

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 10764



Introduced by **Representative AGATHA "AGAY" CRUZ**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Some traditions survive because they are written in books. Others survive because people continue to live them.

For generations, the people of Bocaue have gathered along the river for the Pagoda Festival, or "*Pagoda sa Wawa*", a celebration inseparable from the town's history, identity, and devotion to the Holy Cross of Wawa. The pagoda, the Festival's most enduring image, not only carries participants, but also memories, from one generation of Bocaueños to the next.

A tradition of such consequence deserves more than passing recognition. It deserves preservation that is thoughtful, promotion that is responsible, and celebration that is safe.

This bill seeks to declared the Bocaue Pagoda Festival as the Official Cultural Festival of the Municipality of Bocaue and a Major Tourist Attraction. It aims to recognize the Festival for its legitimate secular significance as cultural heritage, as living local history, as a source of tourism and livelihood, and as an important public gathering requiring proper planning and protection.

Accordingly, this measure provides for the sustainable development and promotion of the Festival, the documentation and safeguarding of its traditions, and the preservation of its historical narrative. It brings together the appropriate expertise of the Department of Tourism and the Tourism Promotions Board in tourism development; the National Commission for Culture and the Arts in cultural heritage; and the National Historical Commission of the Philippines in historical research, documentation, and interpretation.

Considering that the Pagoda Festival's defining feature is that its procession takes place on water, this bill requires an annual Festival Safety and Fluvial Procession Management Plan, including vessel inspection and applicable clearances, enforceable

passenger and load limits, adequate life-saving equipment, controlled boarding, rescue and medical capability, unified incident command, and a documented go/no-go safety determination before the procession begins.

The Bocaue River has long carried one of Bulacan's most distinctive traditions. As the pagoda continues to carry the memory and devotion of generations, this measure ensures that the tradition be preserved with fidelity, promoted with dignity, and celebrated with every reasonable safeguard for the lives entrusted to it.

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


AGATHA "AGAY" CRUZ
Representative, Fifth Legislative District of Bulacan

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HOUSE BILL NO. 10764

Introduced by **Representative AGATHA “AGAY” CRUZ**

AN ACT
DECLARING THE BOCAUE PAGODA FESTIVAL, ALSO KNOWN AS “PAGODA SA WAWA,” AS THE OFFICIAL CULTURAL FESTIVAL OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF BOCAUE, PROVINCE OF BULACAN, AND A MAJOR TOURIST ATTRACTION, PROVIDING FOR ITS DEVELOPMENT, PROMOTION, PRESERVATION, AND SAFE CONDUCT, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

1 **Section 1. *Short Title.*** – This Act shall be known as the “Bocaue Pagoda Festival
2 Act.”
3

4 **Section 2. *Declaration of Policy.*** – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to
5 preserve and promote local cultural heritage and traditions; support sustainable and
6 community-based tourism; strengthen local livelihoods arising from cultural activities;
7 and ensure the safe, orderly, and environmentally responsible conduct of public
8 celebrations.
9

10 Towards this end, the State shall support the preservation, development, and
11 promotion of the Bocaue Pagoda Festival as an enduring cultural tradition of the people
12 of Bocaue and as a significant tourism attraction of the Province of Bulacan.
13

14 **Section 3. *Official Cultural Festival and Major Tourist Attraction.*** – The Bocaue
15 Pagoda Festival, also known as “*Pagoda sa Wawa*,” traditionally celebrated in the
16 Municipality of Bocaue, Province of Bulacan, in connection with the local devotion to the
17 Holy Cross of Wawa, is hereby declared the Official Cultural Festival of the Municipality
18 of Bocaue and a Major Tourist Attraction.
19

20 The recognition granted under this Act shall be for the secular purposes of cultural
21 preservation, tourism development, local economic development, public safety, and
22 environmental protection. Nothing in this Act shall be construed to authorize any

government agency or instrumentality to administer or interfere in religious rites, doctrines, or ecclesiastical matters associated with the celebration.

Section 4. Sustainable Tourism Development and Promotion. – The Municipality of Bocaue, in coordination with the Department of Tourism (DOT), the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB), and other concerned government agencies and stakeholders, shall ensure the inclusion of the Bocaue Pagoda Festival in the local tourism development plan and undertake measures for its sustainable development and promotion.

Such measures shall, as appropriate, include:

- (a) Domestic and international promotion of the Festival as a cultural and tourism attraction;
- (b) Visitor, traffic, crowd, and accessibility management;
- (c) Improvement and maintenance of appropriate tourism facilities, access, wayfinding, sanitation, and other support services;
- (d) Programs supporting local enterprises, artisans, cultural workers, food producers, tourism establishments, and other community-based economic activities associated with the Festival;
- (e) Heritage interpretation, information, and educational materials concerning the history and cultural significance of the Festival; and
- (f) Collection of appropriate tourism and socioeconomic data to assess the Festival's contribution to local tourism and development.

The DOT and its attached agencies may provide technical, promotional, and development assistance for these purposes in accordance with Republic Act No. 9593, otherwise known as the "Tourism Act of 2009," and other applicable laws.

Section 5. Cultural Preservation, Historical Research, and Documentation. – The Municipality of Bocaue, with the technical assistance of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) and, on matters pertaining to local history, the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP), and other appropriate cultural agencies, shall promote the documentation, preservation, and transmission of the history, traditions, practices, oral histories, craftsmanship, music, rituals of cultural significance, and other cultural expressions associated with the Bocaue Pagoda Festival.

The NHCP may provide technical assistance in the historical research, documentation, verification, interpretation, and dissemination of information concerning the origins, development, and historical significance of the Festival, consistent with Republic Act No. 10086, otherwise known as the "Strengthening Peoples' Nationalism Through Philippine History Act."

For this purpose, the Municipality shall maintain, update, and, where appropriate, expand the documentation of the Festival and its associated cultural traditions through the local cultural mapping and inventory processes, consistent with Republic Act No.

1 10066, otherwise known as the “National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009,” as amended by
2 Republic Act No. 11961.

3
4 The participation of concerned communities, cultural organizations, religious
5 institutions, lawful custodians, and tradition bearers shall be respected in the
6 documentation and safeguarding of cultural expressions associated with the Festival.

7
8 **Section 6. *Fluvial Procession Safety and Emergency Preparedness.*** – In view of the
9 fluvial character of the Festival, the Municipality of Bocaue, in coordination with the
10 Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), the Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction and Management
11 Office, local law enforcement, health and emergency-response authorities, and other
12 concerned agencies, shall prepare and implement an annual Festival Safety and Fluvial
13 Procession Management Plan.

14
15 The Plan shall, at a minimum, provide for the following:

- 16 (a) Inspection and safety clearance, as may be required under applicable laws and
17 regulations, of barges, floating platforms, boats, and other watercraft
18 participating in the fluvial procession;
19 (b) Determination, certification, posting, and strict enforcement of the maximum
20 safe passenger and load capacity of each participating barge, floating platform,
21 boat, or other watercraft, taking into account its design, stability, condition,
22 intended use, and prevailing river and weather conditions;
23 (c) Mandatory availability and proper use of an adequate number of appropriate
24 and serviceable life jackets or personal flotation devices for all persons aboard
25 participating watercraft, together with such other life-saving, fire-safety,
26 communication, and emergency equipment as may be required by competent
27 authorities;
28 (d) Designated and controlled embarkation and disembarkation areas, passenger-
29 accounting procedures, and appropriate barriers and crowd-control measures
30 to prevent unauthorized boarding and overloading;
31 (e) River traffic, navigation, vessel-spacing, speed, route, and movement controls
32 during the fluvial procession;
33 (f) Continuous monitoring of weather, river, visibility, current, water-level, and
34 other conditions that may materially affect navigation or public safety;
35 (g) Adequate communication, medical, rescue, evacuation, and emergency-
36 response arrangements, including the strategic deployment of rescue vessels,
37 trained personnel, medical teams, and emergency equipment;
38 (h) Establishment of a unified incident command and coordination mechanism for
39 the fluvial procession, utilizing existing local disaster risk reduction and
40 emergency-management structures and clearly identifying the responsibilities
41 and operational authority of participating government agencies;
42 (i) Designation of an authorized safety officer or coordinating official responsible
43 for consolidating safety assessments and ensuring compliance with the
44 requirements of the Plan; and

1 (j) Formal go/no-go safety clearance procedure immediately prior to the
2 commencement of the fluvial procession, taking into account vessel readiness,
3 passenger and load limits, weather and river conditions, rescue and medical
4 capability, crowd conditions, and other relevant safety considerations.
5

6 No participating vessel, barge, floating platform, or other watercraft shall join the
7 fluvial procession unless it has complied with applicable inspection, capacity, safety-
8 equipment, and clearance requirements.
9

10 The commencement or continuation of the fluvial procession may be postponed,
11 suspended, modified, or terminated upon the determination of the competent authority
12 that prevailing or reasonably anticipated conditions pose a substantial risk to life or public
13 safety.
14

15 Nothing in this section shall diminish the regulatory, enforcement, inspection,
16 navigation-safety, search-and-rescue, or other powers vested by law in the PCG and other
17 competent authorities.
18

19 **Section 7. *Environmental Protection and River Management.*** – The conduct and
20 development of the Festival shall be consistent with applicable environmental laws and
21 local environmental programs.
22

23 The Municipality of Bocaue, in coordination with the Department of Environment
24 and Natural Resources and other concerned agencies, shall adopt appropriate measures
25 for waste reduction and segregation, prevention of dumping and water pollution,
26 provision of adequate sanitation facilities, and pre- and post-Festival cleanup of the
27 Bocaue River and affected public areas.
28

29 Programs and infrastructure developed pursuant to this Act shall, insofar as
30 practicable, promote the protection, rehabilitation, and sustainable use of the Bocaue
31 River as an integral part of the Festival’s cultural setting.
32

33 **Section 8. *Funding.*** – The Municipality of Bocaue may appropriate such amounts
34 as may be necessary for the implementation of this Act, subject to applicable budgeting,
35 accounting, procurement, and auditing laws, rules, and regulations.
36

37 National government agencies concerned shall implement their respective
38 responsibilities under this Act from their existing programs and appropriations, subject
39 to the annual General Appropriations Act.
40

41 The Municipality may likewise accept grants, donations, sponsorships, and other
42 lawful forms of assistance from public or private sources for programs authorized under
43 this Act, subject to existing laws, rules, and regulations and appropriate safeguards
44 against conflicts of interest.

1
2 **Section 9. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – Within one hundred eighty
3 (180) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DOT, in coordination with the Municipality
4 of Bocaue, PCG, NCCA, NHCP, Department of the Interior and Local Government,
5 Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and other concerned agencies, shall
6 promulgate the rules and regulations necessary for the effective implementation of this
7 Act, with each agency acting within its respective mandate.
8

9 The Municipality of Bocaue shall adopt such corresponding local measures as may
10 be necessary to implement this Act and its implementing rules and regulations.
11

12 Implementation shall utilize existing offices, councils, personnel, and inter-agency
13 coordination mechanisms.
14

15 **Section 10. *Separability Clause.*** – If any part or provision of this Act is held
16 unconstitutional or invalid, the remainder thereof not otherwise affected shall remain in
17 full force and effect.
18

19 **Section 11. *Repealing Clause.*** – All laws, executive orders, presidential decrees,
20 administrative orders, rules and regulations, issuances, or parts thereof inconsistent with
21 or contrary to the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.
22

23 **Section 12. *Effectivity.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
24 publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.
25

26 *Approved,*