

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 50



Introduced by Representative RAYMOND ADRIAN SALCEDA

**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) are hailed as modern-day heroes, contributing an estimated ₱1.87 trillion annually to the Philippine economy through remittances, supporting millions of families, and strengthening the country's foreign exchange position. Yet, upon their return – whether by choice, crisis, or tragedy – many OFWs are met not by a system of care, but by confusion, red tape, and disjointed government support.

This bill seeks to institutionalize the Balikbayani Center as a one-stop reintegration hub for returning OFWs, patterned after the successful Malasakit Center model under Republic Act No. 11463. Each Balikbayani Center will be strategically located in regional centers, with emergency services available in major ports of entry such as NAIA, Cebu, and Davao to provide immediate, consolidated, and dignified assistance to OFWs the moment they step back on Philippine soil. Services will also be available for OFW dependents.

The core innovation of the Balikbayani Center is inter-agency co-location – bringing together the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), the Department of Health (DOH), and other agencies in a single service window. This ensures that OFWs can access all their reintegration needs – livelihood support, psychosocial services, emergency aid, training, and business support – without navigating multiple agencies, forms, and queues.

The bill prioritizes labor-intensive and vulnerable occupations, such as domestic work, caregiving, construction, and factory labor, in recognition of the greater reintegration needs of workers returning from these sectors. It also mandates immediate support such as temporary

shelter, transportation for family reunification, and food assistance – basic dignities too often overlooked.

Importantly, the bill does not create a new bureaucracy. It leverages existing agency budgets, particularly the OWWA Trust Fund and special purpose funds of DSWD and DOLE, aligning with the rightsizing policy of government. The Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) is designated as the lead implementing and rule-drafting agency.

The Balikbayani Center Act is a tribute to the hard work and sacrifice of Filipino workers abroad. It tells every OFW: "*Balik ka sa bayan – may gobyernong sasalubong.*" Through this bill, we make that promise real.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate approval of this measure is earnestly sought.



RAYMOND ADRIAN SALCEDA

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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.”

SEC. 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.

SEC. 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.

SEC. 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.

SEC. 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.

SEC. 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.

SEC. 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.

SEC. 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.

SEC. 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.

SEC. 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.

SEC. 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.

SEC. 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.

SEC. 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,