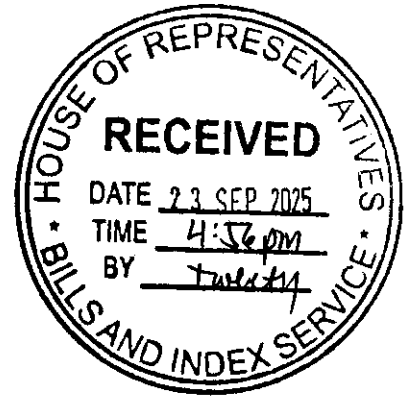




Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
QUEZON CITY



20th Congress
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 4807

Introduced by: REP. ROSALIE "MOMMY ROSE" ANG SALVAME

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The rationale for granting benefits and incentives to accredited Bantay Dagat volunteers is rooted in both environmental protection and social justice.

Bantay Dagat volunteers are community-based sea wardens who help enforce fishery laws, prevent illegal fishing, and protect marine ecosystems. They operate in hazardous conditions, often without pay, risking their safety to safeguard public resources.

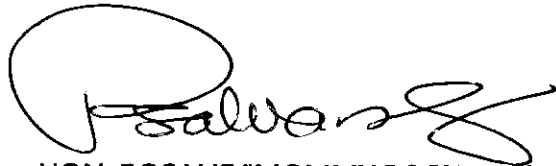
Many volunteers are fisherfolks who sacrifice their own livelihood to serve the community. They typically receive no regular honoraria, insurance or health coverage, despite the risks and time commitment.

The Philippine Fisheries Code (R.A. 8550) emphasizes the role of local government units and community participation in managing municipal waters. This bill proposes hazard pay, insurance, PhilHealth coverage, training and access to loans.

Institutionalizing Bantay Dagat enhances the enforcement of fishery laws and deters illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. It also supports participatory governance and builds trust between communities and authorities.

Granting benefits and incentives to Bantay Dagat is not just a reward - it is an investment in marine protection, climate resilience and national security. These volunteers risk their safety and livelihood to protect the country's waters, yet often lack basic support. Providing benefits and incentives for the Bantay Dagat volunteers will strengthen enforcement, retain skilled volunteers and safeguard the nation's marine wealth for future generations.

Given the importance of this measure, passage of this bill is earnestly sought.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rosalie' followed by a stylized flourish.

HON. ROSALIE "MOMMY ROSE" ANG SALVAME

1st District, Palawan



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AN ACT
GRANTING BENEFITS AND INCENTIVES TO ACCREDITED
BANTAY DAGAT AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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 "Bantay Dagat Welfare and Benefits Act of 2025."

Section 2. Declaration of Policy. - The State shall protect the rights of subsistence fishermen and local communities to the preferential use of the communal marine and fishing resources, both inland and offshore. It shall provide support to such fishermen through appropriate technology and research and other fisheries. Toward this end, coastal municipalities and cities are vested with jurisdiction over the municipal waters as defined by Republic Act 8558 and, upon consultation with the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council (FARMC) be responsible for the management, conservation,

development, protection, utilization and disposition of all fish and fisheries and aquatic resources within their respective municipal waters. The LGUs shall enforce all fishery laws, rules and regulations as well as valid fishery ordinances enacted by the municipal or city council. In the enforcement of the said laws, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), in coordination with the local government (LGUs), is authorized to train and deputize fisherfolks as Deputy Fish Wardens, locally known as Bantay Dagat. This Act shall provide benefits and incentives to these volunteers Bantay Dagat who are frontliners in the protection of marine and fisheries resources.

The government and all instrumentalities shall also recognize the rights of accredited Bantay Dagat to organize themselves, to strengthen and systemize their services for their community, and to make a venue for sharing their experiences and for recommending policies and guidelines for the conservation, protection and sustainable management of fisheries and aquatic resources.

Section 3. Definition. - "Bantay Dagat" also known as Deputy Fish Warden or Sea Wardens shall refer to persons who have undergone training programs on coastal and fisheries law enforcement under any accredited government or non-government organizations and who voluntarily work as deputized fishery law enforcers. They shall be accredited to function as such by the Municipal or City Fisheries and Aquatic Resource management Council (M/CFARMC) and be deputized in writing by the Local Chief Executive (LCE) in accordance with the guidelines promulgated by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR).

Section 4. Registration. - In order for Bantay Dagat to be entitled to benefits and incentives provided under this Act, said Bantay Dagat shall register with the M/CFARMC in the municipality or city in which said Bantay Dagat renders service. The FARMC through the concerned LCE shall furnish a copy of such registry to the BFAR through its Regional Office which is hereby mandated to maintain a national register of accredited Bantay Dagat nationwide. The accredited Bantay Dagat shall be given appropriate proof of said accreditation.

Section 5. Qualifications of Bantay Dagat. - Any person seeking accreditation as Bantay Dagat must possess the following qualifications :

- a. A Filipino Citizen;
- b. A registered and licensed fisherfolk in the municipality or city where he/she intends to be accredited;
- c. Not less than twenty-one (21) years but not more than sixty (60) years old;
- d. Not have been convicted of any offense involving violation of the Fisheries Code and related environmental laws;
- e. Completed the Fisheries Laws Enforcement Training for Bantay Dagat or Deputy Fish Wardens; and
- f. Involved in coastal and fisheries management activities for at least three (3) years.

Section 6. Number of Bantay Dagat. – The BFAR shall determine the ideal ratio of Bantay Dagat to the number of fisherfolks and the area of municipal waters or fisheries management area in every municipality or city.

Section 7. Benefits and Incentives. – In recognition of their services, all accredited Bantay Dagat who are actively and regularly performing their duties shall be entitled to the following incentives and benefits:

- a. Insurance and PhilHealth coverage – Each Bantay Dagat shall be entitled to life and accident insurance and PhilHealth coverage upon deputization as such by the LCE;
- b. Hazard Allowance – Each Bantay Dagat exposed to situations, conditions or factors where foreseeable but unavoidable danger or risks exists and which adversely endanger such Bantay Dagat's life and/or safety, shall be entitled to hazard allowance in an amount to be determined by the FARMC and the Peace and Order Council of the Local Government Unit concerned;
- c. Subsistence Allowance – Each Bantay Dagat who renders seaborne patrolling or rescue services for at least eight (8) hours a day shall be entitled to subsistence allowance equivalent to the meals they take in the course of their duty, which shall be computed in accordance with prevailing circumstances as determined by the local government unit concerned;
- d. Training, Education and Career Enrichment Program – The concerned coastal municipality or city in coordination with BFAR and other government agencies and non-government organizations shall provide opportunities to accredited Bantay Dagat for the following :

- i. Continuing education, study and exposure tour trainings, grants, fields immersion scholarship and the likes;
 - ii. Scholarship in the form of tuition fees and other school fees in State Universities/ Colleges, to be granted to one child of every Bantay Dagat who will not be able to take advantage of the above programs;
 - iii. Special training programs such as those in paralegal education, case documentation and evidence gathering and preservation and operation of special gadgets or equipment for effective and efficient coastal and fisheries law enforcement;
- e. Civil Service Eligibility – A second grade eligibility shall be granted to accredited Bantay Dagat who have rendered five (5) years of continuous service as such: Provided That should the Bantay Dagat volunteer become regular employee of the government, the total number of years served as Bantay Dagat shall be credited to his/her service in computing retirement benefits;
 - f. Free Legal Services – Legal representation and consultation services for Bantay Dagat shall be immediately provided by the Municipal or City Legal Officer and/or Public Attorney's Office in cases of coercion, interference, and in other civil and criminal cases filed by or against Bantay Dagat volunteers arising out of or in connection with the performance of their duties; and
 - g. Preferential Access to Loans – the BFAR, in coordination with the Department of Social Welfare Development and other concerned government agencies, shall provide, within one hundred eighty (180) days after the effectivity of this Act, a mechanism for access to loan services by organized Bantay Dagat volunteers.

Section 8. Review by the Municipal or City FARMC – Incentives and benefits for Bantay Dagat volunteers requiring the expenditure of local funds shall be reviewed and recommended by the FARMC for the approval of the Local Chief Executive to ensure that only deserving Bantay Dagat get the same.

Section 9. Security of Tenure – All accredited Bantay Dagat shall enjoy security of tenure and shall not be removed or terminated except for just and valid causes as may be determined by BFAR. Said just or valid causes shall be included in the implementing rules and regulations of this Act.

Section 10. Agent of Person in Authority – The accredited Bantay Dagat shall be considered as agents of persons in authority while in the performance of their duties and responsibilities.

Section 11. Funding Requirements of Bantay Dagat Operation – Coastal local governments, by virtue of this Act, are mandated to allocate regular funding for the benefits and incentives of the Bantay Dagat and their operational requirements. Such operational requirements shall include, but shall not be limited to : (a) the conduct of seaborne operations such as regular patrol in the coastal areas; (b) maintenance of equipment, gadgets, and supplies necessary for their functions; (c) vehicle, fuel and food allowance for their operations; and (d) conduct of seminars or workshops for Bantay Dagat members.

Section 12. National Government Subsidy – The national government, through the BFAR, shall provide annual subsidy to local government that are able to organize their own Bantay Dagat groups.

Section 13. Rules and Regulations – The BFAR, in cooperation with the Department of Interior and Local Government, the Department of Justice, the Civil Service Commission and other government agencies and non-government organizations, shall formulate within one hundred eighty (180) days from effectivity, the rules and regulations necessary to implement this Act.
Section 14. Separability Clause – If any provision of this Act is declared invalid, the remainder or any provision hereof not affected thereby shall remain in force and effect.

Section 15. Repealing Clause – All laws, decrees, executive orders and other presidential issuances which are inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

Section 16. Effectivity – This act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in at least two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved.