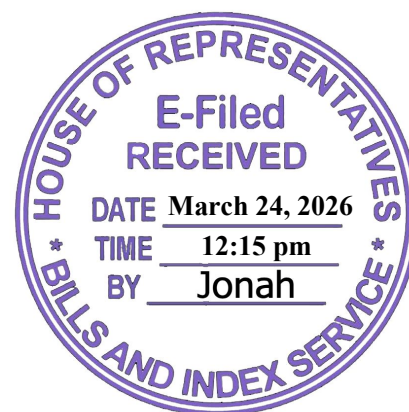


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **8746**



Introduced by **REP. NATHANIEL “Atty. Nat” M. ODUCAO**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

While the national poverty incidence declined to 15.5 percent in 2023, the distribution of these gains remains uneven and leaves significant portions of the population vulnerable. Rural areas continue to experience a disproportionately high burden of poverty, with poverty incidence among farmers recorded at 27 percent and among fisherfolk at 27.4 percent—figures markedly higher than the national average. More broadly, rural communities as a whole face a poverty incidence of 30.3 percent, compared to 22.3 percent in urban areas. These disparities highlight the persistent socio-economic gaps between rural and urban populations, which are further exacerbated by limited access to quality education, health services, and economic opportunities in rural localities.

At the same time, the labor market continues to present challenges. As of March 2025, the national unemployment rate reached 3.9 percent, while underemployment remains particularly high in the agriculture and fisheries sectors. Many rural households rely on seasonal or informal work, which contributes to income instability and vulnerability to shocks, such as natural disasters or fluctuations in commodity prices. These data underscore the urgent need for comprehensive and targeted interventions to address rural poverty and promote sustainable livelihoods.

In response to this pressing concern, this measure seeks to establish the Rural Employment Assistance Program (REAP), a government initiative designed to provide temporary employment to qualified individuals from poor rural households. Under the program, beneficiaries shall receive compensation equivalent to at least seventy-five percent of the prevailing regional minimum wage, thereby ensuring a fair and sufficient means of livelihood. By providing meaningful employment, the program aims not only to support rural incomes but also to enhance skills, build resilience, and stimulate local economies.

The Rural Employment Assistance Program is envisioned as a crucial instrument for advancing inclusive growth. By directly supporting the most vulnerable rural households, it strengthens social protection, narrows the rural-urban divide, and reinforces the State’s commitment to social justice and poverty alleviation. The program also aligns with broader national development objectives, including reducing inequalities, promoting economic

¹Philippine News Agency (2025) Poverty incidence in 10 basic sectors down in 2023. Available at: <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1247183> (Last accessed September 23, 2025)

²Rappler (2025) PH unemployment, underemployment rates rise in March 2025. Available at: <https://www.rappler.com/business/unemployment-rate-philippines-march-2025/> (Last accessed September 23, 2025)

empowerment, and fostering sustainable rural development.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Oducado', with a small blue circular stamp containing a stylized 'S' or similar symbol located near the bottom right of the signature.

REP. NATHANIEL “ATTY. NAT” M. ODOCADO
1 Tahanan Party List

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **8746**

Introduced by **REP. NATHANIEL “ATTY. NAT” M. ODUCAO**

**AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A RURAL EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

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

1 **SECTION 1. *Short Title.*** – This Act shall be known as the “*Rural Employment Assistance*
2 *Program Act.*”

3 **SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.*** – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote a
4 just and dynamic social order that will ensure the prosperity and independence of the nation and
5 free the people from poverty through policies that provide adequate social services, promote full
6 employment, a rising standard of living, and an improved quality of life for all.

7 Towards this end, the State shall provide Filipinos with opportunities for just and
8 sufficient means of livelihood. The State shall likewise initiate meaningful employment
9 assistance programs to qualified individuals of poor households in rural areas duly identified
10 by the appropriate national agencies.

11 **SEC.3. *Rural Employment Assistance Program.*** - There is hereby created a Rural
12 Employment Assistance Program (REAP), which shall provide temporary employment to
13 every qualified individual member of a poor family in rural areas who volunteers to do
14 unskilled labor for a minimum of forty-five (45) days but not more than ninety (90) days in a
15 calendar year wherein the minimum and maximum period of engagement can cover a single
16 activity or multiple activities spread out over the course of a calendar year.

17 Qualified individuals are not subject to the terms and conditions of regular employment
18 and as such, shall not be deemed to have an employer-employee relationship with the DSWD,
19 or any agency or institution who utilizes their services with respect to the Program.

20 **SEC.4. *Definition of Terms.*** – As used in this Act;

- 21 a) *Poor* refers to individuals and families whose income fall below the poverty
22 threshold as defined by the government and/or cannot afford in a sustained manner
23 to provide their minimum basic needs of food, health, education, housing and other
24 essential amenities of life, or those who have been identified as poor by the National
25 Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction (NHTS-PR);

b) *Qualified individual* refers to willing and able Filipino citizens who are at least fifteen (15) years of age. Provided, That individuals between the ages of fifteen (15) and eighteen (18) may only qualify by first obtaining consent from their parent/s and/or legal guardian. Provided further. That individuals who are between the ages of fifteen (15) and eighteen (18) may only qualify provided they can be employed in non-hazardous work environments In accordance with the Labor Code;

c) *Rural area* refers to any barangay with at least fifty percent (50%) land devoted to agriculture, timberland, forest and or/pasture land as determined by the Comprehensive Land Use Plan of the concerned local government unit (LGU); and
d) "Unskilled labor" refers to a segment of the workforce associated with a limited skill set or a minimal economic value for the work performed. It is generally characterized by having lower levels of educational attainment, such as high school diploma. General Equivalency Diploma (GED) or lack thereof, and which typically results in getting lower wages.

SEC.5. Local Community Participation. - The DSWD shall take the lead in the overall implementation of the REAP. However, the corresponding LGUs and in particular, the local communities and people's organizations (POs) representing its most vulnerable sectors such as women, youth, the elderly and the like shall be given proper recognition and due consideration by the DSWD as the primary stakeholders of each project to be initiated.

Towards this end, the LGUs and especially the local communities shall be capacitated by the DSWD to be able to fully participate in any and all phases of the project development cycle, which include, but are not limited to, situational analysis and needs assessment, project identification, project implementation and management, and project monitoring and evaluation.

SEC.6. Qualifications for Availment of Employment Assistance. - The Local Social Welfare and Development Officers (LSWDOs), in close coordination with the LGUs and other concerned government agencies, as well as concerned members of the identified rural communities themselves, may conduct a preliminary joint assessment of all poor individuals and families in rural areas who signify interest in undertaking work as unskilled labor to determine eligibility in availing of the employment assistance program.

The assessment shall also take into consideration the inherent knowledge, skills, capacities, and capabilities of potential qualified participants so as to properly determine the type and nature of projects that are most suited to them and their respective communities.

These preliminary joint assessments may be subject to validation and approval by the DSWD. The DSWD shall facilitate basic knowledge and skills orientation and capacity building trainings and seminars as deemed necessary towards project development for qualified participants.

The concerned LGUs shall be responsible for providing for the loaning out of any tools and equipment necessary for project development to the qualified individuals.

SEC.7. Types of Works and Activities under the Program. - Employment activities for this purpose shall be designed to mobilize eligible individuals, families and communities to finish a project within a given time period. These projects may include, but are not limited to the following:

1 (a) Development, rebuilding/rehabilitation of agri-based livelihood assets damaged,
2 destroyed or lost due to natural disasters, such as desilting of irrigation canals, development of
3 paddy dikes, and rehabilitation of water 4 impounding dams;

4 b) Development or rehabilitation of common service facilities, which are being shared
5 and used by poor families as production or consolidation centers like post-harvest facilities,
6 and public markets;

7 (c) Development or rehabilitation of physical assets to open up access to areas necessary
8 to transport rural products, such as construction of farms to market roads and bridges; and

9 (d) Protection of natural and productive assets through mitigation and disaster risk
10 reduction measures, such as mangrove planting and rehabilitation, tree planting and similar
11 activities.

12 Additionally, the DSWD shall provide an updated list of projects that may be
13 undertaken as well as the projects not covered under this law. This list shall be readily made
14 available to potentially qualified individuals who have expressed their desire to participate in
15 the REAP.

16 **SEC. 8. Rate of Assistance.** - Every person qualified under this Program shall be
17 entitled to receive compensation for each day of work at the rate of not less than seventy five
18 percent (75%) of the prevailing minimum wage set by the concerned Regional Tripartite Wages
19 and Productivity Board (RTWPB). LGUs concerned may also provide for additional
20 allowances to the beneficiaries in order to cover for other expenses such as transportation and
21 food.

22 **SEC. 9. Micro-insurance Benefits.** - Qualified individuals are granted the option to
23 access micro-insurance as a form of social security in the event of accidental death or
24 dismemberment, medical reimbursement, and bereavement assistance at a socialized cost.

25 Toward this end, the DSWD shall provide liaison services necessary to enable qualified
26 individuals access to these social services. LGUs concerned may also provide additional
27 allowance to participants to cover insurance costs.

28 **SEC. 10. Appropriations.** - The Secretary of Social Welfare and Development shall
29 include in the DSWD's programs the implementation of this Act, the initial funding of which
30 shall be charged against the current year's appropriations of the DSWD.

31 Thereafter, the amount necessary for its continued implementation shall be included in
32 the annual General Appropriations Act.

33 In addition, the DSWD may accept donations, contributions or grants from foreign and
34 local persons, institutions and governments, among others, for the implementation of the
35 Program.

36 **SEC. 11. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** - Within ninety (90) days after the
37 approval of this Act, the Secretary of the DSWD shall, in consultation with the Secretary of the
38 Department of the Interior and Local Government, issue the necessary rules and regulations for
39 the effective implementation of this Act.

1 **SEC. 12. *Separability Clause.*** - If any provision of this Act is declared invalid or
2 unconstitutional, the other provisions not affected by such declaration shall remain in full force
3 and effect.

4 **SEC. 13. *Repealing Clause.*** - All laws, executive orders, administrative orders, and
5 rules and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

6 **SEC. 14. *Effectivity.*** - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete
7 publication in the *Official Gazette* or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

8 *Approved,*