

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 5214



Introduced by
LONE DISTRICT OF DINAGAT ISLANDS REPRESENTATIVE KAKA BAG-AO,
AKBAYAN REPRESENTATIVES PERCIVAL CENDAÑA, JOSE MANUEL "CHEL" DIOKNO,
and DADAH KIRAM ISMULA

AN ACT
PROHIBITING GOVERNMENT OFFICES AND AGENCIES FROM DENYING CITIZENS ACCESS
TO GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION BASED ON ATTIRE

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, in Article II, Sections 10 and 11, declares that the State "shall promote social justice in all phases of national development" and "values the dignity of every human person with full respect for human rights." Furthermore, Article XIII, Section 1 mandates Congress to "give highest priority to the enactment of measures that protect and enhance the right of all the people to human dignity, reduce social, economic, and political inequalities, and remove cultural inequities."

In addition, Article XIII, Section 16 states that, "[T]he right of the people and their organizations to effective and reasonable participation at all levels of social, political, and economic decision-making shall not be abridged."

These mandates underscore the State's responsibility to guarantee inclusive and non-discriminatory access to government services and public participation, ensuring that all citizens can fully exercise their rights and engage in national development.

Throughout the years, legislators have introduced several proposed laws aimed at addressing injustices faced by citizens, particularly those from marginalized sectors of society. These laws typically address significant issues that affect farmers, fisherfolk, the urban poor, indigenous peoples, and other marginalized groups. However, we must also turn our attention to daily realities that are often taken for granted. These are instances that affect and cut across various sectors in their everyday lives as they interact with different levels of government.

In many public offices, citizens who attempt to access government services are sometimes turned away. The public office's security personnel deny entry to certain citizens because they failed to wear the prescribed attire. These strict requirements of the dress code are not necessarily integral to the transactions being undertaken. In public meetings, such as legislative hearings and sessions, ordinary Filipinos — including farmers, fisherfolk, urban poor, and indigenous peoples — who wish to observe proceedings on matters that affect them are denied entry because they are wearing slippers instead of shoes. These examples may

seem trivial and minimal compared to the more significant issues we face. They may often fail to capture the attention of policymakers and public officials in the course of their duties, but they are still concrete and clear circumstances that provide us with a real glimpse of everyday inequalities that affect citizens.

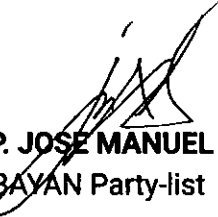
This concern is especially relevant in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDAs) such as Dinagat Islands, where poverty remains rampant and access to economic opportunities is limited. Many residents lack the financial capacity to purchase clothes or other items required by rigid dress codes often enforced in government offices. In rural municipalities and island communities, it is common for citizens to own only a few sets of clothing, often worn out by daily use and the harshness of their environment.

When strict dress codes become grounds for exclusion from benefiting from services and participating in public meetings that are all within the rights of citizens, they perpetuate exclusion based on poverty – a condition not of choice but of circumstance. For Dinagatnons and marginalized Filipinos from all over the country, the simple desire to engage and transact with their government – to file a document, attend a consultation, or observe a hearing – can be denied based on attire. This unjust barrier reinforces inequality and contradicts the very principles of public service and democratic governance that our Constitution seeks to uphold.

In the interest of social justice and equality, unnecessary requirements in prescribed attire for accessing government offices must be dismantled. Strict dress codes, which block opportunities for marginalized Filipinos to access services and to attend public meetings, should be eliminated. Let us provide all our citizens an equal chance to exercise their rights without impediments that categorize them by what they wear and, in effect, how much they have. We must be reminded that we should first and foremost respond to the needs of those who have less in life. Let us truly open the doors of government to the people whom we serve.

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


REP. KAKA BAG-AO
Lone District of Dinagat Islands


REP. JOSE MANUEL "CHEL" DIOKNO
AKBAYAN Party-list


REP. PERCIVAL CENDAÑA
AKBAYAN Party-list


REP. DADAN KIRAM ISMULA
AKBAYAN Party-list

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

1 **SECTION 1. *Short Title.*** – This Act shall be known as the ***Open-Door Policy Act.***

2
3 **SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.*** – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to uphold and protect
4 the dignity of every human person, ensure full respect for human rights, and promote social
5 justice in all phases of national development.

6
7 Pursuant to Article II, Sections 10 and 11 of the 1987 Constitution, the State shall promote social
8 justice and value the dignity of every human person with full respect for human rights.
9 Furthermore, as mandated by Article XIII, Section 1, the Congress shall give highest priority to
10 enact measures that protect and enhance the right of all people to human dignity, reduce social,
11 economic, and political inequalities, and remove cultural inequities.

12
13 This Act also declares as policy the fulfillment of the rights of the people to effective and
14 reasonable participation at all levels of social, political, and economic decision-making, in
15 accordance with Article XIII, Section 16 of the 1987 Constitution.

16
17 Consistent with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, particularly Articles 1 and 7, the State
18 recognizes that all persons are born free and equal in dignity and rights and are entitled to equal
19 protection under the law without discrimination.

20
21 In line with these constitutional and international law principles, this Act prohibits government
22 offices and agencies from denying individuals access to government services or public
23 participation solely based on attire, especially when such attire reflects their social or economic
24 circumstances.

25 **SEC. 3. *Coverage.*** – This Act shall apply to all government offices and agencies including the
26 national government and all its agencies, departments, bureaus, offices and instrumentalities,
27 constitutional commissions and constitutionally mandated bodies, local governments and all
28 their offices including legislative bodies, government-owned or -controlled corporations, state

1 universities and colleges, and all offices in the Congress of the Philippines including the offices
2 of Senators and Representatives that provide government services and/or opportunities for
3 public participation as defined in this Act. Dress codes for public officials and employees in the
4 course of their duties in their respective government offices or agencies will not be affected or
5 prohibited by this Act.

6
7 **SEC. 4. Definition of Terms.** – For this Act, the following terms shall be defined as follows:

- 8
9 (a) *Government service* refers to the process or transaction between applicants or requesting
10 parties and government offices or agencies involving applications for any privilege, right,
11 reward, license, clearance, permit or authorization, concession, of for any modification,
12 renewal or extension of the enumerated applications or requests which are acted upon in
13 the ordinary course of business of the agency or office concerned;
14
15 (b) *Transaction* refers to an application or request made by a citizen covering all
16 classifications provided by Republic Act No. 11032 (Ease of Doing Business and Efficient
17 Government Service Delivery Act of 2018), specifically:
18
19 (1) *Simple transactions* refer to applications or requests submitted by applicants or
20 requesting parties of a government office or agency that only require ministerial
21 actions on the part of the public officer or employee, or that present only
22 inconsequential issues for the resolution by an officer or employee of said
23 government.
24
25 (2) *Complex transactions* refer to applications or requests submitted by applicants or
26 requesting parties of a government office that necessitate evaluation in the resolution
27 of complicated issues by an officer or employee of said government office, such
28 transactions to be determined by the office concerned; and
29
30 (3) *Highly technical applications* refer to applications that require the use of technical
31 knowledge, specialized skills, and/or training in the processing and/or evaluation
32 thereof;
33
34 (c) *Public participation* refers to the effective and reasonable involvement of citizens and their
35 organizations in all levels of decision-making processes related to social, political, and
36 economic development, including but not limited to access to information, attendance in
37 public meetings, and the opportunity to express views and contribute to policies and
38 programs that affect them as stakeholders.
39
40 (d) *Strict dress code* refers to rules and regulations that prescribe particular clothing and
41 footwear that impede citizens' access to government services and public participation;
42
43 (e) *Marginalized sectors* refer to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of citizens in Philippine
44 society, including, but not limited to, farmers, peasants, landless rural workers, fisherfolk,
45 workers in the formal sector, workers in the informal sector, urban poor, rural poor,
46 indigenous peoples and cultural communities, disaster survivors, and residents of
47 geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas.

48 **SEC. 5. Prohibition of Strict Dress Codes in Accessing Government Services.** – All government
49 offices and agencies that handle government services for the public are hereby prohibited from
50 enforcing strict dress codes that prevent citizens, especially those from marginalized sectors,
51 from making inquiries or undertaking transactions. Such institutions shall not prescribe or restrict

1 the types of clothing and footwear that citizens may wear when accessing government services:
2 *Provided*, that the attire of the citizen is not integral or essential to the transaction being
3 undertaken.
4

5 **SEC. 6. *Prohibition of Strict Dress Codes in Exercising Public Participation.*** – All government
6 offices and agencies, including local special bodies and legislative bodies, are hereby prohibited
7 from enforcing strict dress codes that prevent citizens, especially those from marginalized
8 sectors, from exercising their constitutionally guaranteed right to public participation.
9

10 **SEC. 7. *Administrative Liability.*** – Failure to comply with this Act is tantamount to discourtesy in
11 the course of official duties and will constitute grounds for administrative and disciplinary
12 sanctions against any public officer or employee who deliberately and knowingly imposes,
13 implements, or requires a strict dress code that shall prevent any citizen from accessing
14 government services or exercising public participation.
15

16 **SEC. 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – The Civil Service Commission (CSC), in
17 consultation with the Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor (PCUP), the National
18 Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), and civil society organizations with publicly
19 recognized expertise in advocating the causes of marginalized sectors, shall promulgate the
20 necessary rules and regulations within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act.
21

22 **SEC. 9. *Separability Clause.*** – If any section or part of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional,
23 no other section or provision shall be affected.
24

25 **SEC. 10. *Repealing Clause.*** – All provisions of existing laws, presidential decrees or issuances,
26 executive orders, letters of instruction, administrative orders, rules and regulations contrary to or
27 inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified
28 accordingly.
29

30 **SEC. 11. *Effectivity.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete publication in
31 the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation. For purposes of transparency and
32 wider accessibility and in accordance with the constitutionally guaranteed right of the people to
33 information on matters of public concern, this Act may also be published electronically on the
34 official websites of all government offices and agencies.

Approved.