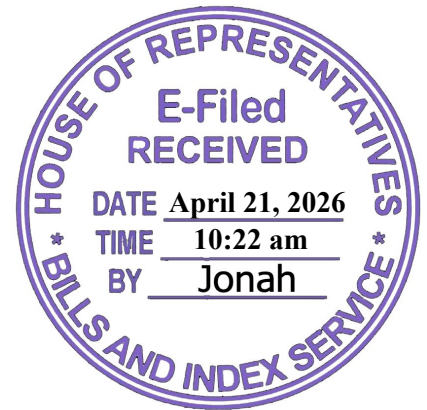




Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 8907



Introduced by Representatives Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez, Yedda Marie K. Romualdez, Andrew Julian K. Romualdez and Jude A. Acidre

AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR THE PROGRAMS AND BENEFITS FOR
RETURNING SENIOR OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) have long been regarded as modern-day heroes for their significant contributions to the Philippine economy and to the welfare of their families. After spending much of their productive years working abroad, many OFWs return home upon reaching senior age, often facing limited employment prospects and economic uncertainty.

As a declared policy, the State recognizes and upholds the fundamental rights of senior citizens, ensuring their equal access to government services, programs, discounts, and privileges in acknowledgment of their invaluable contributions to society. Returning senior OFWs, who have likewise contributed immensely to national development, merit targeted support to facilitate their reintegration.

This proposed measure seeks to establish employment facilitation and entrepreneurship programs specifically designed for returning senior OFWs. By promoting job placement assistance, skills enhancement, and enterprise development opportunities, the bill aims to support their continued productivity, financial security, and dignified participation in society.

Through this legislation, the State affirms its commitment to honoring the sacrifices of senior OFWs and empowering them to remain active contributors to the nation's socio-economic development.

In view of the foregoing, approval of this bill is earnestly requested.



FERDINAND MARTIN G. ROMUALDEZ



YEDDA MARIE K. ROMUALDEZ



ANDREW JULIAN K. ROMUALDEZ



JUDE A. ACIDRE



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

**CHAPTER 1
GENERAL PROVISIONS**

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Returning Senior OFW Act.”

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is declared the policy of the State to acknowledge the fundamental rights of senior citizens, ensuring their equal access to government services, discounts, and privileges, in recognition of their invaluable contribution to society. It is likewise the policy of the State to afford full protection to labor, local and overseas, organized and unorganized, and

promote full employment opportunities for all. Towards this end, it shall be the State's responsibility to protect the Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs).

The State shall promote inclusivity, equity, and accessibility to goods and services so that senior OFWs, through standardized benefits and incentives, are afforded adequate social services, decent standard of living, and improved quality of life.

SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act, the following terms and phrases are defined as follows:

- (a) *Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW)* refers to a Filipino who is to be engaged, is engaged, or has been engaged in remunerated activity in a country of which he or she is not an immigrant, citizen, or permanent resident or is not awaiting naturalization, recognition, or admission, whether land-based or sea-based regardless of status; excluding a Filipino engaged under a government-recognized exchange visitor program for cultural and educational purposes. For purposes of this guidelines, a person engaged in remunerated activity covers a person who has been contracted for overseas employment but has yet to leave the Philippines, regardless of status, and includes "Overseas Contract Workers". The term "OFW" is synonymous to "Migrant Worker".
- (b) *Senior OFW* refers to an OFW who is a senior citizen or at least sixty (60) years old.
- (c) *Health Care Voucher* refers to assistance given to a qualified senior OFW beneficiary in the form of a voucher that has monetary value, to be utilized for the healthcare needs of the senior OFW beneficiary.
- (d) *Health care provider* refers to any of the following:

- 1) A health facility which may be public or private, devoted primarily to the provision of services for health promotion, prevention, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation and palliation of individuals suffering from illness, disease, injury, disability, or deformity, or in need of obstetrical or other medical and nursing care;
- 2) A health care professional who may be a doctor of medicine, nurse, midwife, dentist, rehabilitation therapist, occupational therapist, or any other allied professional or practitioner duly licensed to practice in the Philippines;
- 3) A community-based healthcare organization, which is an association of members of the community organized for the purpose of improving the health status of that community; or
- 4) Pharmacies or drug outlets, laboratories and diagnostic clinics.

SEC. 4. Coverage. – OFWs, as defined in Republic Act No. 11641 or the “Department of Migrant Workers Act”, who are resident senior citizens aged 60 years old and above, returned to the Philippines irrespective of date, and have served and completed at least one employment or service contract overseas.

SEC. 5. Health Care Voucher Program for Senior OFWs. – Senior OFWs who are 71 years old and above shall be entitled a one-time voucher with monetary value of Fifty Thousand Pesos (P50,000.00). This voucher shall be used exclusively for the healthcare needs of the beneficiary and may be applied solely toward essential healthcare services, including but not limited to primary care, diagnostic, laboratory, preventive, curative, and rehabilitative services, as well as essential healthcare products, including prescription medicines and other approved medical supplies, provided or dispensed by duly accredited healthcare providers. Further, the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) shall formulate

accreditation of health care providers, including the payment scheme for remuneration of services rendered in favor of senior OFWs and monitoring thereof.

SEC. 6. *Employment Facilitation Program for Senior OFWs.* – The government shall encourage and provide incentives to local employers that employ senior OFWs, regardless of employment status, to enable them to continue being economically productive and to share their knowledge and expertise to the local economy. Private entities that shall employ senior citizens as employees, upon the effectivity of this Act, shall be entitled to an additional deduction from their gross income equivalent to thirty five (35%) of the total amount paid as salaries, wages, benefits, and trainings provided to senior OFWs, subject to the provision of Section 34 of the National Internal Revenue Code (NIRC), as amended: *Provided, however,* That such employment shall continue for a period of at least six (6) months: *Provided, further,* That the annual income of the senior OFW does not exceed the latest poverty threshold as determined by the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) of the Department of Economy, Planning, and Development (DEPDev) for that year.

SEC. 7. *Entrepreneurship Program for Senior OFWs.* – The Department of Migrant Workers and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) shall establish and sustain a dedicated entrepreneurship and training program for senior OFWs, whether individual or group, who have developed an entrepreneurial mindset to enable them to continue being economically productive upon their return to the Philippines, in collaboration with national government agencies, local government units, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), Department of Tourism (DOT), Department of Finance (DOF), Department of

Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Education (DepEd), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), private companies and social organizations, among others.

SEC. 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DMW shall, in coordination with the OWWA, DOLE, Department of Budget and Management (DBM), DTI, DEPDev, NCSC, TESDA, DOT, DOT, DepEd, CHED, and other concerned government agencies, as well as civil society organizations, non-government organizations, and people’s organizations, promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

The intended guidelines must include the establishment of the corresponding Reintegration Application System for the proper administration, operation, and maintenance thereof. It shall likewise set the mechanism in the identification of beneficiaries of the programs and benefits under this Act.

SEC. 9. *Implementing Guidelines for Programs.* – The DMW shall promulgate the necessary implementing guidelines of the programs and services covered under this Act.

SEC. 10. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary for the implementation of the provisions of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act following its enactment into law.

SEC. 11. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act shall be held unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not otherwise affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 12. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, executive orders or issuances or any part thereof, which are inconsistent herewith, are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

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

Approved,