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SENATE
P. S. R. No. 1497

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

RESOLUTION
DIRECTING THE PROPER SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY
IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE REPORTED ILLEGAL LABOR PRACTICES
COMMITTED AGAINST FILIPINO TEACHERS IN THE UNITED STATES

WHEREAS, the Constitution, Article 2, Section 18 provides: "The State affirms labor as a primary social economic force. It shall protect the rights of workers and promote their welfare";

WHEREAS, *The Philippine Daily Inquirer*, in an article entitled "Distressed Filipino Teachers in US Get More Support," dated 29 October 2009, reported that some Filipino teachers in Louisiana who have accused their recruiter of labor contract violations continue to gain support in the United States after a widely circulated newspaper detailed their suffering;

WHEREAS, *USA Today* published in its 28 October 2009 issue an article on three teachers who borrowed up to P50,000 to be able to go to Louisiana but ended up deeper in debt;

WHEREAS, it was learned that these were among the estimated 300 Filipino public school teachers deployed over the past two years by the Los Angeles-based Universal Placement International, Inc. (UPI) through its Philippine sister firm, PARS International Placement Agency, which maintains an office in Quezon City;

WHEREAS, the report said that the teachers, with the support of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the second largest education sector union in the US, have sued UPI for labor malpractice before Louisiana's Workforce Commission;

WHEREAS, AFT President Randi Weingarten allegedly said that the Filipinos were being "treated like chattel," and that last Oct. 20, AFT filed another complaint with the US Department of Labor on behalf of the teachers, who were kept in "virtual servitude" by their recruiter;

WHEREAS, according to their complaint, the teachers were promised salaries of up to \$40,000 a year; however, before being flown to the US, they were made to pay for their placement fees in exchange for their visas, violating a federal law which allows collection of fees only after the recruits get their first paychecks;

WHEREAS, aside from being made to pay various fees, such as "evaluation and transcript fee," "processing fee" and "marketing fee," the teachers were likewise allegedly made to sign new contracts giving the recruiter portions of their salaries, including

signing leases for their apartments, which they said were not only costly but also crowded and dilapidated;

WHEREAS, the teachers' case has been complicated after school districts that deployed them were found to have paid UPI fees to recruit the Filipinos to fill up vacancies in Louisiana's public schools; some school districts, on the other hand, after learning of the alleged abuses, demanded their fees back from UPI;

WHEREAS, the plight of these Louisiana teachers echoed that of the 27 so-called Sentosa nurses—Filipinos in New York City who sued their employer and recruiter for labor malpractice and illegal recruitment;

WHEREAS, there is an urgent need to investigate the alleged complaints made by these teachers in order to protect them and their rights, and to shed light as to the reported exploitative practices of some recruitment agencies;

WHEREAS, this report needs the immediate attention of all government agencies concerned so that if the allegations were proven to be true, preventive measures could be put into place so that similar incidents will not happen in the future;

WHEREFORE, be it hereby resolved by the Philippine Senate, to direct the proper Senate committee to investigate, in aid of legislation, the alleged reports of illegal labor practices committed against Filipino teachers in the United States.

Adopted,


MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO

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