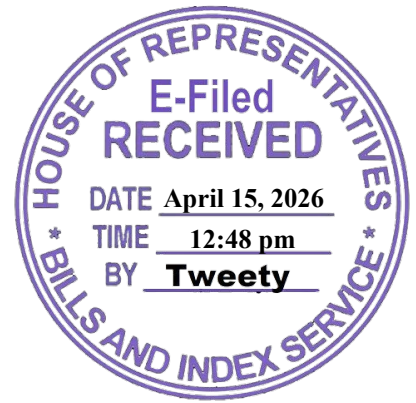




Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session



House Bill No. 8872

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

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Section 5, Article III of the 1987 Philippine Constitution guarantees the right to religious freedom of every Filipino. Among the bundles of rights subsumed in this constitutional guarantee is the right of a person to share, proclaim or disseminate his or her religious belief within constitutional or lawful bounds. Thus, any act that hinders, obstructs, prevents or threatens a person, natural or juridical, from sharing, preaching or doing any act of propagating his or her religion or religious belief, without justifiable cause, is a violation or impairment of this God-given and constitutionally- guaranteed right.

Faith propagators – regardless of the church or religious denomination they come from – are messengers of peace and hope to needy people. In a survey conducted in a recent year, it is found that 73% of Filipinos valued religion as “very important” in their lives.¹ Religion provides faith, hope, and a sense of purpose to Filipinos which keep them resilient even in the midst of life challenges like poverty, natural disasters, and personal struggles. Religion also provides the Filipino people with sense of values and moral compass that help them remain anchored on God as they navigate political and social issues and face the onslaught of modern ideologies.

Unfortunately, probably due to prejudice, bias, hatred, religious fanaticism, or money-motivated persecution, many missionaries or faith propagators have suffered different forms of persecution, hardship and threat to their lives in their honest and sincere quest to share their faith or religious belief to others. These include coercing or threatening missionaries or faith propagators if they continue preaching their religious belief; or disrupting or harassing religious gathering in order to sow fear and intimidation with the aim of preventing such religious gathering from happening again.

¹ April 1, 2021. SWS: Number of Filipinos who think religion is ‘very important’ drops from 83% to 73%. Available at <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1413554/losing-faith-filipinos-who-think-religion-is-very-important-down-survey-says>. Accessed on February 26, 2026.

This proposed measure seeks to give substance to the Constitutional right to freedom of religion by protecting and promoting the right of a person or a religious group or organization to freely and safely propagate or share his or her faith to others. By doing so, Filipinos are saved from being deprived of opportunities to hear the messages of these religions which are the producer of faith in God in their lives. This spiritual nourishment is very crucial in attaining the interest of the State of turning Filipinos to good and productive citizens of the country even in the midst life hardships and challenges.

Further, the bill balances freedom with responsibility by providing exceptions. In particular, the right to propagate religion cannot be invoked if an act may result to physical harm, violence, or if it will endanger public safety, order, or health. Propagating religion must also not be subversive, or contrary to good morals, a valid work, business or school policy, and to the laws of the country. It can also be regulated when done within a private establishment or dwelling, if it violates the fundamental rights and freedoms of others, or if it involves a minor whose consent of the parent or legal guardian has not been obtained.

The bill also supersedes Article 132 and 133 of the Revised Penal Code by not limiting to just public officers or employees the ones who can commit the offense, and by providing for stiffer penalties.

This measure is not about establishing a state religion nor giving special treatment to any faith group; rather, it is about giving faith propagators or religious groups a safe environment to share their faith and at the same time provide them with legal protection and remedies in case of threats, obstruction, harassment or persecution.

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. 8872

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EDUARDO "BRO. EDDIE" C. VILLANUEVA

AN ACT
PROTECTING THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE TO FREELY AND SAFELY
PROPAGATE THEIR RELIGION, GUARANTEED UNDER SECTION 5, ARTICLE III
OF THE 1987 CONSTITUTION

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 "*Freedom to Propagate Religion Act.*"

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy. - It is the declared policy of the State to protect and uphold the fundamental and inalienable right of every person to religious freedom as guaranteed under Section 5, Article III of the Constitution and other international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Declaration on the Elimination on All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion and Belief, to which the State is a party or that it adheres thereto.

The right of every Filipino to religious freedom, which includes the right to safely propagate religious beliefs, publicly or privately, through speech or actions, must always be recognized, protected and promoted.

Towards this end, the State must ensure that no person should be allowed to hinder, obstruct, prevent or threaten a person, natural or juridical, from sharing, preaching or doing any act of propagating his or her religion or religious belief, without justifiable cause.

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

- a. *Religious Belief* refers to a particular belief or set of beliefs held by a particular religion, or by an individual person;

- b. *Religious group* refers to a church, religious entity, religious organization or group of persons who have formed together into a congregation for the worship of a Higher Authority according to the group's established doctrines and ceremonies whether or not the same is registered with the government. For purposes of this Act, the group does not need to be registered to be entitled to recognition as a religious group.

SEC. 4. Prohibited Acts. – Subject to limitations and exceptions provided under Section 5, it shall be unlawful for any person to:

- a. Hinder, obstruct, disturb, or prevent a religious ceremony or manifestation either using force, threat or otherwise;
- b. Perform an act or acts notoriously offensive to the feelings of the faithful in a place devoted to religious worship or during the celebration of any religious ceremony;
- c. Hinder, obstruct, threaten or prevent a person or a group of persons from sharing, teaching, preaching or doing any act of propagating his or her religion or religious belief to other people; and
- d. Commit any other act that curtails or violates the right of a person to freely and safely propagate his or her religious belief, either publicly or privately.

SEC. 5. Exceptions. – The rights granted by under this Act shall be subject to the following limitations:

- a. When propagating religion may result in physical harm, violence, or endanger public safety, order or health;
- b. When propagating religion is contrary to good morals, or will violate the fundamental rights and freedoms of others;
- c. When the religious doctrine or teaching being propagated is subversive or contrary to the laws of the Republic of the Philippines;
- d. When propagating religion is contrary to a valid work, business or school policy;
- e. When propagating religion is conducted within a private establishment or dwelling owned, operated, or managed by a religious sect or one of its members; and
- f. When propagating religion involves a minor and the consent of the parent or legal guardian has not been obtained.

SEC. 6. Penalty. – Any person who violates Section 4 of this Act shall suffer a fine of not less than One Hundred Thousand Pesos (P100,000.00) but not exceeding Five Hundred Thousand Pesos (P500,000.00), or imprisonment of not less than six (6) years and one (1) day but not more than eight (8) years, or both, at the discretion of the court.

SEC. 7. Prohibition Against the Establishment of a Religion by the State. – Nothing in this Act shall be construed to affect or diminish, in any way, the meaning and intent of Section 5, Article III of the Constitution, which prohibits the State from establishing any religion.

SEC. 8. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – Within ninety (90) days from after the effectivity of this Act, the Secretary of the Department of Justice, in upon consultation with other concerned and relevant government agencies and stakeholders, shall formulate the necessary implementing rules and regulations of this Act.

SEC. 9. Separability Clause. – If any provision or part hereof is declared unconstitutional, the remainder of this Act or any provision not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 10. Repealing Clause. – Articles 132 and 133 of the Revised Penal Code are hereby superseded by this Act. All laws, decrees, executive orders, memorandum orders, memorandum circulars, administrative orders, ordinances, or parts thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, are hereby deemed repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 11. Effectivity. - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,