



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

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session



HOUSE BILL NO. 9503

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

AN ACT
PROMOTING AND SUPPORTING LOCAL HANDICRAFTS, WEAVING
COMMUNITIES, AND HERITAGE INDUSTRIES THROUGH CAPACITY
BUILDING, MARKET DEVELOPMENT, AND FISCAL INCENTIVES,
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Philippines possesses a rich and diverse cultural heritage reflected in its traditional crafts, artisanal industries, indigenous knowledge systems, and community-based cultural practices. Across the country, generations of Filipino artisans have preserved unique traditions in weaving, pottery, embroidery, woodcarving, metalwork, basketry, and other heritage crafts that embody the identity, history, and creativity of local communities.

Despite their cultural and economic significance, many artisans and heritage industries continue to face serious challenges, including declining transmission of traditional skills, limited market access, lack of financing and technological support, imitation and unauthorized commercial use of cultural designs, and the gradual loss of indigenous and community-based knowledge systems. Globalization, changing consumer trends, and the aging population of master artisans further threaten the continuity and sustainability of Philippine heritage industries.

Thus, this bill seeks to establish a comprehensive national framework for the preservation, development, promotion, and modernization of Philippine handicrafts and heritage-based industries. The measure recognizes that cultural heritage is not only a matter of historical preservation, but also a vital driver of inclusive economic growth, rural livelihood generation, tourism development, creative industry expansion, and national cultural identity.

The bill institutionalizes a Local Handicrafts and Heritage Promotion Program under the leadership of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), in coordination with the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), the Department of Tourism (DOT), the Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines (IPOPHL), Local Government Units (LGUs), and other stakeholders. The measure likewise strengthens the protection of traditional knowledge, cultural expressions, and indigenous designs against unauthorized exploitation and cultural misappropriation. It establishes a system of certification and cultural authenticity labeling to promote genuine Philippine heritage products, enhance consumer confidence, strengthen export competitiveness, and safeguard the integrity of culturally significant crafts and traditions.

By supporting both cultural preservation and sustainable enterprise development, the State affirms its commitment to protecting the country's heritage while creating meaningful economic opportunities for present and future generations.

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


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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 “*Local Handicrafts and Heritage Industries Promotion Act.*”

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy. - It is hereby declared the policy of the State to preserve, protect, promote, and develop Filipino cultural heritage and traditional

industries as integral components of national identity, sustainable development, and inclusive economic growth.

The State recognizes the invaluable contribution of Filipino artisans, craft communities, and indigenous and local knowledge systems in sustaining the country's intangible cultural heritage, promoting creative industries, and generating livelihood opportunities in rural and urban communities.

The State shall ensure the transmission of traditional skills, techniques, and cultural expressions to future generations by supporting education, apprenticeship, and community-based training programs, while safeguarding the integrity and authenticity of culturally significant designs and practices.

The State shall likewise promote the development of sustainable and globally competitive heritage-based enterprises by improving access to technology, financing, markets, and innovation support, without compromising cultural authenticity and community ownership of traditional knowledge.

Consistent with the principles of inclusive growth and cultural sovereignty, the State shall strengthen collaboration among national government agencies, Local Government Units (LGUs), civil society organizations, and cultural communities in the protection, development, and promotion of Philippine handicrafts and heritage industries.

SEC. 3. Objectives. - This Act aims to:

1. Provide capacity building and technical support to local artisans, weaving communities, and heritage industries;
2. Expand local and global market access for Filipino handicrafts and traditional products;
3. Support innovation and sustainability within heritage-based industries;
4. Strengthen inter-agency collaboration for the preservation of cultural heritage skills and designs.

SEC. 4. Scope. - This Act shall cover:

- a. Individual artisans and craftspersons;
- b. Organized artisan groups, cooperatives, and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) engaged in handicrafts, traditional textiles, and heritage products;
- c. Communities recognized for intangible cultural heritage practices such as weaving, pottery, woodcarving, metalwork, embroidery, and related crafts.

SEC. 5. Definition of Terms. –

- a. *Heritage Industries* refer to economic activities based on traditional knowledge, cultural practices, and indigenous or local craftsmanship, including but not limited to weaving, pottery, carving, embroidery, metalwork, and other similar artisanal production;
- b. *Artisan* refers to an individual skilled in traditional or contemporary craft production using manual, semi-manual, or heritage-based techniques;

- c. *Intangible Cultural Heritage* refers to practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills transmitted from generation to generation as defined under applicable cultural heritage laws and international conventions;
- d. *Cultural Communities* refer to groups recognized as custodians of traditional knowledge, including indigenous cultural communities and local craft-based communities;
- e. *Heritage Products* refer to handicrafts and goods derived from traditional techniques, motifs, or cultural expressions;
- f. *Common Service Facilities (CSFs)* refer to shared production facilities, equipment, and services that support artisans and MSMEs in improving productivity and product quality.

SEC. 6. Implementing Agencies and Inter-Agency Coordination. - The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) shall be the lead implementing agency of this Act and shall be primarily responsible for the overall coordination, implementation, and management of the Local Handicrafts and Heritage Industries Promotion Program. In the exercise of its functions, the DTI shall coordinate with the following agencies:

1. The National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), for the protection, documentation, and safeguarding of cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and cultural authenticity of heritage products;
2. The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), for the development and implementation of skills training, apprenticeship programs, certification, and capacity-building initiatives for artisans and craft communities;

3. The Department of Tourism (DOT), for the integration of heritage crafts into tourism circuits, cultural destinations, and promotional campaigns;
4. The Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines (IPOPHL), for the protection of traditional knowledge, designs, and intellectual property rights of artisans and cultural communities;
5. Local Government Units (LGUs), for local implementation, community coordination, enterprise support, and facilitation of access to facilities and beneficiaries;
6. State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), academic institutions, and research organizations, for research, design innovation, documentation, and product development support; and
7. Civil society organizations, artisan associations, cooperatives, and private sector partners, for program delivery, market access, and sustainability support.

The DTI may create an inter-agency steering committee or technical working group (TWG) to ensure coordinated implementation, policy alignment, and efficient delivery of program components across participating agencies.

The respective roles of participating agencies shall be without prejudice to their mandates under existing laws, and shall be exercised in coordination with the DTI as lead implementing agency.

SEC. 7. Local Handicrafts and Heritage Promotion Program. - The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), in coordination with the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), Technical Education and Skills Development

Authority (TESDA), and local government units (LGUs), shall establish a Local Handicrafts and Heritage Promotion Program (LHHP Program) with the following components:

- a. Capacity building on product design, quality standards, digital marketing, and financial literacy;
- b. Establishment of Common Service Facilities (CSFs) and equipment sharing centers;
- c. Mentoring and incubation programs to support new artisan entrepreneurs;
- d. Integration of heritage crafts in tourism circuits and local festivals;
- e. Documentation and safeguarding of traditional techniques, motifs, and processes.

SEC. 8. Protection of Cultural Heritage and Traditional Knowledge - The State shall ensure that traditional designs, motifs, techniques, and cultural expressions of indigenous and local communities are protected from unauthorized commercial exploitation and cultural misappropriation.

The NCCA, in coordination with the Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines (IPOPHL), shall develop guidelines for the documentation, registration, and protection of culturally significant designs and traditional knowledge systems.

Commercial use of culturally sensitive designs shall require, where applicable, free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) or appropriate community authorization in accordance with existing laws.

SEC. 9. Certification and Cultural Authenticity Labeling. - The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), in coordination with the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), the Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines (IPOPHL), Local Government Units (LGUs), artisan associations, cooperatives, and relevant cultural communities, shall develop and implement a system of certification and cultural authenticity labeling for heritage products covered under this Act. The certification and labeling system shall aim to:

1. Promote the authenticity, quality, and cultural integrity of Philippine handicrafts and heritage products;
2. Protect traditional designs, motifs, techniques, and cultural expressions from imitation, unauthorized reproduction, and deceptive commercial practices;
3. Strengthen consumer awareness and market confidence in locally produced heritage products;
4. Enhance the competitiveness and market value of authentic Philippine handicrafts in domestic and international markets; and
5. Support community-based livelihoods and recognition of cultural knowledge bearers.

The certification system may include, where appropriate:

1. Geographic origin identification or place-based cultural labeling;
2. Verification of traditional production methods or cultural significance;
3. Product traceability and authenticity verification mechanisms;

4. Quality assurance and product standards consistent with cultural preservation objectives; and
5. Official seals, marks, or designations identifying certified heritage products.

The DTI and NCCA, in consultation with concerned cultural communities and stakeholders, shall establish guidelines and criteria for certification, including procedures for application, evaluation, renewal, suspension, or revocation of certification.

In cases involving indigenous cultural communities or culturally sensitive traditional knowledge, certification and commercial use shall be subject to applicable laws on free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) and other community authorization requirements.

The DTI, in coordination with the DOT and PTICs, shall promote certified Philippine heritage products in local and international trade fairs, tourism programs, digital platforms, and export promotion initiatives.

The unauthorized use, misrepresentation, falsification, or commercial misuse of official certification marks or cultural authenticity labels established under this Act shall be subject to penalties and sanctions as may be provided under the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) and applicable laws.

SEC. 10. Fiscal Incentives and Financial Support. – Registered enterprises, cooperatives, and associations under the Local Handicrafts and Heritage Promotion

Program shall be entitled to priority access to existing government MSME support programs, including financing, training, trade promotion, and market development assistance.

Subject to applicable laws and approval of the appropriate authorities, qualified heritage-based enterprises may avail of incentives under existing laws governing investment promotion, MSME development, and creative industries.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), in coordination with the Department of Finance (DOF), Board of Investments (BOI), and other relevant agencies, shall develop a certification and qualification system for heritage enterprises eligible for fiscal and non-fiscal incentives.

Government Financial Institutions (GFIs) shall extend concessional financing programs, credit guarantees, and matching grants to qualified artisans, cooperatives, and MSMEs engaged in heritage industries.

SEC. 11. Market Development and Promotion. - The DTI, in partnership with the Department of Tourism (DOT) and Philippine Trade and Investment Centers (PTICs), shall:

- a. Promote local handicrafts and heritage products in domestic and international trade fairs;
- b. Develop an online National Heritage Crafts Portal to market products globally;

- c. Collaborate with designers, schools, and creative industries to innovate while preserving cultural authenticity.

SEC. 12. Heritage Skills Preservation, Apprenticeship, and Youth Engagement.

- The National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), in coordination with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), the Department of Education (DepEd), Local Government Units (LGUs), and other relevant agencies, shall establish a comprehensive Heritage Skills Preservation and Transmission Program to ensure the continuity of traditional Filipino crafts and cultural practices.

The Program shall include structured apprenticeship and mentorship systems that formally match master artisans with youth apprentices for the transmission of traditional skills, techniques, and cultural knowledge, subject to accreditation guidelines to be issued by the implementing agencies.

Master artisans and cultural knowledge bearers participating in the Program shall be entitled to appropriate incentives, including stipends, honoraria, training subsidies, or other forms of support, in recognition of their role in preserving intangible cultural heritage and transferring specialized skills.

TESDA, in coordination with the NCCA, shall develop competency standards, certification pathways, and training modules for heritage-based skills, ensuring that traditional crafts are recognized within national technical and vocational education frameworks without compromising cultural authenticity.

The DepEd, in coordination with the NCCA and TESDA, shall integrate heritage crafts, traditional knowledge, and cultural industries awareness into relevant basic education curricula and school-based cultural programs, where appropriate.

The NCCA shall identify and document endangered or at-risk traditional skills and practices, and prioritize these for urgent safeguarding, transmission, and community-based revitalization programs.

The DTI and partner agencies shall facilitate the linkage of trained apprentices and graduates of the Program to livelihood opportunities, enterprise development programs, cooperatives, and market access initiatives under the Local Handicrafts and Heritage Industries Promotion Act.

SEC. 13. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting. – The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), as lead implementing agency, shall establish and implement a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system for all programs, projects, and activities under this Act.

The M&E system shall assess the implementation and impact of the Local Handicrafts and Heritage Industries Promotion Program, including but not limited to the following indicators:

1. Number of artisans, craft groups, cooperatives, and MSMEs assisted under the Program;
2. Changes in income levels and economic conditions of participating artisans and communities;

3. Volume and value of domestic and export sales of heritage products;
4. Number of trainees, apprentices, and beneficiaries of skills development and capacity-building programs;
5. Number of Common Service Facilities (CSFs) established, upgraded, or utilized;
6. Degree of market access expansion, including participation in trade fairs, online platforms, and export markets;
7. Extent of preservation, transmission, and continued practice of traditional skills and techniques; and
8. Compliance of participating enterprises with program standards, including cultural authenticity and product quality requirements.

All participating agencies and Local Government Units (LGUs) shall submit periodic reports to the DTI in accordance with guidelines to be issued in the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR), including data on program implementation, expenditures, outputs, and outcomes.

The DTI shall submit an annual consolidated report to the President of the Philippines, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), and the Congress of the Philippines, detailing the status of implementation, performance outcomes, challenges encountered, and policy recommendations.

The DTI shall maintain a centralized national database of artisans, heritage enterprises, cooperatives, and assisted communities, which shall serve as the primary reference for planning, targeting, monitoring, and policy development.

The Commission on Audit (COA) shall have access to all relevant records and reports for audit and verification purposes in accordance with existing laws and regulations.

Sec. 14. Appropriations. - The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current appropriations of the DTI and participating agencies. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

Sec. 15. Implementing Rules and Regulations. - Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DTI, in consultation with the NCCA, TESDA, DOT, LGUs, and representatives from artisan groups and heritage industries, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations.

Sec. 16. Separability Clause. - If any provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions shall remain in full force and effect.

Sec. 17. Repealing Clause. - All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules, and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

Sec. 18. Effectivity. - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,