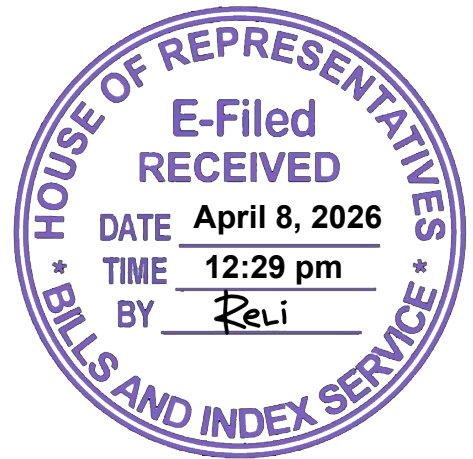




Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session



House Bill No. 8833

Introduced by CIBAC Party-List Representative
EDUARDO “BRO. EDDIE” C. VILLANUEVA

EXPLANATORY NOTE

“... Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” – Matthew 25:40b

“Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act.” – Proverbs 3:27

This bill is a result of the consultations and dialogues this Representation has made with various Filipino communities abroad, especially Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). One of the persisting needs of OFWs is a support system where they can run to in order to seek counselling, emotional upliftment, or spiritual strength – whether for themselves or for their left-behind family members – in times of life challenges and crises.

Article XV, Section 1 of the 1987 Constitution provides that *“the State recognizes the Filipino family as the foundation of the nation. Accordingly, it shall strengthen its solidarity and actively promote its total development.”* The Constitution affirms the State’s duty to protect the integrity and well-being of Filipino families, even in circumstances where they are vulnerable due to social, emotional, and psychological challenges.

OFWs, who are regarded as modern-day heroes, significantly contribute to national development through their remittances which sustain millions of Filipino households and support the national economy. However, prolonged family separation due to overseas employment has been associated with increased risks of emotional distress, weakened family cohesion, and psychosocial challenges among spouses and children left behind.

Existing government programs administered by the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW), the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), and other

relevant agencies primarily focus on labor protection, welfare assistance, and reintegration. While these programs provide essential services, there remains a need for an accessible government service that focuses on providing psychosocial support for left-behind family members of OFWS, especially their spouses and children. Though there were already efforts geared at providing support and focused attention to this vulnerable sector, an institutionalized government program that focuses on this area will greatly help in meeting the psychosocial needs of both OFWs and their left-behind family members.

Most of the time, OFWs or their left-behind family members during times of distress and challenges seek help from extended family, church, or other communities for emotional, mental, and spiritual support and direction. However, not all OFWs have reliable support system which include members of their extended family, church, or other communities. This is where the bill comes in. It mandates the government to be a third-party alternative for afflicted OFWs or left-behind family members where they can seek support and refuge in times of need, particularly, emotional, mental, social and spiritual upliftment.

This measure seeks to establish and institutionalize the OFW Life Crisis Support System Program which aims to provide OFW or left-behind family members with emotional support system, counseling, prayers and spiritual upliftment, hospital, jail, and or other solitary facility visitations, peer groups, and other support services as may be determined by the DMW consistent with the objectives of this Act.

Further, the program aims to maximize the potential partnership and possible contribution of the faith sector and care professionals in nation-building. The bill harnesses the potential and volunteerism of faith-based groups and other professionals with a heart of service for the needy to strengthen the social and emotional resilience of OFWs and left-behind families. Their voluntary participation will secure an abundant supply of loving hands who will reach out to needy OFWs and/or their left-behind family members in times of need. Thus, the State still fulfills its duty of preserving the solidarity and cohesion of Filipino families, even if separated by great distance due to overseas employment.

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


EDUARDO "BRO. EDDIE" C. VILLANUEVA



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HOUSE BILL NO. 8833

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EDUARDO “BRO. EDDIE” C. VILLANUEVA

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A LIFE CRISIS SUPPORT SYSTEM PROGRAM FOR OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS AND THEIR LEFT-BEHIND FAMILIES

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 “*OFW Life Crisis Support*
2 *System Act.*”
3

4 **SEC. 2.** Declaration of Policy. – It is a declared policy of the State to strengthen
5 the solidarity of the Filipino family regardless of whether living together in the country
6 or with other members residing abroad due to employment. Whether a co-residing or
7 a left-behind family, the State shall take such actions as necessary to protect and
8 strengthen the Filipino family as the basic unit of our nation.
9

10 As such, the State shall:
11

- 12 (a) Protect and promote the welfare, stability, and resilience of Filipino migrant
13 workers and their left-behind families;
14
- 15 (b) Provide accessible services that provide mental, emotional, social, and
16 spiritual support systems to Filipino migrant workers and/or their left-behind
17 families especially in times of life distress, hardships and challenges to
18 preserve psychosocial well-being, family cohesion, and responsible
19 parenting; and
20
- 21 (c) Strengthen partnership of government and non-government organizations or
22 groups in providing support systems to overseas Filipino workers and their
23 left-behind families;
24

25 **SEC. 3. Definition of Terms.** - For purposes of this Act, the term:
26
27

- 1 a. *Center* refers to Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) Family Center as
2 established in this Act;
3
4 b. *Co-residing family* refers to the family members living together in the
5 same household and sharing dwelling space;
6
7 c. *Left-Behind Family* refers to the family or its members left behind in the
8 Philippines by an overseas Filipino worker;
9
10 d. *Program Partner* refers to a qualified individual duly accredited and
11 authorized by the DMW to implement and perform the services of the
12 Program as defined in this Act; and
13
14 e. *Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW)* refers to a Filipino who is to be
15 engaged, is engaged, or has been engaged in remunerated activity in
16 a country of which he or she is not an immigrant, citizen, or permanent
17 resident or is not awaiting naturalization, recognition, or admission,
18 whether land-based or sea-based regardless of status; excluding a
19 Filipino engaged under a government-recognized exchange visitor
20 program for cultural and educational purposes. For purposes of this
21 provision, a person engaged in remunerated activity covers a person
22 who has been contracted for overseas employment but has yet to leave
23 the Philippines, regardless of status, and includes “Overseas Contract
24 Workers”. The term “OFW” is synonymous to “Migrant Worker”.
25
26

27 **SEC. 4. Overseas Filipino Worker Family Centers.** – The DMW shall establish
28 OFW Family Centers (OFC) nationwide and in all countries around the world. The
29 Center may be:
30

- 31 a. A regional, provincial, or field office of DMW;
32 b. A Migrant Workers Office (MWO) as defined in Republic Act No. 11641
33 or the “Department of Migrant Workers Act”; and
34 c. Such other facilities or offices as may be determined and established
35 by the DMW.
36

37 The purposes of a Center are the following:
38

- 39 a. To serve as a coordinating office of Program Partners; and
40 b. To serve as a venue for counseling or any emotional support system
41 for OFWs and their left-behind families
42
43

44 **SEC. 5. Establishment of an OFW Life Crisis Support System Program.**
45 There is hereby established an OFW Life Crisis Support System Program, hereinafter
46 referred to as the “Program,” to be implemented nationwide and in countries where
47 there are OFWs.
48

1 Upon request by an OFW, a left-behind family member, or *motu-proprio* by the
2 DMW, the Program shall deliver and provide any of the following services to distressed
3 OFWs and/or left-behind family members:
4

- 5 a. Counseling;
- 6 b. Prayers and spiritual upliftment;
- 7 c. Hospital, jail, or other solitary facility visitation;
- 8 d. Emotional support system through peer groups; and
- 9 e. Other support services as may be determined by the DMW consistent with
10 the objectives of this Act.
11

12 All services under the Program shall be provided in a non-coercive, inclusive,
13 and non-discriminatory manner. Program Partners may provide the service in Centers
14 or in the actual location of the distressed OFW or left-behind family member needing
15 assistance.
16

17 **SEC. 6. Accreditation of Program Partners.** – The DMW, in coordination with
18 relevant agencies and stakeholders, shall establish a list of accredited program
19 partners in each center who shall be either of the following:
20

- 21 a. Ministers from faith-based organizations;
- 22 b. Licensed professional counselors;
- 23 c. Licensed professional psychologists;
- 24 d. Licensed professional social workers; and
- 25 e. Other qualified individuals as may be determined by the DMW.
26

27 The process of accreditation of program partners shall be based on clear,
28 objective and transparent standards to be set by the DMW.
29

30 The criteria for accreditation shall be based on probity, integrity, competence,
31 good community standing, and compliance with applicable laws and regulations of the
32 applying Program partner.
33

34 **SEC. 7. Honoraria and Operational Funds.** – Accredited program partners who
35 will implement the Program may receive reasonable honoraria as voluntary token of
36 appreciation of their public service.
37

38 Further, the DMW shall provide the necessary operational funds for the carrying
39 out of the Program services by the Program Partners. These include reasonable
40 allowances for transportation, communication, and other necessary expenses needed
41 to carry out the Program, subject to government accounting and auditing rules and
42 regulations.
43

44 **SEC. 8. Report to Congress.** – The DMW shall include in its annual report the
45 effectiveness of the implementation of the Program which shall include the number of
46 cases brought to the various centers and the intervention provided.
47

48 **SEC. 9. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** – Within ninety (90) days from
49 the effectivity of this Act, the DMW, in coordination with relevant agencies and

1 stakeholders, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for its effective
2 implementation.

3
4 **SEC. 10. Appropriations.** – The initial funding for the implementation of this Act
5 shall be charged against the existing appropriations of the DMW. Thereafter, the
6 necessary funding of the implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual
7 appropriations of DMW.

8
9 **SEC. 11. Separability Clause.** – If any portion or provision of this Act is declared
10 unconstitutional, the remainder hereof or any provisions not affected thereby shall
11 remain in force and effect.

12
13 **SEC. 12. Repealing Clause.** – Any law, presidential decree or issuance,
14 executive order, letter of instruction, rule, or regulation inconsistent with the provisions
15 of this Act is hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

16
17 **SEC. 13. Effectivity.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
18 complete publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

19
20 *Approved,*