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SENATE

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Senate Bill No. 1619

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INTRODUCED BY HON. MANNY VILLAR

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**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

The rich heritage of the Filipino people has attracted scholars, both local and foreign, to venture into further studies in this area. The books and chronicles written, as well as historical artifacts and materials are rich sources of information about our culture and traditions. A Filipino cannot claim to be a true Filipino if he is not aware of his cultural moorings.

Filipinos who are permanent or temporary residents abroad are not exempt from this cultural responsibility. In cognizance of the role of the State in the promotion of the appreciation and awareness of Philippine national heritage, this "Education and Heritage Program for Overseas Filipinos Act" is being proposed. This bill intends to teach Filipino language and Philippine history, culture and institutions in Filipino communities overseas. It also provides for support to the establishment of Philippine schools and Filipiniana Resource Centers in Filipino communities abroad. These measures aim to provide overseas Filipinos with knowledge about their own history, culture and traditions.

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

  
MANNY VILLAR

FOURTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES  
First Regular Session

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**AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE PRESERVATION AND CULTIVATION OF THE  
FILIPINO HERITAGE AMONG FILIPINOS OVERSEAS THROUGH THE TEACHING  
OF FILIPINO LANGUAGE AND HISTORY, ASSISTANCE IN THE ESTABLISHMENT  
AND OPERATION OF PHILIPPINE SCHOOLS AND FILIPINIANA CENTERS  
ABROAD AND ESTABLISHING A TRUST FUND THEREFOR**

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

Section 1. Title - This Act shall be known and cited as the "Education and  
Heritage Program for Overseas Filipinos Act"

Section 2. Declaration of Policies - The State recognizes the importance of  
education, both formal and informal, as a means of promoting human development,  
fostering patriotism and nationalism, accelerating progress, and propagating knowledge  
about Philippine history and the Filipino cultural heritage.

It is also the policy of the State to preserve, promote, and enhance the ties  
between the Philippine homeland and the Filipino communities overseas, in particular  
with younger generations of Filipinos overseas, in order to keep them from being  
alienated from their native country and to provide them with knowledge and values that  
would contribute to the shaping of their Filipino character and identity.

The State shall also promote the establishment of educational institutions and  
programs, and the continued exposure of younger generations of Filipinos overseas to  
the Filipino language and Philippine history, culture and arts.

The State shall also continuously strengthen ties with Filipino communities and  
associations abroad to encourage their active participation its programs and activities  
that shall enable children of Filipino nationals abroad to gain expos~ to the Filipino  
language, as well as knowledge about Philippine history and institutions.

Section 3. Definition of Terms -For the purposes of this Act:

(a) "Overseas Filipinos" refer to all Filipinos who are permanently or temporarily residing  
abroad.

(b) "Philippine Schools Overseas" refer to educational institutions operating outside the Philippines, which may be fully or partly owned by Filipinos, and managed or Operated by Filipinos, which implement the Philippine education curriculum, and which are accredited or awaiting accreditation by the Department of Education.

Section 4. Preservation of the Filipino Heritage - The State, through its relevant agencies and instrumentalities, and in cooperation with Filipino communities or associations abroad, shall preserve and promote the Filipino heritage and culture among Filipinos overseas through the following activities:

(a) Teaching of Filipino language and Philippine studies – All Philippine diplomatic and consular establishments shall provide assistance and support to Filipino communities and associations, as well as other organizations overseas, to encourage the regular conduct of classes in Filipino and in Philippine history, geography, culture and institutions for the benefit of children of Filipino parentage and overseas Filipinos in general. The learning of Filipino and Philippine history and culture utilizing advances in information technology shall also be promoted.

(b) Assistance in the Establishment and Operation of Philippine Schools Overseas - All Philippine diplomatic and consular establishments shall provide assistance in the establishment and operation of community-based Philippine schools abroad where feasible, to provide regular courses of instruction in the elementary and secondary levels, subject to regulations as may be promulgated by relevant agencies of the Philippine government.

(c) Establishment and Operation of Filipiniana Centers - All Philippine Diplomatic and Consular establishments shall allocate space for the establishment and maintenance of a permanent library and collection of Filipiniana materials such as books, films, video and audio tapes, journals, photographs, musical scores, artwork, costumes, and artifacts, for reference and use by members of Filipino communities overseas.

Section 5. Role of Philippine Diplomatic and Consular Establishments – All diplomatic and consular establishments shall make available to overseas Filipinos the services of an officer to promote programs and activities in furtherance of this Act. Among other duties, this officer shall perform any or all of the following:

- a) Organize, in cooperation with community members, the conduct of regular classes in Filipinos and Philippine history, geography, culture and institutions at embassy / consulate premises or other venues;
- b) Assist and advice community members in establishing Philippine schools wherever feasible, in accordance with pertinent laws and regulations of both the Philippines and the host country, and in coordination with the Inter-Agency Committee on Philippine Schools Overseas;
- c) Organize the conduct of special lectures and discussion meetings on Philippine history, geography, culture, institutions, and current events; and
- d) Assist members of the Filipino community in organizing regular community-based classes in Filipino and Philippine studies.

Section 6. Establishment of a Committee on Heritage and Culture for Overseas Filipinos - A Committee on Heritage and Culture for Overseas Filipinos shall be established to supervise implementation of the provisions of this Act, and shall be composed of the heads of the following agencies: Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Education, National Commission on Culture and the Arts, Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, Commission on Filipinos Overseas, and two members

from the private sector to be appointed by the President upon recommendation by the Committee.

The Committee on Heritage and Culture for Overseas Filipinos shall be chaired by the Commission on Filipinos Overseas, which shall also provide secretariat support, and co-chaired by the National Commission on Culture and the Arts.

Section 7. Responsibilities of the Committee on Heritage and Culture for Overseas Filipinos - The Committee shall have the following powers, duties and responsibilities:

- a) Formulate policies and guidelines to carry out the provisions of this Act, including the promulgation of rules and regulations necessary for its implementation;
- b) Develop appropriate strategies and mechanisms for the teaching of Philippine history and language among overseas Filipinos, including the use of innovative educational methods and advanced information technologies;
- c) Assign specific duties and responsibilities to Committee members as may be necessary in carrying out the policies and provisions of this Act;
- d) Provide periodic study, monitoring, and assessment of the programs and services as provided for in this Act to preserve and advance Filipino heritage and culture among overseas Filipinos;
- e) Ensure effective and efficient implementation policies and programs under this Act through the holding of regular or consultative meetings and development of a coordinated reporting system for member agencies and other instrumentalities; and
- f) Call on any agency of the government, private sector, and the academe to support the programs as may be established by the Committee.

Section 8. Participation of Filipino Associations and Communities Abroad - Filipino associations and communities abroad shall be activated as primary partners of government departments and agencies concerned in the operationalization and implementation of this Act.

Section 9. Source of Funding - A permanent trust fund is hereby established for the purpose of carrying out programs and activities under the provisions of this Act, with the amount of ten million pesos (P10, 000, 000. 00) hereby appropriated from the income of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas. Thereafter, the amount equivalent to fifty per cent of all yearly incomes of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas derived from the registration of emigrants shall automatically accrue to the trust fund.

Section 10. Implementing Rules and Regulations - The Committee on Heritage and Culture for Overseas Filipinos, composed of government departments and agencies charged with carrying out the provisions of this Act, shall within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, formulate the necessary rules and regulations for effective implementation thereof.

Section 11. Repealing Clause - All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Section 12. Separability Clause - If, for any reason, any part or provision of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, the other sections or provisions shall not be affected thereby and shall continue to be operative.

Section 13. Effectivity Clause - This law shall take effect after fifteen (15) days from its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,