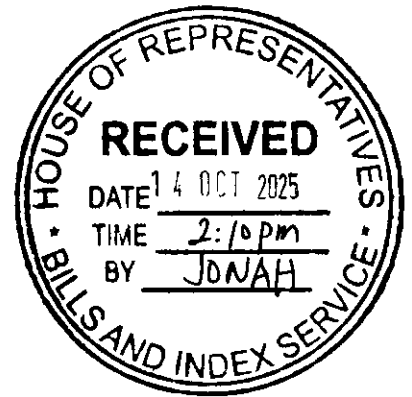


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 5555



Introduced by: Hon. Keith Micah "Atty. Mike" D.L. Tan

AN ACT

PROVIDING FOR INCOME SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR FISHERFOLKS WHOSE LIVELIHOOD ARE NEGATIVELY AFFECTED DURING PERIODS OF CLOSED SEASONS FOR FISHING AS DECLARED BY THE BUREAU OF FISHERIES AND AQUATIC RESOURCES (BFAR) AS WELL AS DURING CALAMITIES AND LEAN OR TYPHOON SEASONS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

According to the FAO Legislative Advisory Group-Philippines (FLAG-PH) initiative, "In the 2020 State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World Report, the Philippines recorded the most number of food insecure people in Southeast Asia in 2017 to 2019, with 59 million Filipinos suffering from moderate to severe lack of consistent access to food. This is an increase from the figures of 44.9 million recorded in 2014 to 2016. The increasing population, limited resources and natural disasters resulted to continuing challenges in "poverty reduction" and efforts towards "eradicating hunger"¹.

Among these poor Filipinos are farmers and fisherfolk who struggle to feed their families. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, in 2021, 30.6 % of fisherfolk and 30.0 % of farmers lived below the poverty line, significantly higher than the national average. The agriculture sector has continued to suffer from job losses, exacerbated not only by variable weather and climate shocks but also by recent calamities. As of early 2025, the huge drop in agricultural employment, largely attributed to the devastation caused by typhoons, is a cause for concern. These job losses not only mean lost income and livelihoods for millions of Filipino farmers and fisherfolk, but underscores government's long-time neglect and lack of substantial support for the sector.²

To achieve food security as the overriding consideration in the utilization, management, development, conservation and protection of fishery resources in

¹ <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/fao-legislative-advisory-group-philippines-flag-ph-initiative> Accessed on 23 August 2022

² IBON Foundation. (2025, January 16). *Agricultural job losses*. IBON Foundation.

order to provide the food needs of the population, Republic Act No. 8550, otherwise known as "The Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998" provided for the establishment of "Closed Season", which is the period during which the taking of specified fishery species by a specified fishing gear is prohibited in a specified area or areas in Philippine waters.

The policy has been burdensome to some fisherfolk as the fishing regulation entails work suspension and could inevitably pose serious repercussions on the fisherfolk who are highly dependent on certain aquatic resources such as sardines, herrings, and mackerel for livelihood.

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources has enjoined the fisherfolk sector to comply with the policy in order to achieve the goal of food security.

In light of the consequential impact of the closed season policy to the livelihood of the affected fisherfolk, most which are poor, marginalized, and vulnerable, this bill seeks to alleviate their condition through the provision of subsidy, replacement job or substitute livelihood, financial and medical assistance among other forms of social protection in order to mitigate income loss and offer the necessary economic security to the fisherfolk and their families during the closed fishing season.

Consistent with Republic Act No. 11291, otherwise known as the "Magna Carta for the Poor", which now officially recognizes the "right to adequate food, decent work, and highest attainable standard of health, the expeditious approval of this measure is eagerly sought.



Keith Micah "Atty. Mike" D.L. Tan
4th District, Quezon

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the "Tulong Pangkabuhayan Para sa mga Mangingisda Program Act".

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – The State recognizes the crucial role of municipal fisherfolk in ensuring the food security of the country. It is hereby declared a policy of the State to provide support to municipal fisherfolk, in recognition of their sacrifices and contributions to the nation, and in pursuit of the Constitutional mandate to promote social justice in all phases of development.

SEC. 3. *Tulong Pangkabuhayan Para sa mga Mangingisda Program.* - Pursuant to the declared policy of this Act, there is hereby established the Tulong Pangkabuhayan Para sa mga Mangingisda Program, herein referred to as the Program, to augment the income of fisherfolk in times of closed seasons for fishing as declared by the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR) as well as during calamities, and lean or typhoon seasons. The Program shall provide livelihood, financial, medical, and other social protection assistance for eligible beneficiaries under this Act

A Tulong Pangkabuhayan voucher worth at least Three Thousand Pesos (Php3,000.00) per month shall be given for each eligible beneficiary. Provided, that the amount shall be revised every year to account for inflation.

The Program shall be administered by the DA-BFAR, which shall establish an effective, efficient and responsive mechanism that allows eligible fisherfolk

timely access to the menu of social protection assistance provided under the Program.

SEC. 4. *Beneficiaries.* - The beneficiaries of this Act shall be municipal fisherfolk who fish within municipal waters, whether coastal or inland, and who use motorized fishing vessels of three (3) gross tons or less: Provided, that registration under the National Program for Municipal Fisherfolk Registration of the DA-BFAR shall be a precondition for the receipt of benefits under this Act.

SEC. 5. *Convergence of Social Services.* - Beneficiaries of this Program shall be automatically enrolled and covered under the National Health Insurance Program (NHIP) of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth).

The Social Security System (SSS) shall craft a micro-insurance mechanism for the beneficiaries of the Program.

The local government units (LGUs), through their Local Social Welfare and Development Offices shall cover all indirect costs of accessing the Program including transportation, meals, accommodation or halfway house, among others.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) shall help defray the necessary expenses to access the Program through its Crisis Intervention Unit. It shall provide protective services or social safety net to fisherfolk through its Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation (AICS).

The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) shall make emergency employment accessible for eligible beneficiaries under the Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (TUPAD).

The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) is directed to empower eligible beneficiaries under this Act through the provision of relevant livelihood training program.

SEC. 6. *Non-Diminution of Benefits.* - Nothing in this Act shall be construed to reduce existing benefits granted under existing laws, decrees, executive orders, or any contract, agreement, or policy between the employer and employee.

SEC. 7. *Appropriations.* - The amount necessary to implement this Act shall be included in the General Appropriations Act of the year following its enactment into law and thereafter.

SEC. 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* - Within six (6) months after the effectivity of this Act, the DA-BFAR, in consultation with relevant government agencies and fisherfolk organizations, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to carry out the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 9. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the remaining parts or provisions not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 10. *Repealing Clause.* - All laws, presidential decrees or issuances, executive orders, letter of instructions, administrative orders, rules and regulations contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby amended, repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 11. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,