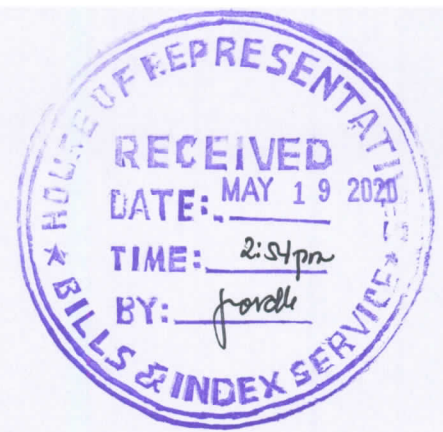


Republic of the Philippines  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS  
First Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION No. 885



Introduced by

BAYAN MUNA Representatives FERDINAND R. GAITE ZARATE,  
CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE and EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT,  
ACT TEACHERS Party-List Representative FRANCE L. CASTRO,  
GABRIELA Women's Party Representative ARLENE D. BROSAS  
and KABATAAN Party-List Representative SARAH JANE I. ELAGO

RESOLUTION

URGING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, THROUGH THE COMMITTEE  
ON OVERSEAS WORKERS AFFAIRS AND THE DEFEAT COVID-19 AD HOC  
COMMITTEE, TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON  
THE SURGE OF COVID-19 INFECTION AMONG REPATRIATED DISPLACED  
OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS AND REPORTED RISKY AND DISMAL  
SITUATION IN QUARANTINE FACILITIES, AND RECOMMEND URGENT  
MEASURES TO PROTECT AND SUPPORT OFWs

**WHEREAS**, on May 13, 2020, there were 171 Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) staying at government-run quarantine centers who tested positive for COVID-19. Based on available reports, 20,569 OFWs under quarantine have been swabbed but are still awaiting test results.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, 23,480 OFWs remain quarantined in Metro Manila and in nearby Batangas as of May 7, 2020, according to Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infections Diseases (IATF);

**WHEREAS**, on April 14, 2020, the Department of Labor and Employment estimated 70,000-100,000 OFWs have been displaced due to the impact of COVID-19 and are bound to be repatriated to the Philippines. Among the estimated number of homebound OFWs, around 85,000 have already been repatriated as of May 7, 2020 according to the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA)<sup>2</sup>. Of this number, 45,000 were seafarers and 40,000 were land-based overseas workers<sup>3</sup>. More than 45,000 more Filipinos are expected to return home over the next two months<sup>4</sup>;

**WHEREAS**, in response to the announced mass repatriation of OFWs, the IATF through DOLE and DOH issued several guidelines and resolutions to facilitate repatriated OFWs including directing OWWA to provide temporary shelters for homebound overseas workers<sup>5</sup>. Said guidelines mandated the 14-day quarantine, rapid antibody testing, RT-PCR testing, standard

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bomboradyo.com/171-ofws-na-nasa-mga-quarantine-centers-nagpositibo-sa-covid-19-galvez/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/05/07/2012325/40000-displaced-ofws-coming-home>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/05/07/2012325/40000-displaced-ofws-coming-home>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.asianjournal.com/world/over-71700-overseas-filipino-workers-expected-to-be-displaced-by-pandemic/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.poea.gov.ph/memorandumcirculars/2020/MC-09-2020.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <http://poloosaka.dole.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/DOH-Department-Memorandum-No-2020-0200.pdf>



1 health policies in accommodation including one-person-per-room policy, and social distancing  
2 measures among others;

3 **WHEREAS**, upon arrival at the accommodations provided by OWWA, several OFWs took to  
4 social media to complain over 'filthy and unhygienic' conditions at their quarantine hotel.  
5 Bedsheets and pillowcases have not been properly washed, dirty rugs, cockroaches inside the hotel  
6 room, and garbage on top of air condition units were just some of the many complaints aired by  
7 repatriated OFWs<sup>7</sup>. In response to issues on the quality of OWWA shelters and the growing  
8 demand for quarantine facilities, the NTF converted several establishments into We Heal As One  
9 Centers that served as temporary health facilities meant to accommodate the influx of repatriated  
10 OFWs needing isolation within and outside Metro Manila<sup>8</sup>;

11 **WHEREAS**, despite additional capacity to house repatriated OFWs, migrants continue to report  
12 substandard facilities, violations of the one-person-per-room policy, lack of social distancing  
13 measures, and delayed testing. Dismal health monitoring systems, and no ample medical and  
14 mental health services were provided contrary to previously issued IATF, DOLE and DOH  
15 guidelines. Stranded OFWs decry the lack of transport services supposedly provided by DOTr  
16 leaving hundreds marooned in quarantine facilities with some staying for extended periods for  
17 more than one month. In addition, OFWs also reported the lack of free testing despite clear  
18 accountability of manning agencies to shoulder testing costs. Even in cases wherein agencies fail  
19 to comply, the government bears the responsibility to administer free COVID-19 testing among  
20 OFW repatriates;

21 **WHEREAS**, the health, safety and well-being of repatriated OFWs must be ensured and  
22 protected the moment they enter mandatory isolation until they are safely sent back to their  
23 respective hometowns including efforts to ensure one standard protocol across different LGUs to  
24 allow OFWs who have completed the 14-day quarantine to return home safely and undergo  
25 necessary protocols at home to prevent possible community transmission;

26 **WHEREAS**, consultations with migrants held by Migrante International through the  
27 #StrandedPH<sup>9</sup> initiative show an urgent need to investigate the current situation of stranded  
28 OFWs in quarantine facilities. Migrants report overcrowding and massive delays in the release of  
29 test results making it difficult, if not impossible to ascertain whether infection was contracted from  
30 their exposure in quarantine centers or from abroad. Thus, it is imperative to investigate whether  
31 the infections were contracted in host countries or in crowded quarantine facilities;

32 **WHEREAS**, mass testing among repatriated OFWs must be prioritized by the IATF including  
33 the need to fast-track the release of test results to prevent possible outbreaks within quarantine  
34 centers. This comes as an urgent concern especially after OWWA released five repatriates to  
35 Western Visayas who turned out to be COVID-19 positive.<sup>10</sup> Without addressing the backlogs on  
36 test results, congested quarantine areas can lead to higher risks of contagion;

37 **WHEREAS**, the systematic neglect of the government on the welfare of migrants make them  
38 highly vulnerable to COVID-19 infection. Even prior to the pandemic, migrants are mostly  
39 overworked and underpaid largely working in inhumane conditions and away from their families.  
40 Inadequate salaries and benefits on top of exorbitant PhilHealth dues, the lack of concrete  
41 measures to ensure their rights while staying in their host countries have severely compromised  
42 their physical and mental well-being. Case in point is Algen Manos Cadungog, a 42-year old female

<sup>7</sup> <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/04/14/20/ofw-complains-of-filthy-unhygienic-conditions-at-quarantine-hotel>

<sup>8</sup> <https://bcda.gov.ph/returning-ofws-undergo-quarantine-we-heal-one-center-world-trade-center>

<sup>9</sup> #StrandedPH: Stranded sa Panahon ng COVID-19 is an online group initiated and led by stranded OFWs in an effort to organize themselves and call on the government to address their urgent needs and demands.

<sup>10</sup> <https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/05/03/owwa-under-fire-after-5-repatriated-ofws-in-w-visayas-test-positive-for-covid-19/>

1 OFW from Kuwait who, suffering from depression, hanged herself to death on April 27, 2020, at  
2 a hotel in Pasay City where she underwent quarantine<sup>11</sup>;

3 **WHEREAS**, defeating COVID-19 necessitates the government to immediately address and arrest  
4 the surge of infection among OFW quarantine centers. It is crucial to save the lives of OFWs –  
5 Filipino workers whom we have long hailed as our heroes, but at the same time are bereft of the  
6 proper compensation and care they truly deserve. Much more than calling them “heroes,” the  
7 government must ensure and provide concrete steps and programs to truly protect and support  
8 OFWs while providing for their immediate needs;

9 **NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the House of Representatives, through the  
10 Committee on Overseas Workers Affairs and the Defeat COVID-19 Ad Hoc Committee, conduct  
11 an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the surge of COVID-19 infections among repatriated overseas  
12 Filipino workers, and reported risky and dismal situation in quarantine facilities, and recommend  
13 urgent measures to protect and support displaced OFWs.

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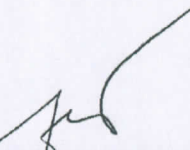
REP. FERDINAND R. GAITE  
*Bayan Muna Partylist*




REP. CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE  
*Bayan Muna Partylist*



REP. EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT  
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REP. FRANCE L. CASTRO  
*ACT Teachers Partylist*



REP. ARLENE D. BROSAS  
*GABRIELA Women's Party*



REP. SARAH JANE I. ELAGO  
*Kabataan Partylist*

<sup>11</sup> <https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/04/27/owwa-to-provide-free-counseling-to-repatriated-ofws/>