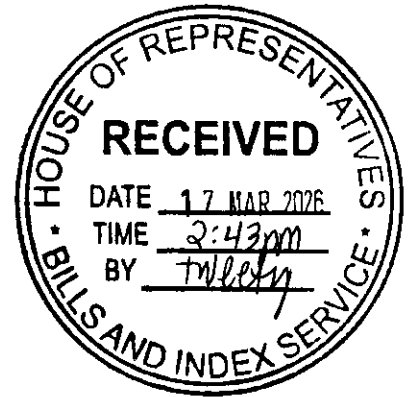


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Batasan Hills, Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session



HOUSE BILL NO. 8608

Introduced by Honorable Representatives
SARAH JANE I. ELAGO (Gabriela Women's Party)
RENEE LOUISE M. CO (Kabataan Partylist)
ANTONIO L. TINIO (ACT Teachers Partylist)

**AN ACT PROHIBITING VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT IN THE WORLD OF
WORK, PROVIDING REMEDIES AND PROTECTIONS FOR WORKERS, AND
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Violence and harassment in the world of work remain a pervasive scourge that undermines the dignity of the working class and reinforces the exploitative structures of our semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. For the Filipino worker, especially women, the youth, and those in precarious, informal, or contractual employment, the world of work is often a site of power imbalances where systemic abuse is used as a tool of control and subjugation.

The adoption of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 190 (Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019) and Recommendation No. 206 marks a historic global recognition that everyone has the right to a world of work free from violence and harassment. It acknowledges that such acts constitute a human rights violation, a threat to equal opportunities, and are fundamentally incompatible with the concept of decent work.

In the Philippines, the prevailing culture of impunity and the lack of comprehensive legal protections leave millions of workers vulnerable. Women workers disproportionately bear the brunt of gender-based violence and harassment, which is exacerbated by patriarchal norms and the lack of economic security. Furthermore, the "world of work" has expanded beyond the physical office to include work-related communications, commutes, and even the domestic sphere for those in home-based work arrangements.

This bill seeks to transform the standards set by ILO Convention No. 190 into our own legislation. It adopts an inclusive, integrated, gender-responsive, and intersectionality approach to preventing and eliminating violence and harassment. It recognizes that violence and harassment are not merely individual acts, but systemic issues rooted in unequal power

relations. By providing clear definitions, broadening the scope of protection to include all workers regardless of contractual status, and establishing robust mechanisms for remedies and support, including paid leave for victims of domestic violence, this measure serves as a weapon for the working class in their struggle for dignity, safety, and social justice. It aims to ensure a Safe World of Work for all workers by designating every individual in the World of Work both as a right-holder and a duty-bearer in the elimination of violence and harassment in the World of Work.

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



REP. SARAH JANE I. ELAGO
Gabriela Women's Party



REP. RENEE LOUISE M. CO
Kabataan Partylist



REP. ANTONIO L. TINIO
ACT Teachers Partylist

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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 "Safe World of Work Act."

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. -- It is the policy of the State to value the dignity of every human person and guarantee full respect for human rights. The State recognizes that violence and harassment in the world of work can constitute a human rights violation or abuse, and is a threat to equal opportunities.

The State shall ensure an inclusive, integrated, gender-responsive, and intersectionality approach to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence and harassment in the world of work. It shall protect all workers, particularly women and those in vulnerable situations, from physical, psychological, sexual, and economic harm.

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

- (a) "Violence and harassment" refers to a range of unacceptable behaviors and practices, or threats thereof, whether a single occurrence or repeated, that aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual, or economic harm, and includes gender-based violence and harassment;
- (b) "Gender-based violence and harassment" refers to violence and harassment directed at persons because of their sex or gender, or affecting persons of a particular sex or gender disproportionately, and includes sexual harassment;

- (c) "World of work" refers to the environment occurring in the course of, linked with, or arising out of work, whether on or off working hours, including but not limited to:
 - (i) the physical workplace;
 - (ii) places where the worker is paid, takes a rest break or a meal, or uses sanitary, washing, and changing facilities;
 - (iii) work-related trips, travel, training, events, or social activities;
 - (iv) work-related communications, including those enabled by information and communication technologies (ICT);
 - (v) employer-provided accommodation; and
 - (vi) commuting to and from work.
- (d) "Worker" refers to any person in the world of work, including employees as defined by national law, as well as persons working regardless of their contractual status, persons in training (including interns and apprentices), workers whose employment has been terminated, volunteers, jobseekers, and job applicants.
- (e) "Worker in the Formal Economy" refers to any person who renders services for an employer, whether in a public or private sector, regardless of sex, gender, age, employment status, and religious beliefs, where employment is governed by written, standardized, or systematized contract. A worker in the formal economy is one who has access to grievance machinery established either by the employer or the organization of employees.
- (f) "Worker in the Informal Economy" refers to any person whose work is not sufficiently covered by formal arrangements or contracts. This includes those who are working as freelancers.
- (g) "Migrant Worker" refers to any person whose work engagement is located outside the country, regardless of employment status.
- (h) "Third Party" refers to any natural or juridical person engaged in the world of work as client, customer, contractor, service provider, user, patient, or member of the public. This includes public authorities and any other person in a similar capacity.
- (i) "Intersectionality approach" refers to the recognition that the impact of violence and harassment experienced by individuals differs depending on their identities and social and economic positions – such as gender, class, race, age, disability, migrant status, sexual orientation and employment status.

SECTION 4. Scope. – This Act applies to all sectors, whether private or public, in both the formal and informal economy, and whether in urban or rural areas, including gig and platform workers and other non-standard work arrangements, and shall likewise apply outside the Philippines where a Filipino is engaged to work. It protects workers and other persons in the world of work, including employees as defined by national law and practice, as well as persons

working regardless of their contractual status, persons in training, including interns and apprentices, workers whose employment has been terminated, volunteers, jobseekers and job applicants, and individuals exercising the authority, duties or responsibilities of an employer.

SECTION 5. Prohibited Acts. – All forms of violence and harassment in the world of work are hereby prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to:

- (a) Physical acts of violence and harassment;
- (b) Verbal and non-verbal abuse, insults, psychological bullying, and any form of discrimination, such as but not limited to microaggressions, shaming, humiliation, belittling comments and behaviors, creating rumors, inappropriate comments, inappropriate touching, withholding information, failure to greet or acknowledge certain people, distancing physically or socially from people with marginalized identities, or refusal to acknowledge the contributions of others;
- (c) Gender-based violence and harassment in all its forms, as provided under Republic Act No. 7877, otherwise known as the “Anti-Sexual Harassment Act of 1995,” and Republic Act No. 11313, otherwise known as the “Safe Spaces Act,” when occurring in the world of work;
- (d) Acts of violence against women and children under Section 5 of Republic Act No. 9262, otherwise known as the “Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004”;
- (e) Prohibited acts under Section 28 of Republic Act No. 11058 or “An Act Strengthening Compliance with Occupational Safety and Health Standards and Providing Penalties for Violations Thereof”;
- (f) Constructive dismissal including actions demonstrating extreme hostility, discrimination, or ill will toward an employee—such as demotion without just cause, uttering insulting or degrading language, persistent humiliation, microaggression, or deliberate indifference or apathy—when such acts create working conditions so intolerable or unbearable that the employee is left with no reasonable option but to resign;
- (g) Violations on the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining;
- (h) Economic abuse, including the withholding or non-payment of wages, fees, honoraria, or other compensation for work or services rendered; the denial or withholding of benefits or incentives; the imposition of unjustified deductions or delays in payment; or the threat of dismissal, non-renewal of engagement, exclusion from work opportunities, or other economic reprisals to compel submission to harassment;
- (i) Cyber-harassment or bullying through work-related digital platforms; and
- (j) Violence and harassment committed by state actors or agents of the State, including members of the military, police, intelligence agencies, or other public authorities, against workers, trade unions, workers’ organizations, or any person in the world of work. Such acts include, but are not limited to, red-tagging or publicly labeling workers, union leaders, labor organizers, or workers’ organizations as communists, terrorists, or enemies of the State; surveillance, intimidation, threats, harassment, or coercion intended to discourage or punish the exercise of labor rights; interference with the exercise of freedom of association, collective bargaining, peaceful assembly, or other

legitimate trade union activities; the presence or intervention of armed personnel in workplaces, picket lines, strikes, organizing activities, or labor disputes without lawful authority; and arbitrary arrest, detention, or the filing of baseless or retaliatory charges related to legitimate work or trade union activities.

SECTION 6. Rights of Persons to Ensure Safe World of Work. – The State, through the appropriate government agencies, and employers shall respect, promote, and ensure the full realization and effective protection of the following rights of all persons in the world of work, consistent with international labor standards:

- (a) Right to information and training on the prevention of violence and harassment and on the rights and remedies available under this Act;
- (b) Right to accessible, fair, and effective mechanisms for reporting, complaint, investigation, and resolution of incidents of violence and harassment, within and outside the world of work, including protection against retaliation, intimidation, or victimization;
- (c) Right to refuse dangerous work or remove oneself from a work situation which presents imminent danger to life, health, or safety without fear of retaliation;
- (d) Right to free, timely, and effective remedies, including legal, medical, psychological, social, and administrative support services, and appropriate compensation or redress for victims;
- (e) Right to freedom of association, collective bargaining, and meaningful participation in the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of world of work policies, grievance mechanisms, and programs aimed at preventing, addressing, and eliminating violence and harassment in the world of work; and
- (f) Right to privacy and confidentiality in the handling of complaints, investigations, and proceedings, consistent with due process.

SECTION 7. Employer Responsibilities. – Employers shall take appropriate steps to prevent violence and harassment in the world of work, including but not limited to:

- (a) Adopting and implementing, in consultation with workers and their representatives/unions, a comprehensive world of work policy and guidelines against violence and harassment which covers workers, employers, and third parties;
- (b) Identifying hazards and assessing the risks of violence and harassment, including psychosocial risks, and domestic violence risks, with the participation of workers;
- (c) Integrating violence and harassment in the occupational safety and health policy in the world of work, with the participation of workers;
- (d) Providing information and training to all workers on the prevention and protection measures available and launching of public awareness campaign stating zero tolerance on violence and harassment policy of the company;
- (e) Establishing a confidential and gender-responsive internal mechanism for reporting and investigation, with representatives from unions and/or workers' organizations, if there are any;
- (f) Taking immediate and effective actions in compliance with the findings on violence and harassment; and

- (g) Ensuring the protection of victims from perpetrators of violence and harassment.

ARTICLE I

VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT IN A FORMAL ECONOMY

SECTION 8. Protections for Workers in the Formal Economy. – Workers in the formal economy, including those in the public and private sectors, regardless of sex, gender, age, employment status, religious beliefs, and association, shall be protected from any form of violence and harassment in the world of work and provided with safe and healthy working conditions. They shall be entitled to the following protections:

- (a) Every employer shall, in consultation with workers and their representatives/unions, adopt and implement a comprehensive world of work policy against violence and harassment.
- (b) The right to form unions and collective bargaining shall be recognized as a primary tool for preventing violence and harassment. Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs) and Collective Negotiation Agreements (CNAs) should include specific provisions on violence and harassment prevention and grievance machinery.
- (c) Workers shall have the right to remove themselves from a work situation which they have reasonable justification to believe presents an imminent and serious danger to life, health, or safety due to violence and harassment, without suffering retaliation.
- (d) Employers shall be held liable for acts of violence and harassment committed by their agents or supervisors if they failed to take immediate and appropriate corrective action.
- (e) Employers shall ensure workers are protected from violence and harassment perpetuated by any third party.

SECTION 9. Remedies of the Worker in the Formal Economy. – A worker in the formal economy who was subjected to the prohibited act/s as defined under Section 5 of this Act shall have access to the following remedies:

- (a) Initiate a complaint through the grievance machinery provided inside the world of work;
- (b) Initiate a criminal complaint against any person who committed the prohibited act/s stated under Section 5 of this Act against him or her; or
- (c) Initiate a civil action for damages incurred due to the commission of the prohibited act/s stated herein; provided, that if the worker in the formal economy has already initiated a criminal action, the civil action for damages shall be deemed included in the said criminal action.

Should the employer fail to act upon the complaint within five (5) days from initiation of the complaint, the worker in the formal economy may file an administrative complaint against the employer before the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) or the Civil Service Commission (CSC).

Employers who fail to implement preventive measures required under Section 7 shall be fined not less than One Hundred Thousand Pesos (P100,000.00) but not more than Five Hundred Thousand Pesos (P500,000.00), at the discretion of the court; notwithstanding the preceding paragraph of this Section.

SECTION 10. Protection against Retaliation. – No employer, or any person acting on behalf of the employer, shall dismiss, discipline, suspend, demote, transfer, reduce wages or benefits, harass, intimidate, or otherwise subject to any form of retaliation or adverse action any worker, applicant, or representative who:

- (a) Reports or files a complaint of violence and harassment in the world of work;
- (b) Provides information or participates in any investigation, hearing, or proceeding relating to such complaint;
- (c) Union officer or member who provides assistance; or
- (d) Exercises any right or duty under this Act, including seeking remedies or support services.

ARTICLE II

VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT IN AN INFORMAL ECONOMY

SECTION 11. Protections for Workers in the Informal Economy. – Recognizing the absence of traditional employer-employee relationships in the informal economy, the workers in the informal economy shall be entitled to the following protections from the Local Government Units (LGUs) having jurisdiction over the place where the workers in the informal economy are located or the DOLE, as the case may be:

- (a) Ensuring that public spaces used by workers in the informal economy (e.g., markets, terminals, streets) are free from violence and harassment;
- (b) Establishing accessible desks and grievance mechanisms where workers in the informal economy can report violence and harassment by third parties, including public authorities or private contractors. These mechanisms shall also cover violence and harassment perpetuated by state forces and the public. They shall also include protective measures against any form of retaliation or adverse action against those who shall report violence and harassment. "Clearing operations" or regulatory actions shall not be used as a pretext for violence or harassment against vendors and workers in the informal economy;
- (c) Providing resources and assistance for associations of workers in the informal economy to develop their own peer-support and safety monitoring systems; and
- (d) Undertaking necessary measures to protect workers in the informal economy from violence and harassment committed through online means.

The LGUs shall ensure that workers in the informal economy shall be entitled to the protections under this Act regardless of their sex, gender, age, religious and political beliefs, and association.

SECTION 12. Remedies of the Worker in the Informal Economy. – A worker in the informal economy who was subjected to the prohibited act/s as defined under Section 5 of this Act shall have access to the following remedies:

- (a) Initiate a complaint before the grievance committee established by the LGU;
- (b) Initiate a criminal complaint against any person who committed the prohibited act/s stated under Section 5 of this Act against him or her; or
- (c) Initiate a civil action for damages incurred due to the commission of the prohibited act/s stated herein; provided, that if the worker in the informal economy has already initiated a criminal action, the civil action for damages shall be deemed included in the said criminal action.

ARTICLE III VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT OUTSIDE THE PHILIPPINES

SECTION 13. Protections for Migrant Workers. – The State shall protect Filipino migrant workers from violence and harassment throughout the migration cycle:

- (a) The Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) shall ensure that all bilateral labor agreements include specific protocols for prevention, reporting, and addressing violence and harassment in the destination country.
- (b) Philippine embassies and consulates shall provide 24-hour hotlines, emergency shelters, legal aid, and psychological support for OFWs who are victims of violence, regardless of their employment status.
- (c) Mandatory orientation for departing workers shall include comprehensive modules on their rights under ILO Convention 190 and the mechanisms for redress in their host countries.

SECTION 14. Remedies of the Migrant Worker. – A migrant worker who was subjected to the prohibited act/s as defined under Section 5 of this Act shall report to the Philippine embassy of his/her host country. The embassies and consulates shall coordinate with the DMW for the initiation of a criminal or civil complaint against the local employer and/or foreign employer.

ARTICLE IV COMMON PROVISIONS

SECTION 15. Protection for Victims of Domestic Violence. – The State recognizes that domestic violence affects the health, safety, and productivity of workers. To mitigate its impact in the world of work:

- (a) Victims of domestic violence shall be entitled to twenty (20) days of paid leave annually, in addition to existing leave benefits, to attend to legal, medical, or relocation needs; further, they should have access to compensation in cases of psychosocial, physical or any other injury or illness which results in incapacity to work;
- (b) Victims of domestic violence shall have the right to resign with compensation;

- (c) Employers shall provide flexible work arrangements and protection against dismissal for victims of violence and harassment, ensuring their economic security is not compromised by their situation; and
- (d) Employers or LGUs shall provide legal assistance to victims of domestic violence.

SECTION 16. Remedies and Support Mechanisms. – The State, through the DOLE, Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Migrant Workers (DMW), and the Civil Service Commission (CSC), shall ensure:

- (a) Easy access to appropriate and effective remedies and safe, fair, and effective reporting and dispute resolution mechanisms;
- (b) Protection against victimization of or retaliation against complainants, victims, witnesses, and whistle-blowers;
- (c) Access to legal, social, medical, and administrative support measures, including 24-hour hotlines and crisis centers;
- (d) Access to compensation in cases of psychosocial, physical or any other injury or illness which results in incapacity to work; and
- (e) The right of workers to remove themselves from a work situation which they have reasonable justification to believe presents an imminent and serious danger to life, health, or safety due to violence and harassment, without suffering retaliation.

SECTION 17. Jurisdiction and Venue. – Jurisdiction over cases for the violation of this Act shall be vested with the Regional Trial Court of the province or the city where the prohibited act or any of its elements was committed or where the complainant resides at the time of the commission of the prohibited act; provided, that if the complainant is a migrant worker, the venue of the action shall be complainant's residence before working abroad.

SECTION 18. Prescriptive Period. – All punishable offenses and violations under this Act shall prescribe within five (5) years from the commission of the offense or violation, or if unknown, from the discovery thereof.

SECTION 19. Role of Labor Unions and Workers' Organizations. – The State shall ensure that all workers and employers, whether in the formal or informal economy, fully enjoy freedom of association and collective bargaining as a primary tool for the prevention and redress from violence and harassment inside and outside the world of work. Labor unions and workers' organizations shall have the right to represent victims in all proceedings and to monitor world of work compliance with this Act.

SECTION 20. Appropriations. – The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act. National and local government agencies shall be authorized to utilize their mandatory Gender and Development (GAD) budget, as provided under Republic Act No. 9710, otherwise known as "The Magna Carta of Women" for this purpose. In addition, LGUs may also use their mandatory twenty percent (20%) allocation of their annual internal revenue allotments for local development projects as

provided under Section 287 of Republic Act No. 7160, otherwise known as “Local Government Code of 1991.”

SECTION 21. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DOLE, in coordination with the CSC, Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), DILG, DMW, and representatives from workers’ organizations and unions, women organizations, migrants’ organizations, vendors’ associations, and other organizations or associations of concerned workers shall promulgate the necessary implementing rules and regulations.

SECTION 22. Separability Clause. – If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the remainder of this Act shall not be affected.

SECTION 23. Repealing Clause. – All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 24. Effectivity. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,