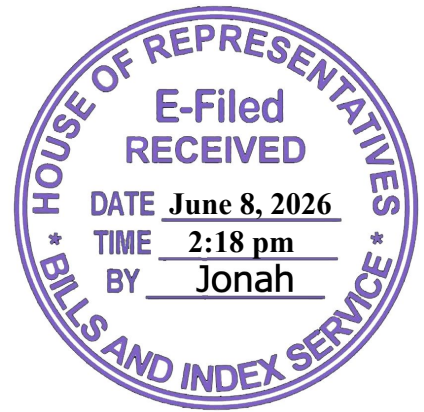


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. **9831**



Introduced by **Representative ERIC G. YAP**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to grant benefits and privileges to indigent Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) who have returned to the Philippines after years of employment abroad and who remain economically vulnerable despite their significant contributions to the country's national development.

The migration of Filipino labor serves as a primary pillar of national macroeconomic stability. The remittances of our OFWs sustain millions of Filipino families and provide a stable source of foreign exchange that supports economic growth. Their sacrifices have earned them recognition as modern-day heroes, often requiring years of separation from their families in pursuit of better opportunities for their loved ones and the nation.

Despite these contributions, many returning OFWs face significant reintegration challenges. Limited employment opportunities, inadequate savings, rising cost of living, and restricted access to affordable healthcare often leave them in financially precarious situations. These were particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when thousands of repatriated OFWs struggled to secure sustainable sources of income upon their return.

This proposed measure grants qualified indigent OFWs discount and privileges on essential goods and services. This includes medicines, medical and dental care, transportation, utilities, lodging, burial services, and government programs. It likewise provides access to livelihood, housing, training, and other forms of assistance intended to promote their welfare and improve their quality of life.

The State has a responsibility not only to protect Filipino workers while they are employed overseas but also to support them when they return home. Reintegration assistance should extend beyond employment facilitation and livelihood programs to include measures that help address the immediate social and economic needs of vulnerable returning workers. Those who have devoted years of their lives to supporting their families and contributing to the country's prosperity

deserve the opportunity to return to a homeland that values their sacrifice and enables them to rebuild their lives with dignity, hope, and security.

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



HON. ERIC G. YAP

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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House Bill No. **9831**

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AN ACT
GRANTING BENEFITS AND PRIVILEGES TO INDIGENT OVERSEAS
FILIPINO WORKERS

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 “*Indigent Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) Discounts Act.*”

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – The Constitution affirms that labor is the primary social economic force and mandates the State to protect the rights of the workers and promote their welfare.

Recognizing the significant contributions of our Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) to our country's national economy, the State shall adopt measures to protect and grant benefits to our modern-day heroes who return to the country after their overseas employment and assist them as they continue to contribute to nation-building.

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

a. Overseas Filipino Worker refers to any resident citizen of the Philippines previously employed overseas and has been certified by the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) for previous overseas employment purposes who has rendered employment services overseas for at least one (1) year including but not limited to seafarers, entertainers, domestic helpers, and professionals, regardless of their current employment status;

b. Lodging establishment refers to a building, edifice, structure, apartment or house including tourist inn, apartelle, motorist hotel, and pension house engaged in catering, leasing or providing facilities to transients, tourists or travelers;

c. Medical services refer to hospital services, professional services of physicians and other health care professionals and diagnostics and laboratory tests that the necessary for the diagnosis or treatment of an illness or injury;

d. Dental services refer to oral examination, cleaning, permanent and temporary filling, extractions and gum treatments, restoration, replacement or repositioning of teeth, or alteration of the alveolar or periodontium process of the maxilla and the mandible that are necessary for the diagnosis or treatment of an illness or injury;

e. Indigent OFW refers to any OFW who is without pension or permanent source of income, compensation or financial assistance from his/her relatives to support his/her basic needs, as determined by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), in consultation with the National Commission of Senior Citizens (NCSC).

SEC. 4. *Privileges and Discounts granted to OFWs and Former OFWs.* – Any qualified indigent OFW as determined by the DMW and DSWD shall be entitled to the following:

a. The grant of twenty percent (20%) discount and exemption from the value-added tax (VAT), if applicable, on the sale of the following goods and services from all establishments, for the exclusive use and enjoyment or availment of the OFW:

1. On the purchase of medicines, and such other essential medical supplies, accessories and equipment to be determined by the Department of Health (DOH); *Provided*, That the DOH shall administer free vaccination against the influenza virus and pneumococcal disease for indigent OFW patients.

The DOH shall establish guidelines and mechanism of compulsory rebates in the sharing of burden of discounts among retailers, manufacturers and distributors, taking into consideration their respective margins;

2. On the professional fees of attending physician/s in all private hospitals, medical facilities, outpatient clinics and home health care services;

3. On the professional fees of licensed professional health providing home health care services as endorsed by private hospitals or employed through home health care employment agencies;

4. On medical and dental services, diagnostic and laboratory fees in all private hospitals, medical facilities, outpatient clinics, and home health care services, in accordance with the rules and regulations to be

issued by the DOH, in coordination with the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth);

5. In actual fare for land transportation travel in public utility buses (PUBs), public utility jeepneys (PUJs), taxis, asian utility vehicles (AUVs), shuttle services and public railways, including Light Rail Transit (LRT), Mass Rail Transit (MRT), and Philippine National Railways (PNR);

6. In actual transportation fare for domestic air transport services and sea shipping vessels and the like, based on the actual fare and advanced booking;

7. On the utilization of all establishments relative to hotels and similar lodging establishments, restaurants and recreation centers nationwide;

8. On admission fees charged by theaters, cinema houses and concert halls, circuses, leisure and amusement; and

9. On funeral and burial services for the death of the indigent OFW, regardless of the cause of death.

b. The grant of a minimum of five percent (5%) discount relative to the monthly utilization of water and electricity supplied by the public utilities: *Provided*, That the individual meters for the foregoing utilities are registered in the name of the OFW residing therein: *Provided, further*, That the monthly consumption does not exceed one hundred kilowatt hours (100 kWh) of electricity and thirty cubic meters (30 m³) of water: *Provided, furthermore*, that the privilege is granted per household regardless of the number of OFWs residing therein;

c. Exemption from training fees for socioeconomic programs;

d. Free medical and dental services, diagnostic and laboratory fees such as, but not limited to, x-rays, computerized tomography scans and blood tests, in all government facilities, subject to the guidelines to be issued by the DOH in coordination with the PhilHealth;

e. To the extent possible, the government may grant special discounts in special programs for OFWs on purchase of basic commodities, subject to the guidelines to be issued for the purpose by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Department of Agriculture (DA);

f. Priority in existing livelihood programs being undertaken by various government agencies subject to the guidelines and qualifications by the implementing body;

g. Priority in national housing programs, affordable “*pabahay*” loans and other housing opportunities subject to the guidelines and qualifications set by the National Housing Authority or the Home Development Mutual Fund (HDMF).

SEC. 5. *Monitoring and Data Gathering on all OFWs.* – The DMW, in coordination with DSWD and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), shall maintain and regularly update at least on a quarterly basis the list of all OFWs, including indigent OFWs, and shall issue a nationally uniform identification card which shall be valid anywhere nationwide.

SEC. 6. *Penalties.* – Notwithstanding any administrative or civil liability from existing laws, any person or company who violates the provision of this Act by denying or hindering an indigent OFW from availing of any of the benefits under this Act shall be penalized by a fine of:

- a. Not less than Fifty thousand pesos (P50,000.00) for the first violation;
- b. One hundred thousand pesos (P100,000.00) for the second violation; and
- c. Two hundred thousand pesos (P200,000.00) for the third violation.

SEC. 7. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – The Department of Migrant Workers, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Health, Department of Tourism, and the Department of Finance shall issue the necessary rules and regulations to carry out the objectives of this Act.

SEC. 8. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriation of the concerned departments and agencies. Thereafter, such amount shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 9. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, executive orders, issuances, rules and regulations which may be inconsistent with any of the provisions of this Act are hereby deemed repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

SEC. 10. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is held unconstitutional or invalid, such holding shall not affect other provisions not affected thereby.

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,