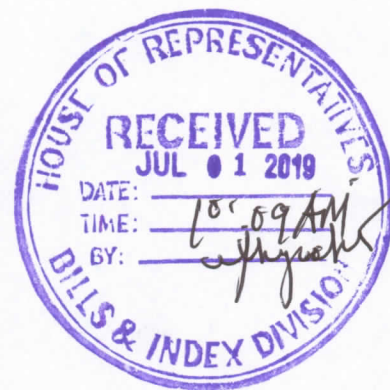


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 168



Introduced by: Hon. Angelina "Helen" D.L. Tan, M.D.

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING THE OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS HOSPITAL
AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority reveals that there were 2.3 million Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in 2017 – 20.7 percent were from CALABARZON, 12.9 percent were from Central Luzon, and 9.5 percent were from Western Visayas. Most OFWs work in Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Kuwait. Many of them were in elementary occupations or were service and sales workers while others work as plant and machine operators and assemblies. In 2017, OFWs remittances, which strengthened the account position of the country, enlarged the middle class, and spawned micro-enterprises in the countryside, amounted to over 205 billion pesos.

Indeed, overseas Filipino workers are the country's "modern-day heroes" as they help improve the lives not only of their families but of the national economy. In spite of their sacrifices and vital contribution to the economy, however, social services, especially health care, remain out of reach for so many of them and their dependents.

OFWs suffer from a growing list of physical and mental health problems due to risks associated with the nature of their employments. Four (4) out of ten (10) repatriated OFWs need medical attention or hospital confinement. Many of them suffer from heart disease, stroke, pneumonia, cancer, kidney ailments and other illnesses requiring medical procedures and preventive and longtime care. Claims from OFWs and their dependents from the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation or PhilHealth amounted to 1.7 million pesos, including those who were confined in hospitals abroad. Renal failure, community-acquired pneumonia, normal spontaneous delivery, acute gastroenteritis, and urinary tract infection are the leading cases by PhilHealth claims.

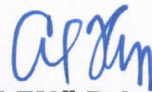
The country's policy environment provides significant protection to the health of OFWs. Republic Act No. 10022, which amended R.A. 8042 or the "Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995," improved the standards of protection and promotion of welfare of the OFWs and their families. A Joint Memorandum Circular was issued for the Integrated Medical Repatriation Assistance Program, while the DOH established its "National Policy on the Health of Migrant and Overseas Filipinos," and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) established its MEDPlus program as supplemental medical assistance for OWWA members.

Regrettably, despite of the existing health services for OFWs and their dependents, they are not enough to provide better access and higher quality of healthcare befitting of them as "bagong bayani".

In this regard, this bill seeks to establish a national facility that offers departmentalized clinical services and select specialty care for OFWs and their families and will complement the existing medical care program for OFWs and their dependents.

Our OFWs deserve more benefits, especially, access to a complete and quality health care. The State policy to provide social services and adequate health care to OFWs rightly justifies a stronger thrust towards the establishment of the Overseas Filipino Workers Hospital in the country.

In view of the foregoing, and in order to make the country's commitment to universal health care more genuinely felt by the OFW community, approval of this bill is earnestly sought.



ANGELINA "HELEN" D.L. TAN, M.D.
4th District, Quezon

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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 "Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) Hospital Act or OFW Hospital Act".

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* - It is the policy of the State to protect and promote the right to health of the Filipino people and to instill health consciousness among them. The State shall adopt an integrated and comprehensive approach to health development. Further, the State shall protect the interest and promote the well-being of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) as recognition of their importance and contribution to economic development and nation building.

SEC. 3. *Establishment of OFW Hospital.* - There shall be established a hospital with at least tertiary level of care to be known as OFW Hospital, hereinafter referred to as the Hospital. The Hospital shall be developed consistent with the health care needs of the OFW and their dependents. The Hospital shall be under the full administrative and technical supervision of the Department of Health (DOH).

SEC. 4. *Objectives.* - To ensure the availability, accessibility and affordability of quality health care, the Hospital shall have the following main objectives:

(a) Provide comprehensive and total health care services to all migrant workers including Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) contributors, whether active or non-active, and their legal dependents;

(b) Conduct medical examinations to ensure the physical and mental capability of would-be overseas contract workers duly covered by an approved job order;

(c) Serve as primary referral hospital for repatriated OFW needing medical assistance and support;

(d) Set up systems that will effectively monitor condition of patients and to generate relevant health information and data for policy formulation; and

(e) Participate in the health care provider networks and arrangements relative to the implementation of Republic Act No. 11223, or the "Universal health Care Act."

SEC. 5. *Medical Assistance.* – The Secretary of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), as Chairperson of the OWWA Board, shall ensure that existing health benefits and medical assistance programs are strengthened to include, among others, subsidies on hospitalization and medical procedures for OFW and qualified dependents.

SEC. 6. *Joint Executive Oversight Committee.* – There is hereby created a Joint Executive Oversight Committee on OFW Hospital to review and recommend hospital development plans and ensure implementation of this Act.

The Committee shall be co-chaired by the Secretary of Health and the Secretary of Labor and Employment. It shall be composed of seven (7) members including the co-chairs. The members shall be appointed by the Secretary of Health upon consultation with the Secretary of Labor and Employment.

SEC. 7. *Tax Exemption.* – All grants, bequests, endowments, donations and contributions made to the OFW Hospital to be used actually, directly and exclusively by the OFW Hospital shall be exempt from donor's tax and the same shall be considered as allowable deduction from the gross income of the donor, in accordance with the provisions of the National Internal Revenue Code of 1997, as amended.

The importation of equipment, machinery and spare parts which are used solely and exclusively for the operation of the OFW Hospital and are not available locally shall be exempt from value-added tax and customs duty.

SEC. 8. *Appropriations.* – The Secretary of Health shall include in the Department's program the implementation of this Act, the funding of which shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act. The OWWA shall also include in their benefits and medical assistance programs for OFW the line item budget necessary to improve the access of OFW and dependents to health care services.

SEC. 9. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within sixty (60) days from the approval of this Act, the DOH, in coordination with DOLE, OWWA, Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) and other stakeholders, shall promulgate the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) to carry out the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 10. *Separability Clause.* – If any provisions of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, the same shall not affect the validity and effectivity of the other provisions hereof.

SEC. 11. *Repealing Clause.* – All other laws, decrees, executive orders, and rules and regulations contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

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

Approved,