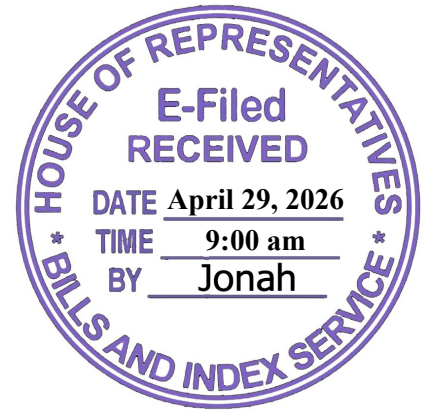




Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session



House Bill No. 8994

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

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The right to travel is a fundamental liberty afforded to every Filipino citizen under Section 6, Article III of the 1987 Constitution. While the State has a duty to enforce immigration laws and combat human trafficking, such authority must be exercised in a manner that is fair, transparent, and respectful of other individual rights. In practice, however, numerous Filipino passengers have experienced deferred or denied departures due to extended immigration inspections, often resulting in missed flights and financial losses, even in cases where no violation of law is ultimately established. Concerns have been raised regarding the inconsistent, opaque, and at times arbitrary implementation of outbound immigration procedures, particularly in cases involving the denial of departure or so-called “offloading” of Filipino travelers.

At present, there exists no clear statutory mechanism to provide relief to passengers who incur financial harm as a result of such deferred departures. This gap places an undue burden on law-abiding travelers, effectively penalizing them despite the absence of any wrongdoing. The lack of accountability mechanisms also risks undermining public confidence in immigration processes.

This proposed measure seeks to address this gap by establishing a reimbursement mechanism for Filipino passengers whose international departure is deferred or denied by the Bureau of Immigration, in cases where such denial is not based on lawful or clearly established grounds. By limiting reimbursement to the cost of the outbound travel ticket and imposing reasonable eligibility conditions, the bill ensures that relief is targeted, fair, and fiscally responsible.

At the same time, the measure carefully preserves the State’s authority to prevent human trafficking, illegal recruitment, and other transnational crimes. It explicitly excludes cases involving fraudulent documents, misrepresentation, trafficking indicators, or failure to comply with established legal requirements. In doing so, the bill strikes a necessary balance between protecting individual rights and maintaining effective border control.

The measure further introduces clear procedures for filing, evaluating, and resolving reimbursement claims, thereby promoting administrative efficiency, transparency, and accountability. It also mandates reportorial requirements to ensure oversight and proper use of public funds.

Ultimately, this bill affirms that while the State may regulate the movement of persons for legitimate purposes, it must also take responsibility when such regulation results in unwarranted financial harm to its citizens. By institutionalizing a system of redress, the measure strengthens both the integrity of immigration enforcement and the protection of Filipino travelers.

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. 8994

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AN ACT

MANDATING THE REIMBURSEMENT OF TRAVEL EXPENSES INCURRED BY FILIPINO PASSENGERS WHOSE INTERNATIONAL DEPARTURE IS DEFERRED OR DENIED BY THE BUREAU OF IMMIGRATION, SUBJECT TO ANTI-TRAFFICKING SAFEGUARDS, AND PRESCRIBING THE CONDITIONS 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 *"Passenger Protection*
2 *and Reimbursement for Deferred Departures Act"*.

3
4 **SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy** - It is hereby declared the policy of the State to
5 protect the rights, welfare, and dignity of Filipino travelers, consistent with their
6 constitutional right to travel, while ensuring effective immigration enforcement.

7
8 Towards this end, this Act establishes a mechanism to provide financial relief to
9 Filipino passengers whose international travel is delayed or deferred due to extended
10 immigration checks, without diminishing the authority of the Bureau of Immigration to
11 enforce immigration and anti-trafficking laws.

12
13 **SEC. 3. Definition of Terms –**

14
15 a. *Court Order* refers to a directive issued by a Philippine court of competent
16 jurisdiction preventing any attempt by a Filipino passenger from leaving the
17 Philippines.

18
19 b. *Declared Sponsor* refers to a person or organization that meets the
20 qualifications to sponsor a passenger's travel, per qualifications provided by
21 the IACAT Guidelines on Departure Formalities for International-Bound
22 Passengers;
23

- 1 c. *Deferred Departure* refers to the situation wherein a passenger's departure is
2 postponed for reasons outlined in Section 4 hereof, excluding personal
3 reasons, voluntary itinerary changes by the passenger, or airline-related
4 issues, among others.
5
6 d. *Passenger* refers to a Filipino national traveling to a foreign country,
7 regardless of the travel purpose, whether for temporary or permanent
8 migration, whose travel has been deferred by Immigration Officers due to
9 immigration inspection.
10
11 e. *Reimbursement* refers to the allowable monetary amount granted to a
12 passenger to cover his/her travel expense as defined in paragraph (h) hereof,
13 due to a deferred departure that does not meet the exceptions in Section 4 of
14 this Act.
15
16 f. *Trafficking in Persons* – as defined in Section 3(a) of the RA No. 9208, as
17 amended, refers to the recruitment, obtaining, hiring, providing, obtaining,
18 transportation, transfer, maintaining, harboring, or receipt of persons with or
19 without the victim's consent or knowledge, within or across national borders
20 by means of threat, or use of force, or other forms of coercion, abduction,
21 fraud, deception, abuse of power or of position, taking advantage of the
22 vulnerability of the person, or, the giving or receiving of payments or benefits
23 to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for
24 the purpose of exploitation or the prosecution which includes at a minimum,
25 the exploitation or the prostitution of others, or the engagement of others for
26 the production or distribution, or both, of materials that depict child sexual
27 abuse or exploitation, or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or
28 services, slavery, servitude, or the removal of sale and organs. The
29 recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, adoption or receipt of a child
30 for the purpose of exploitation or when the adoption is induced by any form
31 of consideration for exploitative purposes, shall also be considered trafficking
32 in persons even if it does not involve any of the means set forth in the
33 preceding paragraph.
34
35 g. *Trafficking in Persons Cases* refer to cases that involve the illegal act/s of
36 trafficking in persons.
37
38 h. *Travel Expense* refers strictly to the total cost of a flight ticket for the departure
39 segment from the Philippines' port of exit to the first overseas port of entry.
40

41 **SEC. 4. Eligibility Criteria for Reimbursement Claims.** – Any Filipino
42 passenger whose international departure from the Philippines is deferred or denied by
43 the Bureau of Immigration without a court order may be eligible to claim
44 reimbursement of travel expenses, subject to the conditions and limitations provided
45 under this Act.
46

47 Eligibility for reimbursement shall arise when the deferral or denial of departure
48 results from immigration inspection conducted in the course of immigration
49 assessment, verification, or clearance procedures.
50

1 No reimbursement shall be granted where the deferral or denial of departure is
2 due to any of the following:

- 3
- 4 a. Failure to present an Allow Departure Order (ADO) for passengers with an
5 active Court Order or who are accused and released on bail;
 - 6 b. Failure to present a duly issued Travel Authority for international travel for
7 government employees, as required under existing regulations;
 - 8 c. Failure to present required documents under the Inter-Agency Council
9 Against Trafficking (IACAT) Guidelines on Departure Formalities for
10 International-Bound Filipino Passengers (Guidelines) and other government-
11 required supporting documents for international travels;
 - 12 d. Any passenger who is identified to have fraudulent, falsified, or tampered
13 travel documents, or identified as a potential trafficked person, or has
14 misrepresented their travel purpose;
 - 15 e. Passengers who are assessed as suspected illegal recruiters/traffickers
16 under RA No. 9208, as amended;
 - 17 f. Travel/deployment restrictions imposed by the Department of Foreign Affairs
18 (DFA), the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW), and other authorized
19 government agencies; and
 - 20 g. Failure to board the flight for causes other than the result of immigration
21 inspection.
- 22

23 **SEC. 5. Filing of Reimbursement.** – A claim for reimbursement of travel
24 expenses shall be filed personally by the passenger with the BI's International Port of
25 Entry and Exit Management Office (IPEE-MO) where the passenger was deferred for
26 departure, within thirty (30) calendar days from the date of the deferred departure.

27

28 **SEC. 6. Evaluation of Reimbursement Claims.** – The Bureau of Immigration
29 (BI), through its International Port of Entry and Exit Management Office (IPEE-MO) at
30 the international airport or seaport of exit where the passenger's departure was
31 deferred, shall receive and evaluate claims for reimbursement of travel expenses and
32 shall endorse the same to the Department of Justice-Inter-Agency Council Against
33 Trafficking (IACAT) for determination.

34

35 The IACAT shall assess the eligibility of the passenger based on records
36 generated during immigration inspection and shall resolve the reimbursement claim
37 within thirty (30) working days from receipt of the BI's endorsement.

38

39 **SEC. 7. Notice of Decision and Finality.** – The claimant shall be notified of the
40 decision on the reimbursement claim through the fastest means available, and a copy
41 thereof shall be furnished to the Bureau of Immigration. The determination of eligibility
42 and the amount of reimbursement shall be final and executory.

43

44 **SEC. 8. Limitations for a Reimbursement Claim.** –

- 45 a. Eligible passengers shall be entitled to only one (1) reimbursement claim per
46 year regardless of the number of deferred departures.
 - 47 b. Only travel expenses that a passenger or a declared sponsor personally paid
48 for will be considered for reimbursement.
- 49

1 This provision shall be without prejudice to the filing of action under existing law
2 or regulation against the responsible government employee or official.
3

4 **SEC. 9. Right to Data Privacy.** – All government agencies involved in the data
5 gathering and processing shall ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of
6 the personal data processed and prevent their use for unauthorized purposes, subject
7 to the requirements under RA 10173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012.
8

9 **SEC. 10. Reportorial requirements.** – The BI shall submit a quarterly report to
10 the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) and Commission on Audit (COA
11 on the claims filed, denied, granted, and released to ensure transparency and
12 accountability.
13

14 **SEC. 11. Appropriations.** – The amounts necessary for the implementation of
15 this Act shall be charged against the current year available appropriations of the
16 Bureau of Immigration. Thereafter, the amount necessary for its continuous
17 implementation shall be included in the annual general appropriations.
18

19 **SEC. 12. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** – The DOJ, BI, and the DBM,
20 in consultation with necessary and relevant agencies and stakeholders, shall
21 promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to implement the provisions of this
22 Act.
23

24 **SEC. 13. Separability Clause.** – If any portion or provision of this Act is declared
25 unconstitutional, the remainder hereof or any provisions not affected thereby shall
26 remain in force and effect.
27

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

31 **SEC. 15. Effectivity.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
32 complete publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.
33

34 *Approved,*