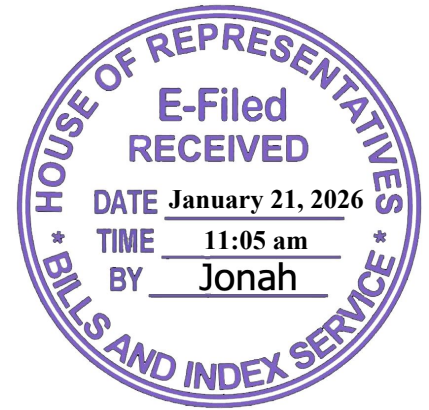




Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session



HOUSE BILL NO. 7227

Introduced by Representatives Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez, Yedda Marie K. Romualdez, Andrew Julian K. Romualdez and Jude A. Acidre

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING THE OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS HOSPITAL AS A
LEVEL III HOSPITAL UNDER THE DIRECT SUPERVISION AND
CONTROL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF MIGRANT WORKERS, AND
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

OFWs are crucial to the Philippine economy, primarily through massive remittances that fuel household spending, support real estate, and provide vital foreign exchange. While boosting growth and foreign reserves, remittances also impact consumption patterns and highlight the need for better support for OFWs and their families for long-term financial sustainability¹. While they are vital for the Philippine economy, many face exploitation, health struggles, and financial difficulties upon return.

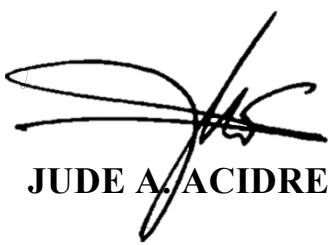
Thus, in honor of our modern-day heroes, this bill seeks to establish a Level III hospital to be known as the *Overseas Filipino Workers Hospital* (OFWH) in the

¹ Albert, J. et.al. *Long-Term Effects of Labor Migration in the Philippines: "Napakasakit, Kuya Eddie!"* (December 2023). Philippine Institute for Development Studies – Discussion Paper Series No. 2023-17. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.62986/dp2023.17>

City of San Fernando, Province of Pampanga, which shall be under the direct supervision and control of the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW). It shall cater primarily to the healthcare needs of OFWs and their qualified dependents, subject to the limitations under existing laws, rules, and regulations.

This bill was also filed during the 19th Congress, where it was approved on third and final reading by the House of Representatives.

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


FERDINAND MARTIN G. ROMUALDEZ
YEDDA MARIE K. ROMUALDEZ
ANDREW JULIAN K. ROMUALDEZ
JUDE A. ACIDRE



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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 “Overseas Filipino Workers Hospital Act.”

SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to adopt an integrated and comprehensive approach to health development which shall endeavor to make essential goods, health, and other social services available to all

people at affordable cost. To this end, the State shall protect the interest and promote the well-being of overseas Filipino workers (OFW) through the provision of social welfare services in recognition of their importance and contribution to economic development and nation-building.

SECTION 3. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act:

A. Dependents shall refer to any of the following:

- a. The legal spouse entitled by law to receive support from the OFW;
- b. The legitimate, legitimated, legally adopted, or illegitimate child who is unmarried, not gainfully employed, and has not reached twenty-one (21) years of age, or if over twenty-one (21) years of age, is congenitally incapacitated or while still a minor has been permanently incapacitated and incapable of self-support, physically or mentally; or
- c. The parents who are receiving regular support from the OFW;

B. OFW refers to a Filipino who is to be engaged, is engaged, or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a country of which the said person is not an immigrant citizen, or a permanent resident of, or is not awaiting naturalization, recognition, or admission, whether land-based or sea-based regardless of status; excluding a Filipino engaged under a government-recognized exchange visitor program for cultural and educational purposes. For purposes of this Act, a person engaged in remunerated activity covers a person who has been contracted for overseas employment but has yet to leave the Philippines, regardless of status, and includes "Overseas Contract Workers. "The term "OFW" is synonymous with "Migrant Worker."

SECTION 4. *Establishment of the Overseas Filipino Workers Hospital as a Level III Hospital.* – There shall be established in the City of San Fernando, Province of Pampanga, a Level III hospital to be known as the Overseas Filipino Workers Hospital (OFWH), which shall be under the direct supervision and control of the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW). It shall cater primarily to the healthcare needs of OFWs and their qualified dependents, subject to the limitations under existing laws, rules, and regulations: Provided, That nothing herein shall prevent the OFWH from accommodating patients other than OFWs or their qualified dependents.

The Medical Center Chief of OFWH shall, in consultation with the DMW and the Department of Health (DOH), prepare the hospital development plan to reflect the development goals of the hospital including its bed capacity and service capability. Requests for staffing requirements, capital outlay investments, and budgetary needs for operations shall be based on the hospital development plan.

The DOH shall support the OFWH through the provision of technical assistance, extending capital outlay, and monitoring of the hospital's compliance with standards to deliver quality healthcare.

SECTION 5. *Purposes and Objectives.* – The OFWH shall:

- (a) Provide comprehensive and total health care services to all migrant workers including Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) contributors, whether active or inactive, their legal dependents, and the general public;

(b) Serve as a referral facility for repatriated OFWs needing medical assistance and support while ensuring its participation in the provincial and inter-regional healthcare provider networks to allow for a seamless and coordinated referral system for the medical repatriation program in accordance with Republic Act No. 11223, otherwise known as the “Universal Health Care Act”;

(c) Promote, encourage, engage in, and publish scientific research on the prevention, care, and treatment of occupational diseases common to OFWs, including the underwriting of research on biological, demographic, social, economic, eugenics, physiological aspects of occupational disorders of OFWs, and conduct relevant congresses, conventions, seminars, and conferences;

(d) Develop training programs for medical and allied medical professionals which shall focus on strengthening occupational and migrant health services in the country and the creation of specialized services;

(e) Provide 24/7 telehealth services to migrant workers and their families; the service may be extended at the Philippine foreign post or the Philippine Overseas Labor Office to assist in the medical assessment and management of distressed OFWs while awaiting repatriation;

(f) Establish the OFWH as a medical facility providing pre-employment medical examination for OFWs;

(g) Strengthen health surveillance through the provision of a post-employment or post arrival medical examination for OFWs, in consonance with Republic Act No. 8042, otherwise known as the “Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995,” and the DOH’s Philippine Migrant Health Program;

(h) Raise public awareness and conduct a massive information drive on the prevention, treatment, and control of diseases common to OFWs, occupational health and safety, and physical fitness; and

(i) Assist and support universities, research institutions, and other hospitals or medical facilities in their studies on health-related concerns of OFWs.

SECTION 6. *Powers of the OFWH.* – The OFWH shall have the power to:

(a) Acquire and hold, in any manner, property of whatever nature or description, and to dispose of such property under any mode of encumbrance or conveyance;

(b) Contract and be contracted with;

(c) Levy, assess and collect such fees, charges, and assessments as may be necessary or proper to support, finance, and maintain its operation;

(d) Mortgage, lease, sell, transfer, convey, or otherwise dispose of its properties;

(e) Invest in, and purchase or otherwise acquire, own, hold, use, lease grant, mortgage, sell, transfer or otherwise deal with, real and/or personal properties of every kind and nature, including shares of stock, bonds, notes and other evidence of indebtedness or obligations of other corporations whether government or private;

(f) Solicit and receive donations, endowments, and funds in the form of contributions, whether in cash or in kind, from both the public and private sectors subject to existing budgeting, accounting, and auditing rules and regulations;

(g) Open such accounts in banks and other financial institutions, and to disburse such funds or invest the same as the DMW Secretary may direct to accomplish or advance the purposes or interest of the hospital;

(h) Invite foreign specialists and similar experts in the various medical fields not available in the country; to train the personnel, trainees, and residents;

(i) Send the personnel to research institutes, medical institutes, or universities for advance training or observation and to attend international or regional conventions, conferences, congresses, and seminars as the Medical Center Chief may deem necessary to accomplish the purposes and objectives of the hospital and subject to the approval of the DMW Secretary; and

(j) Exercise such other powers and functions as may be necessary or incidental for the accomplishment of the purposes and objectives of the OFWH.

SECTION 7. *Duties and Responsibilities of the DMW.* – The DMW shall:

(a) Establish a focal office for migration and health in the DMW to ensure that the country's migrant health program is mainstreamed in the plans and programs of the OFWH which shall include:

- (1) Assistance in identifying, documenting, processing, and approving applications for benefits granted to OFWs and their qualified dependents;
- (2) Establishment of a referral system within the OFWH to ensure efficient delivery of medical and health care services to OFWs and their qualified dependents;
- (3) Strengthening of the existing health benefits and medical assistance programs such as subsidies on hospitalization and medical procedures for OFWs and their qualified dependents, subject to the availability of funds and resources; and
- (4) Active engagement in the Philippine Migrant Health Network, an inter-agency, multi-stakeholder network for migrant health, composed of members from other government, non-governmental agencies, academe, civil society organizations, private sector, and international organizations, to advocate and lobby support for migrant health programs;

(b) Formulate and promulgate policies, programs, and plans for the sound administration, maintenance, and operations of the OFWH in consultation with the Medical Center Chief;

(c) Determine the organizational structure and staffing pattern of the OFWH in accordance with the revised compensation and position classification system subject to the evaluation and approval of the DBM and in compliance with the civil service and other pertinent laws, rules and regulations;

(d) Appoint and remove OFWH personnel upon the recommendation of the Medical Center Chief subject to civil service rules and regulations and other applicable laws;

(e) Create a consultative committee and other necessary mechanisms for the effective participation of land-based and sea-based accredited OFW organizations in the formulation of policies for the effective implementation of programs and measures to attain the objectives of the OFWH;

(f) Determine and undertake, in coordination with the Governance Commission for Government-Owned or Controlled Corporations, the appropriate steps for the formal establishment and incorporation of the OFW Hospital in accordance with Republic Act No. 10149, otherwise known as the “GOCC Governance Act of 2011”: Provided, That the OFWH shall remain under the full control and supervision of the DMW, unless Congress shall provide otherwise; and

(g) Perform such other functions that are necessary for the attainment of the purposes and objectives of this Act.

SECTION 8. *Medical Center Chief.* – The Medical Center Chief shall be appointed by the President of the Philippines upon the recommendation of the DMW Secretary.

The Medical Center Chief shall have the following duties and responsibilities:

- (a) Provide overall direction and strategic leadership to the OFWH toward the provision of high-quality health services;
- (b) Oversee all managerial and administrative processes and operations of all departments of the OFWH;
- (c) Supervise daily activities of functional units;
- (d) Ensure high standards in clinical training for medical and allied medical personnel;
- (e) Execute, on behalf of the hospital, all contracts and agreements which the hospital may enter into and accomplish and deliver any and all documents relative to such contracts and agreements, subject to the approval of the DMW Secretary;
- (f) Represent the hospital in all dealing with other offices, agencies, and instrumentalities of the Government and all other persons or entities, whether domestic or foreign and whether government or private; and

- (g) Exercise such other powers and perform such duties as may be vested or reposed by the DMW.

SECTION 9. *Duties and Responsibilities of the DOH.* – The DOH shall:

- (a) Ensure that the necessary permits and licenses to operate the OFWH are obtained, consistent with relevant issuances, rules and regulations;
- (b) Endorse and encourage medical specialists in other government hospitals such as the Philippine Heart Center, National Kidney and Transplant Institute, Lung Center of the Philippines, National Children’s Hospital, and the Philippine General Hospital, to hold clinics in the OFWH;
- (c) Establish OFW centers or wards in DOH-retained hospitals to complement the OFWH. The level of OFW services and corresponding facilities in OFW centers or wards and their respective health human resource requirements shall be determined by the DOH, in coordination with stakeholders: Provided, That the standards to be adopted thereon shall be consistent with the Philippine Health Facility Development Plan; and
- (d) Perform such other functions that are necessary for the attainment of the purposes and objectives of this Act.

SECTION 10. *Support from other Government Agencies.* – The OWWA shall ensure that existing health benefits and medical assistance programs are strengthened for OFWs and their qualified dependents: Provided, That nothing in

this Act shall be construed to diminish or reduce the existing benefits of OFWs and their dependents provided under Republic Act No. 11223, otherwise known as the “Universal Health Care Act.”

All other agencies, departments, bureaus, offices, or instrumentalities of the government, including government-owned or -controlled corporations, shall render assistance to the OFWH for the effective implementation of this Act.

SECTION 11. *Congressional Oversight Committee.* – There is hereby created a Joint Congressional Oversight Committee which shall be jointly chaired by the Chairpersons of the Senate Committee on Health and Demography and the House of Representatives Committee on Health. It shall be composed of five (5) members from the Senate and five (5) members from the House of Representatives, to be appointed by the Senate President and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, respectively: Provided, That at least one (1) member from each house shall come from the Minority.

SECTION 12. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current year’s appropriation of the concerned departments and agencies. Thereafter, such amount shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SECTION 13. *Annual Report.* – The DMW shall submit to the President and Congress an annual report on the implementation of this Act.

SECTION 14. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within sixty (60) days from the approval of this Act, the DMW shall, in consultation with the DOH, OWWA, and other stakeholders, promulgate the rules and regulations to carry out the provisions of this Act.

SECTION 15. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SECTION 16. *Repealing Clause.* – Executive Order No. 154, Series of 2021, is hereby repealed. All other laws, decrees, executive orders, and rules and regulations contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 17. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,