

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session



HOUSE BILL No. 10380

Introduced by REP. RAMIL L. HERNANDEZ

**AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE BALIKBAYANI CENTER AS A ONE-STOP
REINTEGRATION HUB FOR RETURNING OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS (OFWs)
AND OFW DEPENDENTS, PROVIDING FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION,
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) have long been hailed as our modern-day heroes (*mga bagong bayani*), keeping the Philippine economy afloat through their hard-earned remittances. However, the transition back to the Philippines after years of working abroad remains one of the most challenging phases of an OFW's journey. Returning home permanently, or even abruptly due to crises, contract violations, or abuse, often leaves OFWs and their families facing administrative bottlenecks, financial instability, and a lack of immediate support.

Currently, reintegration programs are scattered across various government offices, requiring returning OFWs to navigate a maze of separate agencies to access livelihood, retraining, medical, and psychosocial services. This fragmented setup delays critical interventions during a highly vulnerable transition period.

This bill, otherwise known as the "**Balikbayani Center Act**," seeks to address this gap by establishing **one-stop reintegration hubs** across the country to consolidate and streamline the delivery of crucial services to returning OFWs and their dependents.

Drawing inspiration from the successful co-location model of the *Malasakit Centers*, the proposed measure introduces the following key structural reforms:

- **Establishment of Regional and Emergency Hubs:** Mandating at least one Balikbayani Center in every region, alongside emergency centers directly inside major international airports (NAIA Terminals 1 and 3, Mactan-Cebu, and Davao) to capture and assist distressed arrivals immediately.

- **One-Stop Co-Location of Core Services:** Bringing together key government partners under one roof, including the DMW, OWWA, DSWD, DOLE, TESDA, DTI, and DOH. This ensures instant access to livelihood grants, starter kits, skills retraining, business startup help, and medical or psychological debriefing.
- **Prioritized Care for Vulnerable Sectors:** Ensuring focused priority for OFWs in vulnerable, labor-intensive occupations (such as domestic workers, caregivers, construction, and factory workers), as well as victims of trafficking, abuse, and contract violations.
- **Support for OFW Dependents:** Recognizing that successful reintegration involves the whole family, the bill explicitly extends essential counseling, livelihood orientation, and medical referral services to immediate dependents.

By institutionalizing the Balikbayani Centers, we fulfill our moral and legal obligation to provide our OFWs with a coordinated, dignified, and seamless path back to local life, enterprise, and family reunification.

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

Approved,

RAMIL L. HERNANDEZ
2nd District, Laguna

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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 “**Balikbayani Center Act.**”

Section 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to recognize the invaluable contribution of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) to national development. In line with this, the State shall provide a coordinated, accessible, and dignified reintegration process for returning OFWs by establishing Balikbayani Centers as one-stop reintegration hubs.

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

- a) *Balikbayani Center* refers to a one-stop shop established in designated locations to consolidate the delivery of all necessary services to returning OFWs;
- b) *Returning OFW* refers to any Overseas Filipino Worker returning to the Philippines upon completion or premature termination of employment;
- c) *Documented OWWA member* refers to an OFW with active membership in the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration at the time of departure or return;
- d) *Reintegration Services* refer to support programs and interventions provided by the government to help returning OFWs transition back to local employment, entrepreneurship, skills development, psychosocial recovery, and family reunification;
- e) *Vulnerable Occupations* refer to categories of overseas employment that are typically low-wage, labor-intensive, and prone to risk or abuse, such as domestic work, caregiving, construction, and factory-based labor; and

- f) *OFW dependents* refer to immediate family members of returning OFWs, including spouse, children, or parents who may also require support services upon the OFW's return, such as counseling, livelihood orientation, or educational guidance.

Section 4. Establishment of Balikbayani Centers. – At least one Balikbayani Center shall be established in every region, with additional Balikbayani Centers in major regional cities. Emergency Balikbayani Centers for arriving OFWs in distressed situations shall also be established at the following locations:

- a) Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) Terminals 1 and 3;
- b) Mactan-Cebu International Airport; and
- c) Davao International Airport.

Additional centers may be established upon recommendation of the Secretary of Labor and Employment in consultation with the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) and other concerned agencies. The Balikbayani Center shall follow the framework and best practices under Republic Act No. 11463, or the “Malasakit Center Act of 2019,” particularly in the co-location of services, reduction of red tape, and one-stop-shop operational efficiency.

Section 5. Core Services. – Each Balikbayani Center shall co-locate and coordinate the following services, including essential arrival support:

- a) Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) – Certification of eligibility for reintegration services; provision of counseling, post-arrival orientation, and tracking of repatriated members; and referrals for livelihood, training, and psychosocial programs as provided under Republic Act No. 10801, or the “OWWA Act of 2016”;
- b) Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) – Release of Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) grants and Aid to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS); provision of immediate arrival assistance including temporary shelter referrals, transportation support for reunification with families, and food assistance for the first 48 hours;
- c) Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) – Enrollment in Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (TUPAD) and livelihood starter kits;
- d) Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) – On-site application for training with allowance and toolkits;
- e) Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) – Business startup assistance and referrals to Negosyo Centers;
- f) Department of Health (DOH) and concerned Local Government Unit (LGU) Health Offices – Medical services, psychological debriefing, and health checkups; and Malasakit Center services for OFW dependents; and
- g) Other government agencies as may be requested by OWWA or as may be directed by the President, for the efficient delivery of reintegration support and public services.

Section 6. *Eligibility.* – All returning OFWs and OFW dependents shall be eligible to avail of the services of the Balikbayani Center, with priority extended to those in labor-intensive or vulnerable occupations such as domestic work, caregiving, construction, and factory-based employment. Priority shall likewise be given to:

- a) Documented OWWA members;
- b) Repatriated OFWs due to abuse, labor violations, or crisis situations; and
- c) Victims of trafficking, contract violations, or other verified grievances.

Section 7. *Implementing Agencies.* – The Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) shall serve as the primary implementing agency. Each Balikbayani Center shall be headed by a designated Center Manager under the DMW, with one-stop co-located agency desks manned by permanent representatives from the concerned agencies.

Section 8. *Inter-Agency Oversight.* – A Joint Coordinating Committee shall be created, composed of representatives from DMW, DOLE, OWWA, DSWD, TESDA, DTI, and DOH. The Committee shall:

- a) Formulate unified protocols for reintegration service delivery;
- b) Submit quarterly performance and outcome reports to the Office of the President; and
- c) Maintain a centralized dashboard to monitor all Balikbayani Centers.

Section 9. *Appropriations.* – The funding for the establishment and operation of Balikbayani Centers shall be sourced from the existing budgets of participating agencies.

Thereafter, the maintenance and operations shall be charged against the regular budgets of participating agencies, including:

- 1) OWWA Trust Fund;
- 2) Special Purpose Funds of DMW, DSWD and DOLE; and
- 3) President's Socioeconomic Projects Fund, where applicable.

Section 10. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW), in consultation with all concerned agencies and stakeholders, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

Section 11. *Separability Clause.* – If any portion or provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, other provisions hereof shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 12. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, orders, rules, and regulations or other issuances or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Section 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,