20 from its effectivity.

21 **SECTION 9. *Separability Clause.*** – If any of the sections or provisions of this Act is
22 held invalid, all other provisions not affected thereby shall remain valid.

23 **SECTION 10. *Repealing Clause.*** – All laws, decrees, issuances, rules and regulations
24 inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

25 **SECTION 11. *Effectivity Clause.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
26 complete publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

27 *Approved,*