NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE	
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES	
First Regular Session	



23 MAR 23 A11:54

RECEIVED BY:

SENATE

P.S. RES. NO. <u>560</u>

)

## INTRODUCED BY SENATOR JOSEPH VICTOR G. EJERCITO

## RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON REPORTS OF UNPROFESSIONALISM AND INEFFICIENCY HOUNDING THE BUREAU OF IMMIGRATION FOR ITS CONDUCT OF DEPARTURE PROTOCOLS AND PROCEDURES FOR INTERNATIONAL-BOUND PASSENGERS, WITH THE END IN VIEW OF STREAMLINING, PROFESSIONALIZING, AND MODERNIZING THE AGENCY'S PROCESSES AND OPERATIONS

**WHEREAS**, the Bureau of Immigration, hereinafter referred to as "Bureau", is an attached agency of the Department of Justice, mandated to administer and enforce the immigration, citizenship, and alien registration laws of the Philippines;

**WHEREAS**, in the discharge of its broad functions, the Bureau exercises administrative powers over the monitoring of the entry and exit of Filipino citizens in compliance with Philippine laws and other legal procedures. The Bureau is, among others, empowered to defer departure of Filipino travelers or disallow a certain traveler to depart for various reasons as determined by immigration personnel in the ports of exit;

**WHEREAS**, the power of the Bureau has been a subject of abuse over the years where there have been previous incidents of its Officers subjecting travelers to a tedious and unreasonable departure procedure causing travelers to miss their flights or their departure deferred by the Officer altogether;

**WHEREAS**, a Filipina travelling to Israel in December 2022 personally encountered the above-mentioned despicable practice. In a now viral social media post, the Filipina recounted her horrible experience with the Bureau that cost her almost Fifty Thousand Pesos (P50,000.00) for her missed flights and rebooking fees;

**WHEREAS**, the traveler narrated that she was asked irrelevant questions during the primary and secondary inspection conducted by the Immigration Officer which includes, among others, the status of relationship of her parents. Further, she was allegedly asked by the Officer to present her yearbook or graduation photo;

**WHEREAS**, similar incidents surfaced where Filipinos travelling abroad have been offloaded or have missed their flights because of the inefficient process of the Bureau. A traveler who missed her flight to Taiwan in January 2023 has filed a complaint before the Ombudsman against two Immigration Officers for grave abuse of authority citing a similar experience;

**WHEREAS**, in the Statement issued by the Bureau regarding the December incident, the agency cited that the worsening cases of human trafficking and illegal recruitment prompted them to implement strict measures in monitoring departing travelers;

**WHEREAS**, in the said Statement, the Bureau mentioned that in 2022 alone, a total of 32,404 Filipinos were deferred departure. However, only 472 of this number have been found to be victims of human trafficking or illegal recruitment, while 873 were found to be misrepresenting themselves or presented fraudulent documents;

**WHEREAS**, the data is an indicator of an inefficient procedure of the Bureau in screening departing travelers, and an inadequate system of preventing cases of human trafficking and illegal recruitment;

**WHEREAS**, there is an urgent need to review the processes and departure protocols being implemented by the Bureau for international-bound passengers to avert similar incidents and to ultimately protect every Filipino citizen's guaranteed constitutional right to travel;

**WHEREAS**, there are pending proposals to modernize and further professionalize the Bureau as the Philippine Immigration Act of 1940 governing its operation is an eighty-year old law has outdated provisions that have ceased to be responsive to present day situations despite its several amendments and revisions;

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE**, as it is hereby resolved to direct the appropriate Senate Committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on reports of unprofessionalism and inefficiency hounding the Bureau of Immigration for its conduct of departure protocols and procedures for international-bound passengers, with the end in view of streamlining, professionalizing, and modernizing the agency's procedures and operations.

Adopted,

JOSEPH VICTOR G. EJERCITO