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SENATE
P.S. Res. No. 678

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by Senator Maria Lourdes Nancy S. Binay

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE PHILIPPINE IMMIGRATION DEPARTURE PROTOCOLS, IN LIGHT OF NUMEROUS REPORTS OF OFFLOADING INCIDENTS DUE TO ARBITRARY AND UNREASONABLE IMPLEMENTATION OF SAID PROTOCOLS BY IMMIGRATION OFFICERS

WHEREAS, in 2015, the Department of Justice (DOJ), issued Memorandum Circular No. 036 or the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT) Revised Guidelines on Departure Formalities for International-Bound Passengers;

WHEREAS, the said guidelines were promulgated for the prevention of human trafficking, illegal recruitment and other related laws;

WHEREAS, the country's immigration departure protocols have been subject to complaints over the years due to arbitrary and unreasonable implementation;

WHEREAS, according to news reports, another Filipino aired his frustrations after he was offloaded due to the now-infamous departure protocols of the Bureau of Immigration (BI). In a Facebook post last July 1, first-time international traveler Aldrin Clark Edward "Ace" Bicomong lamented how he lost fifteen thousand pesos (₱15,000.00) because of it¹;

WHEREAS, according to Bicomong, he answered everything the BI asked of him, but was subjected to a second round of interview because it was his first time to leave the country. He obliged even though the questions were the same. An immigration officer told him to "just sit and wait to be called."²;

¹ One News PH-Philippine Star Website, Travel Turns Traumatic For Another Filipino Who Missed Flight Due To BI Protocols, <https://www.onenews.ph/articles/travel-turns-traumatic-for-another-filipino-who-missed-flight-due-to-bi-protocols>

² Ibid.

WHEREAS, by 9:30 p.m., it was boarding time, so he requested a follow up. The BI officers kept telling him to wait despite their awareness that he was already running late for his trip. Bicomong said his airline made a last call at 9:40 p.m. before ultimately taking off at around 9:45 to 9:50 p.m.³;

WHEREAS, a same incident happened late last year which also inconvenienced another traveler who missed her flight to Israel, due to a lengthy interview by a BI personnel asking her to show her school yearbook as a supporting document, to be given the green light for departure⁴;

WHEREAS, in March 2023, the DOJ vowed to revisit and improve immigration protocols after numerous complaints of inconvenienced travelers who missed their flights due to arbitrary and lengthy BI departure inspection process⁵;

WHEREAS, however, in an interview, DOJ-IACAT Undersecretary-in-Charge Nicholas Felix Ty stated that the BI should have the flexibility in implementing departure formalities to combat the changing trends in human trafficking⁶;

WHEREAS, he added that it is important that Filipinos know the State's interest to protect them against human trafficking. It is important, but sometimes, it is bound to limit their constitutional right to travel⁷;

WHEREAS, ensuring that human trafficking will not be perpetrated in the country will always be a top priority of the government however, it should also endeavor to give its best efforts to streamline processes that become burdensome and costly to Filipinos, such as the immigration departure protocols;

WHEREAS, with the countless complaints over the years regarding the arbitrary and unreasonable implementation by immigration officers of the revised guidelines on departure formalities for international-bound passengers, it is an opportune time to review the said protocols to finally address the problematic departure process in the country, which up to this day continues to negatively affect Filipinos;

³ Ibid.

⁴ GMA News Website, Traveler missed flight after lengthy BI interview, yearbook requirement, <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/864272/traveler-missed-flight-after-lengthy-bi-interview-yearbook-requirement/story/>

⁵ One News PH-Philippine Star Website, Departure Procedures Undergoing Revisions Amid Complaints Against Immigration Officers – DOJ, <https://www.onenews.ph/articles/departure-procedures-undergoing-revisions-amid-complaints-versus-immigration-officers-doj>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, that the Senate of the Philippines directs the appropriate Senate Committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the Philippine Immigration Departure Protocols, in light of the numerous reports of offloading incidents due to arbitrary and unreasonable implementation of said protocols by immigration officers.

Adopted,



MARIA LOURDES NANCY S. BINAY