

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC )  
OF THE PHILIPPINES )  
Third Regular Session )



'16 JAN 25 P5 07

SENATE  
S. No. 3107

RECEIVED BY: *J*

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Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

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AN ACT  
ESTABLISHING A WELFARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM TO  
FAMILIES LEFT BEHIND BY OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Constitution, Article 15, Section 1, provides:

The State recognizes the Filipino family as the foundation of the nation. Accordingly, it shall strengthen its solidarity and actively promote its total development.

Statistics from the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) show that 1.8 million Filipinos are leaving the country annually to work abroad. Data from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas show that in 2014 the total remittances of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) amounted to US\$26.92 billion (P1.20 trillion).

Despite the economic benefits brought by overseas employment, there are attendant costs in terms of family displacement. Reports from cases handled by the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) and non-government organizations link social problems, such as broken marriages, drug addiction, sexual immorality, crime, suicide or psychological breakdowns to the long separations between spouses and children.

This bill seeks to protect and strengthen the Filipino family by establishing OFW Family Centers that shall provide welfare assistance and counseling services to the

families of OFWs. It also seeks to direct the OWWA to develop a comprehensive reunification, reintegration and replacement plan for returning OFWs.<sup>1</sup>

*Miriam Defensor Santiago*  
MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO  
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<sup>1</sup> This bill was originally filed during the Thirteenth Congress, First Regular Session and refiled during the Fourteenth Congress, First Regular Session.

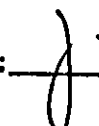
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*Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:*

1 SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Left-Behind  
2 Households of OFWs Act.”

3 SECTION 2. *Declaration of State Policy.* – It is declared policy of the State to  
4 strengthen the solidarity of the family and actively promote its total development. The  
5 State recognizes the Filipino family as the foundation of the nation.

6 Towards this end, the Administrator shall take such actions as are necessary to the  
7 maximum extent practicable, to sustain harmony of the family and prepare families for  
8 future reintegration of OFWs.

9 SECTION 3. *Definition of Terms.* – For purposes of this Act, the term:

10 (A) “Administration” means the Overseas Workers and Welfare Administration or  
11 “OWWA”;

12 (B) “Administrator” means the Administrator of OWWA;

13 (C) “Center” means the Overseas Filipino Workers Family Center;

14 (D) “Left-Behind Household” means families left behind by Overseas Filipino  
15 Workers to work abroad; and

1 (E) "Overseas Filipino Worker" or "OFW" means any Filipino citizen who is  
2 temporarily working in any country outside the Philippines.

3 SECTION 4. *OFW Family Centers.* –

4 (A) *Centers.* – The Administrator shall establish OFW Family Centers nationwide,  
5 using the facilities of its regional offices, or any of the regional offices of Philippine  
6 Overseas Employment Administration and the Department of Social and Welfare  
7 Development. The purposes of each Center are –

8 (1) To provide welfare assistance and counseling services to the families of  
9 OFWs;

10 (2) To serve as coordinating office to non-government organizations and  
11 associations that cater to the plight of OFWs; and

12 (3) To serve as a link of left-behind households to various services and/or  
13 agencies of the government on overseas employment.

14 (B) *Location of Centers.* – Each Center shall be strategically located in every  
15 municipality where there is a large population of families who have relatives working  
16 abroad.

17 (C) *Jurisdiction.* – The responsibilities of each Center shall be centered on the  
18 welfare of left-behind families of OFWs.

19 SECTION 5. *Left-Behind Household Organizations.* – OWWA shall facilitate the  
20 establishment of organizations or support groups of families left behind by migrant  
21 workers. It shall also provide a venue for the interaction of members of families of  
22 migrant workers.

23 SECTION 6. *Report to Congress.* – Three years from the passage of the provisions  
24 of this Act, the OWWA shall report to Congress the number of cases brought to the

1 various Centers and the intervention provided. A yearly statistical report shall be  
2 submitted to the Department of Labor and Employment and other concerned agencies.

3 SECTION 7. *Appropriations.* – To carry out the provisions of this Act, such sums  
4 as may be necessary are hereby authorized to be appropriated from the National Treasury.

5 SECTION 8. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is held invalid or  
6 unconstitutional, the same shall not affect the validity and effectivity of the other  
7 provisions hereof.

8 SECTION 9. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, orders, and issuances, or  
9 portions thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, are hereby  
10 repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

11 SECTION 10. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days  
12 after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in two (2) newspapers of general  
13 circulation.

Approved,

/ml23Nov2015