

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

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 6725



Introduced by **ANG PROBINSYANO**
Party-List Representative Alfred Delos Santos

EXPLANATORY NOTE

1 The COVID-19 pandemic has been an eye-opener to many problems. As of
2 the last census in 2015, Metro Manila has a population of 12.8 million people,
3 and this number would even be greater at present. Population density, along
4 with lack of urban planning and rural development all contributed to the
5 difficulty that Metro Manila and other urban cities experienced in dealing with
6 COVID-19.

7
8 Local government units (LGUs) found themselves overwhelmed with the
9 number of residents that they needed to provide assistance. While some of them
10 are able to cope and lay down effect policies, these are all but temporary
11 solutions. After COVID-19, we will still have to face the problems brought about
12 by population density such as lack of sufficient health facilities, health personnel
13 to patient ratio, limited resources of the LGU compared with the number of its
14 residents, traffic and road congestion, among others.

15
16 Thus, in order to provide for a long-term solution, it is high time to provide
17 for a Buhay Probinsya national policy. Buhay Probinsya, as in the provincial life,
18 and Buhay Probinsya, as in provinces that are alive and thriving. We want to put
19 rural development in a primary position, and for that to happen, a
20 comprehensive national policy must first be created.

21
22 This national policy shall take into account not only industrial or
23 commercial development but also agriculture and sustainable tourism. We want
24 the policy to harness, but at the same time protect, our existing resources so
25 that it can be used for the overall national development. We want our fellow
26 Filipinos to see and feel development within their provinces so that they will
27 never have to uproot their lives and leave their family to move into the big urban
28 cities. We want the provinces to thrive through the inflow of businesses,
29 investors, agricultural advances, and sustainable tourism, *mga probinsyang*

1 *buhay at puno ng buhay, iyan po ang obhektibo natin.* It is for these reasons that
2 the passage of this bill is earnestly sought.
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ALFRED C. DELOS SANTOS

Representative, Ang Probinsyano Partylist

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AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT OF PROVINCES

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “*Buhay Probinsya Law.*”

SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to promote rural development. It is likewise the policy of the state to ensure the equitable distribution of wealth and opportunity to each Filipino. The State shall thus endeavor to provide and implement programs that will ensure a decentralized economic development which will now focus on provinces and rural areas. Toward this end, the State shall implement measures to achieve the following objectives:

- a) Creation and implementation of policies focused on the economic development of provinces and rural areas;
- b) Determination of areas within each province that are suitable for industrial, agricultural, and eco-tourism hubs;
- c) Creation and implementation of sustainable tourism policies per area;
- d) Creation and implementation of policies that will attract various industries to invest and maintain their manufacturing or production sites in rural areas;

- e) Provide avenues for agricultural development which shall consider other agriculture activities that fit the characteristics of the province and not just crop planting;
- f) Encourage Filipinos to work and reside in provinces and rural areas; and
- g) Effectively decongest urban areas by decentralizing business and job opportunities.

SECTION 3. *Philippine Regional and Rural Development Council.* – A Philippine Regional and Rural Development Committee (PRRDC) is hereby created which shall be composed of the following:

- a) Secretary of the Department of Agriculture (DA);
- b) Secretary of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG);
- c) Secretary of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH);
- d) Secretary of the Department of Transportation (DOT);
- e) Secretary of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE);
- f) Secretary of the Department of Tourism (DOT);
- g) Secretary of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI);
- h) Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR);
- i) Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD);
- j) Secretary of the Department of Health (DOH);
- k) Secretary of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM);
- l) Secretary of the Department of Finance (DOF);
- m) Secretary of the Department of Education (DEPED);
- n) Chairperson of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED);
- o) Director General of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA);
- p) Chairperson of the Mindanao Development Authority; and
- q) Chairperson of the Cooperative Development Authority.

Each committee member shall designate a permanent and alternate representative who shall have the authority to decide for and in behalf of the department, agency, or office he or she is representing, and to perform other functions as necessary.

The Committee shall be assisted by a Secretariat, headed by the General Manager of the National Housing Authority which shall provide technical and administrative assistance to the Committee. The Secretariat shall be composed of personnel from the NHA as well as from the member agencies of the Committee.

1 The Committee, in coordination with other relevant agencies, shall
2 formulate a comprehensive national policy for the creation of business,
3 industrial, agricultural, and eco-tourism hubs or zones for every province
4 depending on the capacity and characteristics of the province. The Committee
5 shall release the national policy within one (1) year from the effectivity of this
6 Act.

7
8 SECTION 4. *National Policy Direction.* – The national policy shall include
9 short, medium, and long-term sub-policies on the following focal areas: a)
10 agriculture; b) local industries and MSMEs; c) sustainable tourism; d)
11 employment and social welfare; e) public health; and f) education. The national
12 policy shall have a holistic approach on rural development and on improving the
13 quality of life of the inhabitants of rural areas.

14
15 The national policy shall provide for measures that will encourage
16 businesses to move their operations into the industrial hubs including but not
17 limited to local tax holidays, expedited processing or waiver of other
18 requirements for the establishment of their business, among others. Micro,
19 Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) shall be given fiscal incentives and
20 transition assistance such as local tax holidays, expedited processing or waiver
21 of other requirements for the establishment of their business, among others by
22 LGUs and the national government.

23
24 It shall also provide for measures on agricultural development which may
25 be, but not limited to, planting crops, fisheries, production or processing of
26 agricultural products, dairy farming, or livestock raising. The determination of
27 which agricultural venture or ventures will be undertaken shall be based on the
28 discretion of the LGU considering its capability and geographical characteristics.

29
30 The national policy shall likewise include measures for the development of
31 tourism and tourism-based livelihood and businesses, with a high regard on the
32 sustainability and environmental impact. No measure shall be undertaken if it
33 shall damage or destroy the environment, and all measures shall include
34 safeguards that will ensure compliance with the standards set by the DENR and
35 the DOT.

36
37 The national policy shall provide for the employment of Filipinos before
38 foreign nationals, but in no way shall the latter be discriminated or prevented
39 from occupying the position if there is no Filipino qualified and available to
40 perform the job.

41
42 The national policy shall ensure that a sufficient number of well-equipped
43 hospitals are available for each province. It shall also consider principles of
44 public health in creating policies on health for rural development.

1 The national policy shall ensure that the transition of families from urban
2 to rural areas are supported by sufficient transportation, social welfare, and
3 other necessary assistance from the government.
4

5 SECTION 4. *Implementation by the Local Government Units.* - The national
6 policy shall be forwarded to the existing regional development councils and
7 provincial local government units for assistance in the implementation. LGUs
8 shall assist in the implement the national policy, but shall have the authority to
9 modify aspects of the policy implementation to tailor-fit the needs and available
10 resources of their territory. LGUs shall submit a bi-annual accomplishment
11 report to the Committee.
12

13 SECTION 5. *Incentives for Businesses.* - The provincial LGUs shall
14 implement the incentives laid out in the national policy created by the Committee
15 including but not limited to local tax holidays, expedited processing or waiver of
16 other requirements for the establishment of their business. The provincial LGUs
17 shall also have the discretion to provide additional incentives for businesses who
18 will migrate from the urban areas or establish their operations in their territorial
19 jurisdiction.
20

21 SECTION 6. *Incentives for Workers.* - Workers and their families who
22 decide to move to and take up employment in the provinces shall be given
23 transportation assistance for their person and their belongings by the DOT in
24 coordination with the LGU which has jurisdiction over the chosen residence of
25 the worker.
26

27 The DSWD shall provide a *Balik Probinsya* financial assistance of ten
28 thousand pesos (Php10,000.00) for every family who will move from Metro Manila
29 or other urban cities to the provinces or rural areas and will pursue employment,
30 trade, or profession in such locality. A family who received the *Balik Probinsya*
31 financial assistance shall be disqualified to receive the same within three (3)
32 years from receipt of the grant.
33

34 The DSWD shall formulate the guidelines for the documentary
35 requirements and release of the *Balik Probinsya* financial assistance to qualified
36 families. The DSWD shall also maintain a comprehensive database of families
37 who availed the financial assistance to avoid duplication.
38

39 SECTION 7. *Technical Skills Training for Members of the Urban Poor*
40 *Communities and Informal Settlers; Benefits for Trainees.* - The Technical
41 Education Skills Development Authority, in coordination with DSWD, shall
42 formulate and implement training programs for interested members of the urban
43 poor communities and informal settlers in Metro Manila and other urban cities.
44 The training programs should sufficiently provide the necessary skills training

1 required by commercial, tourism-related, and agricultural industries and
2 businesses.

3
4 TESDA, in coordination with the DOT, shall provide its trainees with free
5 transportation and a daily meal allowance. Training graduates shall thereafter
6 be assisted by TESDA in looking for employment opportunities in the provinces.
7 Once employed, DSWD shall assist the employee in moving to the province where
8 his employer is located.

9
10 SECTION 8. *Provincial Wage Rate Rationalization.* – The Secretary of DOLE,
11 through the National Wages and Productivity Commission, shall submit a
12 provincial wage rationalization plan to the Committee. The said plan shall layout
13 the gradual increase of regional wage rates outside Metro Manila in a span of five
14 (5) years. The annual increase shall lead to a uniform national wage rate. The
15 increase shall begin one (1) year after the issuance of the national policy by the
16 Committee.

17
18 SECTION 9. *Reporting.* – The Committee shall submit to the President a
19 quarterly report on the status of the implementation of this Act,
20 accomplishments, and budget utilization.

21
22 SECTION 10. *Appropriations.* – The amounts necessary for the
23 implementation of this Act shall be charged against the existing appropriations
24 of the member agencies and from other sources as identified by the DBM.

25
26 Local government units shall also be allowed to include in their budget the
27 amounts required to implement the national policy created under the Buhay
28 Probinsya Act. The appropriation for the implementation of this law shall be
29 included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

30
31 SECTION 11. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part of this Act is
32 held invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions or parts unaffected
33 shall remain in full force and effect.

34
35 SECTION 12. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, executive orders, presidential
36 decrees or issuances, letters of instruction, administrative orders, rules, and
37 regulations contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby
38 repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

39
40 SECTION 13. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days
41 after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general
42 circulation.

43
44 Approved,