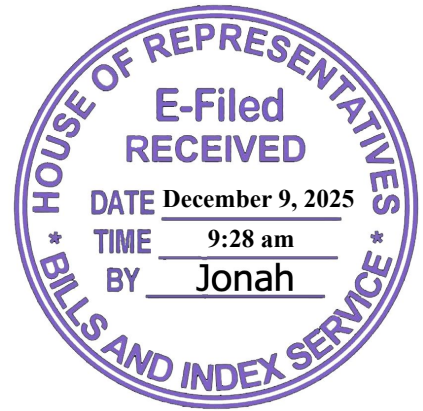


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 6685



Introduced by: **REP. SALVADOR A. PLEYTO, SR.**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) are hailed as modern-day heroes, contributing significantly to the Philippine economy through their remittances and sacrifices. They leave their families behind to seek better opportunities abroad, often facing challenging and difficult circumstances.

This proposed bill, the "OFW Emergency Relief Act," seeks to provide a safety net for OFWs who find themselves in distressful situations while working overseas. These situations may include illegal recruitment, contract violations, abuse, exploitation, natural disasters, armed conflicts, unjust detention, or imprisonment.

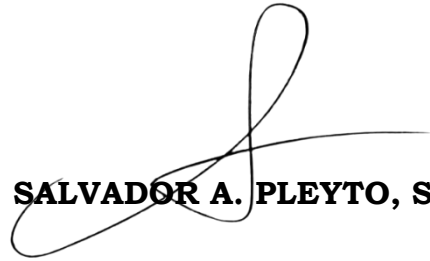
The bill establishes an "OFW Emergency Relief Fund" to be administered by the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) in coordination with the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). This fund will provide lump sum financial assistance to eligible OFWs in distress, helping them to meet their immediate needs and cope with their difficult circumstances.

The amount of assistance will be determined based on the severity of the OFW's situation and the cost of living in their host country, ensuring that the assistance is adequate and relevant.

This bill also includes a penalty clause to deter fraud and corruption, ensuring that the funds are used for their intended purpose and that those who attempt to misuse them are held accountable.

By providing timely and adequate financial assistance to OFWs in distress, this bill aims to uphold the State's responsibility to protect the welfare and interests of its citizens, especially those who are working abroad and contributing to the nation's progress. It is a recognition of their sacrifices and a commitment to ensuring their well-being in times of crisis.

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



SALVADOR A. PLEYTO, SR.

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 6685

Introduced by: **REP. SALVADOR A. PLEYTO, SR.**

**AN ACT PROVIDING A LUMP SUM FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO OVERSEAS
FILIPINO WORKERS IN DISTRESS, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND
FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

*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 "OFW Emergency Relief Act."

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* - The State recognizes the significant contribution of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) to the Philippine economy and acknowledges its duty to protect their welfare and interests. The State shall provide immediate and adequate assistance to OFWs who are in distressful situations abroad.

SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.* - For purposes of this Act, the following terms shall refer to:

- OFW in Distress - a Filipino migrant worker who is facing difficult or dangerous circumstances in a foreign country, including but not limited to:
 - Illegal recruitment
 - Contract violations
 - Abuse or exploitation
 - Natural disasters or armed conflicts
 - Unjust detention or imprisonment

- OWWA - refers to the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration.
- DFA - refers to the Department of Foreign Affairs.
- Lump Sum Financial Assistance - a one-time grant provided to an OFW in distress to help alleviate their immediate needs.

SEC 4. *Establishment of the OFW Emergency Relief Fund.* - There is hereby established an "OFW Emergency Relief Fund," to be administered by the OWWA in coordination with the DFA. This fund shall be used exclusively to provide lump sum financial assistance to OFWs in distress.

The Fund shall be sourced from the following:

- Appropriations from the National Government
- Unutilized funds from OWWA programs
- Donations, grants, and other forms of assistance from both local and international sources

SEC. 5. *Eligibility Criteria.* - An OFW shall be eligible for the lump sum financial assistance if he/she meets the following criteria:

- Must be a documented OFW (i.e., with a valid passport and appropriate visa/work permit).
- Must be certified by the Philippine Embassy/Consulate or OWWA as an OFW in distress as defined in Section 3(a) of this Act.
- Must not have been previously disqualified from receiving assistance due to fraud or misrepresentation.

SEC. 6. *Amount of Assistance.* - The amount of the lump sum financial assistance shall be determined based on the severity of the OFW's situation and the prevailing cost of living in the country where the OFW is located.

The OWWA, in consultation with the DFA, shall establish guidelines for determining the appropriate amount of assistance, with a minimum of [Amount in Pesos] and a maximum of [Amount in Pesos].

SEC. 7. *Application Process.* -An OFW in distress, or his/her authorized representative, may apply for the lump sum financial assistance through the Philippine Embassy/Consulate or OWWA.

The application shall be supported by relevant documents, such as passport, visa/work permit, and a certification from the Philippine Embassy/Consulate or OWWA attesting to the OFW's distressful situation.

SEC 8. *Processing and Approval.* - The Philippine Embassy/Consulate or OWWA shall process the application within [Number] working days from receipt of complete documents.

The OWWA shall approve or disapprove the application based on the eligibility criteria and the availability of funds.

In case of disapproval, the applicant shall be informed in writing of the reason for the disapproval.

SEC. 9. *Mode of Payment.* - The lump sum financial assistance shall be provided to the OFW through the most efficient and secure means, such as direct bank transfer, remittance, or other appropriate channels.

SEC. 10. *Monitoring and Evaluation.* - The OWWA shall monitor and evaluate the implementation of this Act and submit an annual report to the Congress of the Philippines.

SEC 11. *Penalties.* – Acts violating the provisions of this Act shall be subject to the following penalties

- **Misrepresentation:** Any person who makes false statements or submits fraudulent documents to obtain financial assistance under this Act shall be subject to a fine of not less than Ten Thousand Pesos (Php 10,000.00) but not more than Fifty Thousand Pesos (Php 50,000.00) or imprisonment at the discretion of the court.
- **Negligence:** Any government official or employee who, through gross negligence, causes the loss, delay, or misuse of funds intended for the OFW Emergency Relief Fund shall be subject to suspension or dismissal from service, and may be subject to criminal prosecution under existing laws.

SEC. 12. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* - The OWWA, in coordination with the DFA and other relevant government agencies, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to implement this Act within ninety (90) days from its effectivity.

SEC. 13. *Separability Clause.* - If any provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 14. *Repealing Clause.* - All laws, decrees, orders, rules, and regulations, or parts thereof, inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 15. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,