

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



**EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session**

House Bill No. 3887

Introduced by **Hon. RONNIE L. ONG**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

There are over 2.8 million Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) as of September 2018, and the numbers keep growing up to this day. Dubbed as our modern day heroes, OFWs brave through relocating to another foreign country for jobs with higher-paying salaries to provide a better life for their families back here in the Philippines. More than being significant drivers of our economy through their remittances, OFWs are symbols of perseverance, hard work, and resilience.

Many of these OFWS are *probinsyanos* who are now employed as seafarers, office staff, domestic helpers, artist performers, care-givers, teachers, nurses, engineers, doctors, and skilled workers and laborers all over the world. Sadly, when processing important documents and other matters especially when they come home, they are constrained to spend time in Metro Manila where agencies are located, lessening their precious time with their families in the province.

The issue does not stop there. On a regular basis, large numbers of *probinsyanos* of all ages are aspiring to be OFWs themselves in order to provide for their families. Among the requirements they need to process for employment purposes are government-issued identification cards like passport, professional licenses and documents like birth and marriage certificates. Sadly, many *probinsyanos* do not have convenient access to frontline government agencies providing the said documentary requirements for their work abroad, thus hindering and delaying their quest for better job opportunities.

Thankfully, per the directive of the President, the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) together with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) has established nineteen (19) One Stop Service Centers for

OFWs (OSSCOs) nationwide beginning August 2016. OSSCOs provide a one-stop shop for aspiring overseas workers where they can process documentary requirements that they need like passport, NBI clearance, and birth certificate -- all in one place.

As of the end of 2018, the following government agencies have established their presence at the designated OSSCOs: Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA), Home Development Mutual Fund (HDMF), Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth), Social Security System (SSS), Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), Bureau of Immigration (BI), National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA), Philippine National Police (PNP), and Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR). These government agencies are involved in issuing documents needed for employment overseas, and are thus housed in OSSCOs.

Since August 2016, it is observed that OSSCOs shorten document processing time, reduce travel expenses, and increase the efficiency of delivering basic services. More importantly, the precious time of our OFWs and would-be OFWs for their loved ones would not be cut short.

However, this landmark project by the DOLE and POEA under the Duterte Administration currently faces restrictions or challenges in terms of budget, location or space, personnel, and streamlining of operations. Space restrictions, for example, is reported to exist for the Department of Foreign Affairs Passport Section of OSSCOs. Machines needed in the passport section are said to occupy a large amount of space, and not all OSSCO branches can accommodate the space requirement needed for these bulky passport-processing machines. Hence, not all OSSCOs have a DFA Passport Section. This then defeats the purpose of OSSCOs in giving OFWs and would-be OFWS accessible and affordable access to frontline government agencies wherever they are in the country.

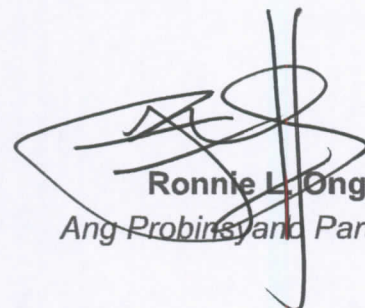
Tabular report as of June 2019 submitted by the DOLE-POEA Regional Overseas Coordinating Office (ROCO) also shows that there are still regions without established OSSCOs. Moreover, despite having an existing OSSCO, a certain region may lack some frontline services such as the absence of a Passport Section as mentioned above. This results to the prevailing incomplete OSSCO set-up instead of having 30 available different services from the 16 identified frontline government agencies.

As of March 2019, the ROCO has reported that existing OSSCOs have served 4 million clients. This is a strong proof that people need these OSSCOs. But as the figure does not capture the quality of service provided to our modern-day heroes, institutionalizing OSSCOs, including ensuring annual budget and trained personnel, may even increase that number of clients or, at least, result to Filipinos being satisfied with the quality of service provided. After prioritizing our OFWs, OSSCO's purpose may even be expanded in order for agencies to serve other *probinsyanos* such as the families and relatives of OFWs.

Thus, this bill seeks to institutionalize Regional One-Stop Shop Centers for OFWs (ROSSCO) as well as introduce improvements in the current system in order to ensure that all frontline government services are of quality and are available per ROSSCO branch in every region in the country. Whether or not the government will eventually put in place a Department for OFWs, institutionalizing ROSSCOs will already sufficiently address the gap in how we treat our OFWs. In the future, ROSSCOs may also be used as the necessary mechanism to implement various programs and projects for OFWs and their families nationwide.

All OFWS and all *probinsyanos* aspiring to be OFWs from regions all over the Philippines deserve access to government agencies aiding them in their choice of working overseas. It is the government's job to help them achieve their dreams faster and not to hinder them any further from providing a better life for their loved ones.

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



Ronnie L. Ong
Ang Probinsyano Party-list

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

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

3887
House Bill No. _____

Introduced by **Hon. RONNIE L. ONG**

**AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING THE REGIONAL ONE-STOP SHOP CENTERS
FOR OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS NATIONWIDE**

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 "Regional One-Stop Shop Centers for Overseas Filipino Workers (ROSSCO)" Act.

Sec. 2. Declaration of Policy. It is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote equal opportunities for employment for all Filipinos regardless of gender, ethnicity, residence, or religion and uphold their welfare at all times. Moreover, the State shall protect the right of all Filipinos for self-determination and, in particular, acknowledge that overseas work is a choice by Filipinos and, thus, to be fully supported by the government.

The State also recognizes that Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) significantly contribute to our country's economic growth and national development through their foreign exchange remittances. In line with this, the State shall provide adequate, relevant, continuous, affordable and accessible services and assistance to both existing and aspiring OFWs.

Sec. 3. Regional One-Stop Service Centers for OFWs Nationwide. The Regional One-Stop Shop Centers for OFWs or ROSSCOs are hereby institutionalized nationwide.

The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), as lead agency, shall ensure that there is at least one existing ROSSCO branch per region in the

country. In choosing the location of a ROSSCO, the POEA, in coordination with participating agencies, shall consider existing government centers or hubs or places such as malls where there is a high volume of foot-traffic. In addition, the POEA, in coordination with participating agencies, shall also determine the standard space requirements for ROSSCOs.

Every ROSSCO shall give utmost consideration to the needs of existing and future OFWs and shall ensure that the services of each participating agency are delivered efficiently. Every ROSSCO may also accommodate the concerns of other individuals, including the family and relatives of OFWs, but only after applications and concerns of OFWs have already been processed or addressed.

To ensure that all needs are addressed, the POEA, as lead agency, may enter into agreements with concessionaires to provide other services such as digital ID printing, photocopy services, courier services, internet and printing services, telephone, prepaid load, cash and online payment services, notarial services, etc. for a uniform and reasonable fee, subject to existing laws and regulations.

In no instance shall fixers be allowed within the premises of ROSSCOs or within considerable distance from the same.

Sec. 4. Complete ROSSCO Frontliners. Every national government agency, department, office and government-owned and controlled corporations, concerned with the issuance of necessary clearances, permits, identification cards and related documents needed by OFWs, shall be part of ROSSCO in each region and shall provide manpower component, equipment, technology and systems necessary to address the needs of existing and future OFWs.

The following agencies shall provide frontline services in every ROSSCO:

- A. Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA)
- B. Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA)
- C. Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA)
- D. Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA)
- E. Professional Regulation Commission (PRC)
- F. Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA)
- G. Home Development Mutual Fund (HDMF)
- H. Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth)
- I. Social Security System (SSS)
- J. Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA)
- K. Bureau of Immigration (BI)
- L. National Bureau Investigation (NBI)

- M. Commission on Higher Education (CHED)
- N. Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA)
- O. Philippine National Police (PNP), and
- P. Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR).

Every agency involved in the ROSSCO shall also ensure that their staff, including outsourced personnel such as security guards, shall be courteous at all times, accommodating to the needs of walk-in clients and those inquiring or applying online or through phone, and skilled enough to handle various queries and concerns of existing and future OFWs or their families, especially those with urgent needs or in crisis situations.

The POEA is hereby authorized to call the assistance of any government office not included in the enumeration above to provide frontline services temporarily or permanently to the extent that such agency is needed in a particular ROSSCO or in every branch nationwide. Such agency called by POEA to participate shall not refuse to provide frontline services in ROSSCOs.

Nothing in this Act prohibits the participating agencies to enter into agreements with other government agencies or the private sector, to outsource their services or to train and designate staff that will handle or provide multiple services; *Provided*, That the responsibility and liability of the designated staff shall be deemed as responsibility and liability of the agency mandated under the law; *Provided further*, That the efficient delivery of services shall not be hampered at all times; and *Provided finally*, That there will be no additional cost to the requesting OFW except the actual regulation fee or the true cost of the document requested.

Sec. 5. Establishment of ROSSCOs vis-a-vis Concentration of OFWs.

The POEA, in coordination with concerned agencies, may require additional personnel from participating agencies or may establish more than one ROSSCO or a satellite office with lesser number of agencies, based on the following considerations per available data:

- a) Large concentration of OFWs coming from a particular region, province or major city/municipality; and/or
- b) Large number of clients being served by a particular ROSSCO.

Sec. 6. Streamlining and Digitization of ROSSCO Process. In line with the mandate to provide ease in doing business, the process of each participating agency shall be streamlined with the end view of removing unnecessary and redundant steps and requirements and integrating the process and requirements of one agency

with the others. The integrated process and requirements of each agency shall be communicated well and in advance to OFWs and other clients.

The ROSSCO Process shall also be digitized. The POEA, with the assistance of the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), shall develop a ROSSCO website where existing OFWs, even those abroad, and other aspiring OFWs can inquire or engage the services of participating agencies online.

Filling out of forms shall also be digitized. Every client shall be assigned one reference number for all services and transactions he or she wants to avail. The POEA shall ensure that there is a common database in every ROSSCO in order to prevent unnecessary or redundant filling out of application forms.

Sec. 7. Implementing Rules and Regulations. The POEA, in coordination with concerned agencies especially those that are part of the ROSSCO as institutionalized in this Act, shall formulate the implementing rules and regulations, including the list of services to be provided by each participating agency, within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act.

Sec. 8. Appropriation. The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act on the first year of its implementation shall be appropriated out of existing funds for the establishment or operationalization of ROSSCOs nationwide and of any other funds in the National Treasury not otherwise appropriated.

Thereafter, the amount necessary for the implementation of this Act shall be included in the respective budgets of the ROSSCO agencies under the annual General Appropriations Act.

Sec. 9. Separability Clause. If any provision or part hereof is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions not affected thereby shall remain valid and subsisting.

Sec. 10. Repealing Clause. Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act is hereby repealed, modified or amended accordingly.

Sec. 11. Effectivity. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in any two (2) newspapers of general circulation in the Philippines.

Approved,