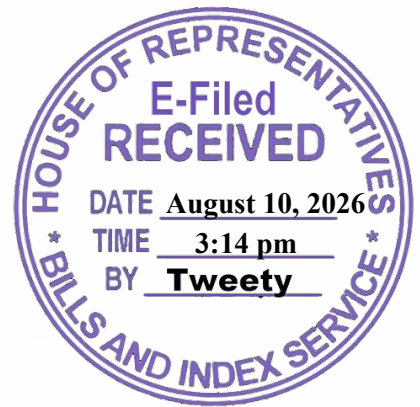


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session



HOUSE BILL NO. **10686**

Introduced by **REPRESENTATIVE AUDREY KAY T. ZUBIRI**

AN ACT

STRENGTHENING THE SENTRO RIZAL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10066, OR THE "NATIONAL CULTURAL HERITAGE ACT OF 2009" AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11961

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Sentro Rizal, established pursuant to Republic Act No. 10066 (National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009), serves as the Philippines' primary instrument for cultural diplomacy. It takes the lead in organizing the country's cultural events and activities as the Philippines' cultural center abroad catering to overseas Filipinos and anyone interested in anything Filipino. As of 2024, there are over 30 active Sentro Rizal hubs worldwide, yet many remain underutilized due to operational constraints, limited funding, and the absence of a centralized strategic framework.

In an increasingly interconnected world, however, cultural engagement has become an essential instrument of diplomacy, enabling nations to strengthen international partnerships, enhance their global image, and advance national interests through the power of culture.

Through this proposed measure we seek to strengthen and institutionalize the Sentro Rizal system by transforming it into a comprehensive cultural diplomacy network with expanded mandates, enhanced institutional support, and a whole-of-government approach in

promoting Philippine culture, history, language, arts, and creative industries in various countries. It establishes a Sentro Rizal Council to provide strategic direction, expands interagency collaboration, and equips Sentro Rizal hubs to serve as centers for cultural exchange, education, tourism promotion, trade, investment, and engagement with the Filipino diaspora and foreign communities.

By reinforcing the Sentro Rizal as the country's principal cultural diplomacy platform, this bill aims to enhance the Philippines' soft power, foster greater appreciation of Filipino identity and heritage, strengthen people-to-people ties, and elevate the country's presence and reputation in the international community. Ultimately, through these reforms, Sentro Rizal will be empowered to effectively contribute to the country's cultural and diplomatic goals.

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



REP. AUDREY KAY T. ZUBIRI

Representative, 3rd District of Bukidnon

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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 "Sentro Rizal Act".

2
3 **Sec. 2. Declaration of Policy and State Principles.** — The State shall foster the preservation,
4 enrichment, and dynamic evolution of a Filipino national culture based on the principle of unity
5 in diversity in a climate of free artistic and intellectual expression. The State shall likewise
6 ensure equal access to cultural opportunities through the educational system, public or private
7 cultural entities, scholarships, grants and other rewards, community cultural centers, and other
8 public venues.

9
10 It is thus declared the policy of the State to provide global knowledge of the Philippines and
11 Filipino culture through cultural, historical, scientific, creative, educational, and economic
12 programs and activities and cooperative exchanges, partnerships, and collaborations with and

1 among foreign government agencies, nongovernmental agencies, and community
2 organizations; as well as utilize cultural diplomacy as a tool to advance Philippine foreign
3 policy through the Sentro Rizal System.
4

5 **Sec. 3. Definition of Terms.** — As used in this Act:

- 6
- 7 a) **Culture** - refers to a set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional
8 features that characterize a society or social group which includes not only arts and
9 letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of human beings, value systems,
10 traditions, and beliefs. Coverage on its definition may be referred to in RA 7356.
- 11 b) **Cultural diplomacy**— refers to using culture as a tool for diplomacy and an instrument
12 of foreign policy, differentiating it from promoting culture for culture's sake. It is a
13 strategic use of culture to pursue national interest, foster mutual understanding and
14 cultural relations with other countries, and protect and enhance the image of the
15 Philippines abroad.
- 16 c) **Cultural diplomacy hub** — refers to the physical space for the repository of materials
17 and implementation venue of programs for cultural diplomacy.
- 18 d) **Sentro Rizal**— refers to the system whose main purpose is to provide global knowledge
19 of the Philippines and promote Philippine culture, history, arts, language, and creative
20 output throughout the world through cultural diplomacy and scientific, cultural,
21 historical, creative, educational, and economic programs, projects, and activities as well
22 as cooperative exchanges and partnerships with and among local and foreign
23 government agencies, and non-government organizations. The Sentro Rizal shall cater
24 to both the Filipino diaspora and foreign nationals in the host country.
- 25 e) **Sentro Rizal hubs**— also referred to as "Sentros Rizal" or "Centers", refer to the
26 physical institution tasked to carry out the objectives of the Sentro Rizal System through
27 the delivery of various services and programs in other countries that are carefully
28 adapted according to the differing socio-cultural and political environments of the host
29 country.
- 30 f) **Soft power**— refers to enhancing the Philippines' global standing and influence through
31 appeal, persuasion, and other non-coercive means. In the context of the Sentro Rizal
32 and its proposed cultural diplomacy hubs, it is the use of the following in pursuit of

1 cultural diplomacy objectives: culture, history, language, Filipino content, One Town,
2 One Product (OTOP), tourism and trade and investment, and other means related to the
3 promotion of soft power.
4

5 **Sec. 4. *Strengthening the Sentro Rizal as a Cultural Diplomacy Hub.*** — The Sentro Rizal,
6 established under Republic Act No. 10066, otherwise known as the "National Cultural Heritage
7 Act of 2009", is hereby converted into a cultural diplomacy hub whose main purpose, as a
8 government instrumentality, is to promote the country's brand and enhance the image of the
9 Philippines throughout the world through cultural diplomacy.
10

11 **Sec. 5. *Functions.*** — The Sentro Rizal shall have the following duties and functions:
12

- 13 (a) Function as the center for Philippine cultural diplomacy and implement cultural,
14 historical, scientific, creative, educational, and economic programs and activities;
- 15 (b) Establish and sustain cooperative exchanges, partnerships, and collaborations with and
16 among foreign government agencies in coordination with the DFA, creative entities,
17 organizations, and associations, locally and overseas, whether from the public or private
18 sector, for purposes of promoting Philippine culture, history, arts, language, and creative
19 output in the global stage;
- 20 (c) Collaborate with the Department of Tourism (DOT), Department of Education (DepEd),
21 Philippine Schools Overseas (PSOs), foreign academic institutions, Commission on
22 Higher Education (CHED), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
23 (TESDA), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), Department of Economy,
24 Planning, and Development (DEPDev), Department of Migrant Workers (DMW),
25 Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Philippine Creative Industries Development
26 Council (PCIDC), National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), National
27 Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP), Cultural Center of the Philippines
28 (CCP), National Museum of the Philippines (NMP), National Archives of the Philippines
29 (NAP), National Library of the Philippines (NLP), Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino (KWF),
30 Film Development Council of the Philippines (FDCP), Design Center of the Philippines
31 (DCP), National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), Bangsamoro Autonomous
32 Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), and other pertinent government agencies in

1 providing tourism, educational, trade and investment, cultural, and historical materials,
2 including information, education, and communication materials (IECs) to all Sentro Rizal
3 hubs;

- 4 (d) Assist the private sector in marketing and promoting Filipino content overseas with the
5 DTI, DOT, PCIDC created under Republic Act No. 11904, otherwise known as the
6 "Philippine Creative Industries Development Act", DCP, Center for International Trade
7 Expositions and Missions, CCP, and other pertinent government agencies;
- 8 (e) Collaborate with the One Town, One Product (OTOP) Management Committee to assist
9 in supporting the beneficiaries of the OTOP Program and promote products through the
10 Sentro Rizal hubs for OTOP Philippines products pursuant to the provisions and
11 objectives of Republic Act No. 11960, otherwise known as the "OTOP Philippines Act";
- 12 (f) Be the repository of cultural materials by acquiring, organizing, servicing, and preserving
13 resource materials on Philippine arts, culture, languages, and other related fields; organize
14 cultural events and activities for Filipinos, hold fora on Indigenous traditions and practices
15 along with cultural heritage campaigns; coordinate the activities of visiting artists and
16 performing groups from the Philippines to ensure maximum participation and community
17 impact with the Filipino diaspora; and offer courses on Philippine culture, history,
18 languages, arts, and other related fields; and
- 19 (g) Adopt a whole-of-nation approach in the promotion of Philippine culture, history, arts,
20 language, and creative output throughout the world.

21
22 **Sec. 6. Sentro Rizal Council.** — The Sentro Rizal Council, herein referred to as the council,
23 is hereby created to strengthen the State's institutional capacity to carry out the above-declared
24 policy. The Council shall be composed of eleven (11) *ex-officio* members:

- 25
26 1) The Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), as Chairperson;
27 2) The Chairperson of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, as co-
28 Chairperson;
29 3) The Chairperson of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP);
30 4) The Secretary of the Department of Economy, Planning, and Development (DEPDev);
31 5) The Secretary of the Department of Tourism (DOT);
32 6) The Secretary of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI);

- 7) The Secretary of the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW);
- 8) The Secretary of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST);
- 9) The Secretary of the Department of Education (DepEd);
- 10) The Chairperson of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED); and
- 11) The Director General of the Technical Education and Skills Development (TESDA)

The *ex-officio* members of the Council may designate their respective next-in-rank officials as their alternate representatives to the Council. The Council for budgetary and administrative purposes, shall be attached to the NCCA.

Sec 7. Powers and Functions of the Council. — The Council shall serve as the policy and advisory body to the President on matters pertaining to cultural diplomacy and shall, adopting a whole-of-nation approach, formulate policies and programs aimed at promoting Philippine culture, history, arts, language, and creative output throughout the world. To this end, the Council shall exercise the following powers and functions:

- (a) Formulate a Sentro Rizal Development Plan that shall define Philippine cultural diplomacy goals and the following key performance indicators, including, but not limited to:
 - 1) influence of cultural diplomacy on foreign policy decisions;
 - 2) monitoring and evaluation of media coverage and public perception;
 - 3) cross-cultural understanding;
 - 4) conduct of cultural exchange activities including cultural exchange programs, cultural festivals, co-production, touring exhibitions, and academic exchanges;
 - 5) partnerships and collaborations established with international organizations, cultural institutions, and government agencies;
 - 6) economic benefits generated by cultural diplomacy initiatives including tourism, trade, investment, and job creation;
 - 7) addressing long-term resource needs and exploring diverse funding models for the Sentro Rizal programs;
 - 8) culturally-literate and participative communities of Filipinos overseas and foreign nationals; and

1 9) other soft power indicators as may be defined by the Council;

2
3 (b) Assess the effectiveness of cultural diplomacy in enhancing the country's soft power and
4 global reputation through indices like the Soft Power Index, global opinion polls, and
5 cultural influence rankings, among others;

6 (c) Devise strategies in utilizing, among others, online platforms, digital tools, and social
7 media to expand its reach and engage global audiences for the marketing and promotion of
8 Philippine culture, history, art, language, and creative output throughout the world;

9 (d) Review and approve programs, projects, and activities of the Sentro Rizal hubs pursuant
10 to the general purposes of this Act;

11 (e) Provide rewards and awards to top-performing Sentro Rizal hubs, as well as opportunities
12 for the private sector to assist and collaborate with the Sentro Rizal in the conduct of
13 cultural diplomacy pursuant to the objectives of this Act, and financial and/or logistical
14 support to Sentro Rizal hubs in the performance of their official duties and responsibilities;

15 (f) Identify potential sites for the Sentro Rizal hubs and formally propose, through the DFA,
16 the establishment of said centers in host countries. The DFA shall take the lead in
17 negotiating the appropriate bilateral agreements with the host countries, pursuant to its
18 mandate under Republic Act No. 7157;

19 (g) Lease, purchase, or otherwise acquire, construct, improve, furnish, or maintain a suitable
20 permanent headquarters for the Sentro Rizal hubs;

21 (h) Accept grants, bequests, endowments, donations, and contributions from local or foreign
22 sources made to the Sentro Rizal, to be used actually, directly and exclusively by the Sentro
23 Rizal for purposes relevant to its functions: Provided, That such grants, in cash or in kind,
24 from government of foreign countries, their agencies and instrumentalities or multilateral
25 institutions or organizations, acceptance thereof shall be subject to the prior clearance and
26 approval by the President or his authorized representative based on the recommendation of
27 the Secretary of Finance; Provided, further, That other donations, in cash or in kind, from
28 foreign governments shall require prior clearance and approval by President or his
29 authorized representative based on the recommendation of the Secretary of Foreign Affairs;
30 *Provided, finally, That such grants, bequests, endowments, donations, and contributions*
31 *shall be exempt from donor's tax and the same shall be considered as allowable deduction*

1 from the gross income for purposes of computing the taxable income of the donor in
2 accordance with the National Internal Revenue Code of 1997, as amended;

- 3 (i) Create ad hoc committees or technical working groups which shall include the private
4 sector to discuss specific issues pertaining to soft power, cultural diplomacy, and the
5 promotion of Filipino content; and
6 (j) Exercise such other powers and functions as may be necessary to effectively carry out the
7 attainment of the purposes and objectives of this Act.

8
9 **Sec. 8. *Organizational Structure and Staffing Pattern.*** — A Secretariat to the Sentro Rizal
10 Council, hereinafter referred to as the Secretariat, shall be established to be headed by an
11 Executive Director (ED), who shall be appointed by the President of the Philippines from a list
12 of at least five (5) nominees recommended by the Council. The ED shall be assisted by five (5)
13 Division Chiefs for: (1) Research and Development; (2) Operations, (3) Policy & Planning
14 Division, (4) Admin and Finance, (5) Assets and Management, (6) Communications and Public
15 Affairs.

16
17 Within one hundred twenty (120) days after the effectivity of this Act, the NCCA shall create
18 the organizational structure and plantilla positions of the Secretariat and submit the same to the
19 Department of Budget and Management (DBM) for approval. The formulation of qualification
20 standards and the appointment to the newly-created positions shall be done in accordance with
21 civil service laws, rules, and regulations. Pending the creation of the Secretariat's plantilla
22 positions, the NCCA shall maintain its existing Secretariat. Each of the Council member
23 agencies shall formally designate at least one (1) representative on temporary detail to the
24 interim secretariat until such time that the plantilla positions of the Secretariat shall have been
25 created. The NCCA, in consultation with the DFA, shall likewise be authorized to engage the
26 services of consultants and enter into service contracts, as necessary.

27
28 **Sec. 9. *Functions of the Secretariat.*** - The Sentro Rizal Secretariat shall perform the following
29 duties and responsibilities:

- 30 (a) Implement plans, programs, and projects as approved by Council;
31 (b) Enter into and carry out contracts of every kind and description, save for the contracts
32 contemplated by Sections 7(f) and 7(h) of which the contracting party is the Council,

1 with any person, firm, association, or corporation, domestic or foreign, and sue or be
2 sued relative to the contracts entered into;

3 (c) Lease and utilize, in any manner recognized by law, real or personal property outside
4 the Philippines or elsewhere necessary to carry out the purposes of this Act;

5 (d) Adopt, alter, and use a corporate seal of the Sentro Rizal;

6 (e) Serve as the lead in the promotion of Philippine arts, culture, languages, and other
7 content throughout the world; and

8 (f) Perform such other functions as vested by the Council to the Secretariat.

9
10 **Sec. 10. *Crafting the Filipino Brand.*** — To establish, manage, and enhance the image of the
11 Philippines throughout the world, the Council shall, within three (3) months from the
12 effectivity of this Act, develop and promote the "Filipino brand" which shall reflect the history,
13 culture, image, and aspirations of the Philippines among other elements.

14
15 The Filipino brand shall, as much as possible, be adopted by all departments, agencies, and
16 instrumentalities of the national government, including government owned and -controlled
17 corporations, and local government units (LGUs) in the formulation and implementation of
18 their programs, projects, and activities relative to the same.

19
20 The Council shall undertake a whole-of-government approach in the crafting of the Filipino
21 brand in partnership with the private sector towards a whole-of-society approach in fostering
22 and championing the same.

23
24 **Sec. 11. *Sentro Rizal Assistance Program.*** — The Council may provide financial assistance
25 in the form of a grant to cultural, historical, scientific, educational, and creative organizations
26 or entities for the promotion of Filipino culture throughout the world. No grant made pursuant
27 to this Act shall be treated as taxable income.

28
29 **Sec. 12. *Awards and Citations.*** — To encourage the promotion of the Filipino brand and
30 enhancement of the image of the Philippines throughout the world, the Council shall establish
31 an annual recognition program under which monetary prizes, awards and citations will be given

1 by the President of the Philippines, upon recommendation of the Council, for special
2 achievements and important contributions and services in the area of cultural diplomacy efforts.
3

4 **Sec. 13. Appropriations.** - The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall
5 be charged against the current year's appropriations of the DFA and NCCA. Thereafter, the
6 amount necessary for the continued implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual
7 General Appropriations Act.
8

9 **Sec. 14. Annual Report.** — The Council shall submit to the President of the Philippines and to
10 both Houses of Congress a report that provides a detailed account of the implementation of this
11 Act, including policy recommendations for legislation.
12

13 **Sec. 15. Transitory Provision.** — All existing Sentro Rizal hubs and facilities, established
14 pursuant to the provisions of Republic Act No. 10066 shall continue to operate pursuant to, and
15 be regulated by, the provisions of this Act and its implementing rules and regulations.
16

17 The DFA and the NCCA shall, in coordination with the DBM and the Civil Service
18 Commission, ensure that the necessary changes in the plantilla items of the Sentro Rizal
19 Secretariat are reflected in the Revised Compensation and Position Classification System and
20 other relevant laws, rules, and regulations.
21

22 **Sec 16. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** — Within sixty (60) days from the approval of
23 this Act, the Council shall, in consultation with the other concerned government agencies and
24 stakeholders, formulate the rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.
25

26 **Sec. 17. Separability Clause.** — Should any portion or provision of this Act be declared
27 unconstitutional, the same shall not affect the validity and effectivity of the other not affected
28 provisions hereof.
29

30 **Sec. 18. Repealing Clause.** — All other laws, decrees, orders, and rules and regulations
31 inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.
32

1 **Sec. 19. *Effectivity.*** — This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the
2 Official Gazette or a newspaper of general circulation.

3

4 *Approved,*