



Republic of the Philippines  
**House of Representatives**  
Quezon City, Metro Manila



**EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS**  
*First Regular Session*  
**4839**  
**HOUSE BILL NO. \_\_\_\_\_**

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Introduced by **Representative Francisco Jose F. Matugas II**

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**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

Tourism is one of the drivers of economic growth in the country. According to the 2018 Report of the World Travel and Tourism Council, the direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP was Php1,377.7 Billion or 8.7 % of total GDP for 2017. According to the Department of Tourism, the tourism industry has generated some Php245 Billion in receipts from international visitors during the first six months of the year 2019 alone. As in most countries in the world, tourism is an important economic activity in the Philippines.

This is probably the reason why the government, in recent years, has focused on developing, promoting and marketing various tourist destinations in the country. While we continue to attract tourists to come into the country, we must make sure that their experience is pleasant, memorable, safe and secure.

This bill seeks to address the common misapprehension of tourists visiting or intending to visit the country – lack of reliable telecommunications facilities, the perception that the country is not safe for tourists, and locals are out to profit from them. It also addresses the concern that tourist destinations are not ready to address medical emergencies which may befall visitors.

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

**FRANCISCO JOSE F. MATUGAS II**  
Surigao del Norte, First District  
(Siargao Island)



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**AN ACT**  
**PROVIDING FOR THE PROTECTION OF AND ENHANCED**  
**SERVICES TO TOURISTS AND PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR**

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

1       SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “**Tourist**  
2       **Protection and Enhanced Services Act of 2019.**”

3       SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – The State recognizes tourism as a  
4       major contributor to the country’s economic growth. Towards this end, the  
5       State shall protect tourists, both domestic and foreign, during their travel  
6       around the country. Among, others, it shall ensure their safety and well-being  
7       by providing health facilities that can attend to emergency and health-related  
8       crises.

9       SEC. 3. *Tourist Protection and Assistance Task Force.* – Within nine (9)  
10       months after the approval of this Act, the Secretary of the Department of  
11       Tourism shall establish an intergovernmental task force to be known as the  
12       “Tourist Protection and Enhanced Services Task Force”, hereinafter referred  
13       to as the “Task Force”.

14       SEC. 4. *Composition of the Task Force.* – The Task Force shall be  
15       composed of the following:



1           a)     Secretary of the Department of Tourism ("DOT"), or the duly  
2 designated representative, as Chairperson;

3           b)     Secretary of the Department of Interior and Local Government,  
4 or the duly designated representative, as Vice Chairperson;

5           c)     Secretary of the Department of Transportation or the duly  
6 designated representative;

7           d)     Secretary of the Department of Public Works and Highways or  
8 the duly designated representative;

9           e)     Secretary of the Department of Information and Communications  
10 Technology;

11          f)     Secretary of Health;

12          g)     Director General of the Philippine National Police or the duly  
13 designated representative; and

14          h)     Such other representatives of other government agencies and  
15 private sector entities as may be determined to be appropriate to the mission  
16 of the Task Force by the Chairperson, as members.

17          SEC. 5. *Functions of the Task Force.* – It shall be the duty of the Task  
18 Force to facilitate, through the concerned national government agencies and  
19 local government units (LGUs), the following:

20          (a)     Adoption of uniform standards on signage for use throughout the  
21 Philippines in order to facilitate travel in the country;

22          (b)     Provision of directional signage in tourism facilities and  
23 destinations, including airports, seaports, land border crossings, highways,  
24 and bus, train, and other public transit locations;

25          (c)     Preparation and dissemination of multilingual travel and  
26 tourism information and promotional materials;

27          (d)     Establishment of a toll-free telephone assistance system run by  
28 multilingual operators to provide assistance to domestic and foreign tourists;

29          (e)     Coordination with LGUs for the establishment of tourist help  
30 desks in identified tourist destinations, *Provided That*, said help desks shall  
31 provide free internet services to tourists;

1 (f) Institution of measures to prevent unlawful acts or harassment  
2 committed on tourists including making illicit profits from tourists,  
3 scrambling for customers, and insisting on or forcing customers to purchase  
4 goods or services;

5 (g) Establishment of a system where tourists can file their  
6 complaints against illegal and unlawful activities of tourism enterprises;

7 (h) Reinforcement of measures undertaken to prevent the use of  
8 dangerous drugs in tourist destinations; and

9 (i) Establishment of health facilities in tourism destinations as  
10 provided in Section 6 of this Act.

11 SEC. 6. *Establishment of Health Facilities in Tourism Destinations.* –  
12 The Task Force, led by the Department of Health, shall identify tourist  
13 destinations for the construction of tourism health facilities which shall have  
14 the minimum capability to respond to emergency cases that are typical to  
15 their respective sites and treat common illnesses and injuries: *Provided,*  
16 That, said tourism health facilities shall be serviced by land and sea  
17 ambulances or airlift helicopters, if necessary, to enable the transport of  
18 patients needing advanced care or treatment to other health facilities.

19 In the construction of health facilities, priority shall be given to:

20 (a) prime tourist destinations;

21 (b) tourist destination with no existing health facilities within a five  
22 (5)-kilometer radius; and

23 (c) tourist destinations with dilapidated health facilities.

24 The Task Force shall ensure that health personnel deployed in all  
25 tourism health facilities shall be well-trained to respond to emergencies and  
26 common illnesses and injuries, taking into consideration the peculiarities of  
27 each tourist destination. In this regard, security forces, tour guides and other  
28 tourism front liners shall also be trained in the basic knowledge and skills on  
29 emergency preparedness and response.

30 SEC. 7. *Efficient and Reliable Communications Infrastructure.* – The  
31 Task Force, led by the Department of Information and Communications



1 Technology, shall ensure the development of information and communications  
2 technology (ICT) infrastructure that meets the high standards of speed and  
3 reliability in each tourist destination. It shall ensure that affordable ICT  
4 networks are available in said destinations.

5 SEC. 8. *Appropriations.* –Funds for the implementation of Section 6 of  
6 this Act, including funds needed for the maintenance and operation of all  
7 tourism health facilities shall be included in the appropriation of the  
8 Department of Health while funds for the implementation of Section 7 of this  
9 Act shall be included in the appropriations of the Department of Information  
10 and Communications Technology.

11 Funds for the implementation of the other programs and projects  
12 approved and adopted by the Task Force shall be included in the  
13 appropriation of the implementing agency concerned.

14 SEC. 9. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part hereof is held  
15 invalid or unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not  
16 otherwise affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

17 SEC. 10. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, presidential decrees or  
18 issuances, executive orders, letters of instruction, administrative orders, rules  
19 or regulations contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are  
20 hereby repealed, modified or amended accordingly.

21 SEC. 11. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after  
22 its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

23 *Approved,*

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