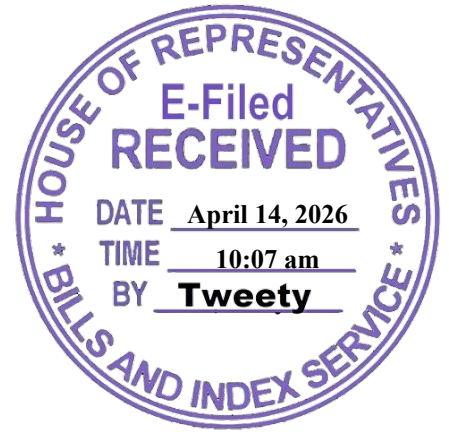


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **8856**



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

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Philippine justice system stands at a critical point, confronted by persistent delays, mounting case backlogs, and unequal access to legal remedies. These longstanding challenges have gradually weakened public confidence in our institutions and underscored the urgent need for comprehensive, systemic reform.

Consistent with the State policy enshrined in Article II, Section 1 of the 1987 Constitution—to uphold the rule of law and ensure justice for all—this proposed measure seeks to establish the Joint Congressional Commission on Justice System Reform (JCCJSR). The creation of this Commission reflects Congress’ commitment to undertake a thorough, independent, and evidence-based review of the justice system, with the end in view of crafting responsive and lasting reforms.

The proposed JCCJSR shall serve as a multi-sectoral body composed of representatives from both Houses of Congress and distinguished non-government experts in fields such as constitutional law, criminal justice, and human rights. This balanced composition ensures that legislative insight is complemented by technical expertise and independent perspectives. Members from Congress shall serve without additional compensation, while experts shall receive reasonable per diems for their services.

The Commission is mandated to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the justice system’s structure, procedures, and use of technology. In particular, it shall identify the root causes of delays in the resolution of cases, especially those involving public officials; evaluate existing rules to ensure both fairness and efficiency; and examine barriers that prevent vulnerable sectors from accessing justice. To ensure inclusivity and transparency, the Commission shall hold nationwide consultations and engage stakeholders from various sectors.

Moreover, the JCCJSR is empowered to request data and assistance from key institutions, including the Department of Justice, the Office of the Ombudsman, the Philippine National Police, and the Supreme Court. Its work shall be supported by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), which shall serve as its research arm, ensuring that all recommendations are grounded in rigorous data and policy analysis. The Commission shall submit periodic reports, culminating in a final set of actionable recommendations to Congress and the President.

The urgency of this measure is underscored by compelling data. As of 2023, over 1.2 million cases remain pending in the courts, with resolution times stretching up to seven years for

¹Inquirer (2023). Supreme Court reports improved case resolution rate in 2023. Available at <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1882071/sc-clearance-rate-2023>

criminal cases. A significant number of detainees remain unsentenced, while conviction rates in certain cases remain low due to procedural inefficiencies. At the same time, access to legal assistance remains limited, particularly for indigent litigants, further deepening inequality within the justice system.

Through a structured and time-bound approach, the JCCJSR shall operate for three years, with the possibility of extension if necessary. Its operations shall be supported through existing congressional appropriations and subsequent funding under the General Appropriations Act.

Ultimately, this proposed legislation does not seek to duplicate existing institutions but rather to complement them by providing a focused, independent, and reform-oriented mechanism within Congress. By identifying gaps, streamlining processes, and advancing institutional innovations—including the strategic use of technology—the Commission is envisioned to significantly reduce case backlogs and improve the overall efficiency of the justice system.

In doing so, this measure aims to restore public trust, strengthen accountability, and reaffirm the fundamental principle that justice must not only be done, but must be done swiftly, fairly, and equitably for all.

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



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

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

HOUSE BILL NO. **8856**

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

**AN ACT CREATING THE JOINT CONGRESSIONAL COMMISSION ON JUSTICE
SYSTEM REFORM, DEFINING ITS POWERS AND FUNCTIONS, PROVIDING
FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

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 “*Comprehensive Justice System Reform Act.*”

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to strengthen democracy by upholding the rules of law, ensuring transparent and strict public accountability in all branches of government, and guaranteeing timely and equal access to justice. The State recognizes that comprehensive, structural reform of the justice sector is imperative to regain public trust and ensure the integrity and efficiency of its institutions.

SEC.3. *Creation of the Congressional Commission.* – There is hereby created a body to be known as the Joint Congressional Commission on Justice System Reform (JCCJSR), hereinafter referred to as the “Commission.”

SEC. 4. *Composition.* – The Commission shall be composed of nine (9) members, with three (3) members from the Senate, three (3) members from the House of Representatives, and three (3) experts from the private sector and academe to be appointed jointly by the Senate President and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. These experts shall possess proven competence in constitutional law, criminal justice, public administration, judicial reform, or human rights, and shall not be currently employed in government service. They shall be entitled to receive appropriate per diems and allowances.

The Chairpersons of the Senate Committee on Justice and Human Rights and the House Committee on Justice, shall serve as Co-Chairpersons of the Commission. The remaining two (2) members each from the Senate and the House of representatives shall be designated by the Senate President and Speaker of the House, respectively, with at least one (1) member coming from the Minority. They shall not receive compensation except for travelling, communications, and other expenses as may be allowed by law.

SEC. 5. *Mandate and Powers.* – The Commission shall have the following specific mandate and powers:

- a. Conduct a comprehensive and independent assessment of the entire justice system's current organizational structure, methodology, procedure, and technological infrastructure;
- b. Identify and evaluate systemic bottlenecks and weaknesses in the enforcement of laws, particularly concerning the expeditious investigation and resolution of cases involving public officials;
- c. Assess the effectiveness of current judicial and quasi-judicial rules of procedure in ensuring the prompt disposition of cases, fairness in legal processes, and preventing abuse of process and delay;
- d. Study the barriers preventing marginalized and vulnerable sectors from accessing effective legal redress and recommend mechanisms for equitable public legal assistance;
- e. Conduct nationwide public consultations, expert panel discussions, and stakeholder dialogues with civil society organizations, the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP), and academic institutions;
- f. Request the assistance of relevant officials from government agencies, including the Department of Justice (DOJ), the Office of the Ombudsman, the Philippine National Police (PNP), and the Supreme Court and request said officials to grant the Commission full access to all necessary public documents, reports, and data, subject to existing laws on confidentiality;
- g. Recommend the appropriate and necessary legislative measures, executive action, and administrative reforms to improve the rules of procedure, expedite judicial processes, strengthen public accountability, and enhance the overall efficiency of the justice system;
- h. Report to Congress its accomplishments on a periodic basis, its findings and recommendations on actions to be taken by Congress and relevant government agencies, and provide a comprehensive final report at the end of its term to the President of the Philippines, the Senate President, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives containing the following:
 - i. A detailed analysis of the structural and systemic issues identified;
 - ii. Specific recommendations for legislative interventions, including the drafting of proposed bills and amendments to existing laws; and
 - iii. Actionable recommendations for executive action and administrative reforms necessary to strengthen accountability and efficiency

SEC. 6. *Standing Committees.* – The members of the Commission shall establish among themselves standing committees, to be chaired by such members or experts from multisectoral groups, and engage resource persons from the public and private sectors as may be needed.

SEC. 7. *Staffing and Administration.* – The Commission shall organize its staff and administrative support. The Commission may appoint and hire an Executive Director and other personnel as may be necessary to effectively carry out its functions.

SEC. 8. *Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS).* – The PIDS shall serve as the research arm of the Commission. During the course of the Commission’s existence, it shall produce data-based research and provide analysis to contribute to the formulation of recommendations on the necessary reforms to the justice sector.

SEC. 9. *Term.* – The Commission shall commence its work immediately upon the effectivity of this Act and shall exist for a period of the three (3) years, unless extended by a Joint Resolution of Congress.

SEC. 10. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the available appropriations of the Senate and the House of Representatives, subject to the approval of the respective heads of the two chambers, Thereafter, the amount necessary for its continuous implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act, subject to existing budgeting, accounting and auditing rules and regulations.

SEC. 11. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain valid and effective.

SEC. 12. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, executive orders, presidential decrees, administrative orders, rules, regulations, issuances or parts thereof inconsistent with or contrary to the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

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

Approved,