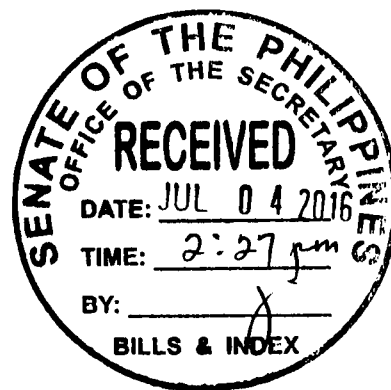


SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC)
OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)



SENATE
S.B. No. 352

Introduced by: Senator Paolo Benigno "Bam" A. Aquino IV

AN ACT
PROHIBITING GOVERNMENT OFFICES AND AGENCIES FROM DENYING CITIZENS ACCESS TO
FRONTLINE SERVICES AND ATTENDANCE IN PUBLIC MEETINGS ON THE BASIS OF ATTIRE

EXPLANATORY NOTE

With the Philippines fast becoming the rising star of Asia and the rest of the world, it is our mandate to build an inclusive and prosperous country for all Filipinos.

We have made strides to build an improved society through policies that uplift and empower the marginalized sectors. However, we often overlook the seemingly trivial but unjust hurdles many Filipinos face on a daily basis, such as their inability to adhere to unnecessary government regulations.

Tragically, not every Filipino can afford to buy shoes and more formal clothing. But every Filipino should be permitted to participate in assemblies that affect them and their community, particularly legislative hearings and sessions. All Filipinos must be granted access to frontline services, especially from public offices.

Unfortunately, needless dress code policies serve as barriers to many of our marginalized Filipinos as they seek to become more participative and rightfully demand services.

How can they raise their voice when they're standing in the heat and behind cold walls? These are the countrymen we are called to serve.


Thus, it is high time to open our government offices and be more considerate of our policies for all Filipinos, regardless of our economic status.

The Philippine Government Agency Open Door Act aims to mandate all government offices to accept entry to all Filipinos and to eliminate the dress code that some government agencies and units are following.

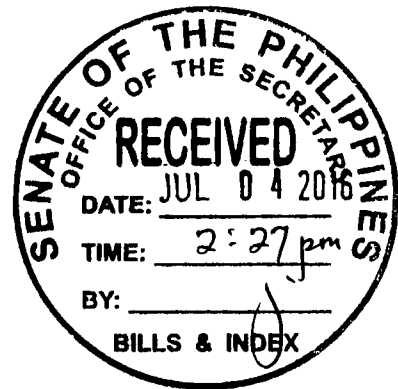
We are called to open the doors to those that have the least in our society, those we have the most to learn from, and those that we desperately need to hear.

We have the opportunity and a duty to generate policies that contribute to a nation that is fair, just, and inclusive. We have a responsibility to create a Philippines where all Filipinos, even minorities and marginalized sectors can live free from discrimination.

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


Senator Paolo Benigno "Bam" A. Aquino IV

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

1 **SECTION 1. Short Title.** - This Act shall be known as the "Open Door Policy Act."

2 **SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy.** - The State recognizes the need to value the dignity of
3 every human person and the promotion of social justice in all phases of national
4 development. Furthermore, the Constitution also mandates Congress to give highest priority
5 to the enactment of measures that protect and enhance the right of all the people to human
6 dignity, reduce social and economic inequalities, and remove cultural inequities.

7 **SEC. 3. Coverage.** - This Act shall apply to all government offices and agencies
8 including the national government and all its agencies, departments, bureaus, offices and
9 instrumentalities, constitutional commissions and constitutionally mandated bodies, local
10 governments and all their agencies including legislative bodies, government-owned or -
11 controlled corporations, state universities and colleges, and all offices in the Congress of the
12 Philippines including the offices of Senators and Representatives that provide frontline
13 services and/or hold public meetings as defined in this Act. Dress codes for public officials
14 and employees in the course of their duties in their respective government offices or
15 agencies will not be affected or prohibited by this Act.

16 **SEC. 4. Definition of Terms.** - As used in this Act, the following terms shall mean:

- 17 a. *Frontline Service* - the process or transaction between citizens as clients and
18 government offices or agencies involving applications for any privilege, right,
19 permit, reward, license, concession, or for any modification, renewal, or
20 extension of the enumerated applications and/or requests which are acted upon
21 in the ordinary course of business of the office or agency concerned.
- 22 b. *Simple Transactions* - requests or applications submitted by clients of a
23 government office or agency which only require ministerial actions on the part of
24 the public officer or employee, or that which present only inconsequential issues

1 for the resolution by an officer or employee of said government office. Such
2 requests or applications are acted upon by the assigned officer or employee
3 during the period stated in the Citizen's Charter, as provided by Republic Act No.
4 9485 or the Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007, which shall not be longer than five (5)
5 working days.

- 6 c. *Public Meetings* – meetings, hearings, or sessions conducted by any government
7 office or agency, including legislative bodies, that are open to the public, where
8 citizens act as guests, observers, or participants, whichever the case may be.
- 9 d. *Strict Dress Code* – rules and regulations that prescribe particular clothing and
10 footwear that effectively prevent citizens from accessing frontline services from
11 government offices and agencies or attending public meetings.
- 12 e. *Marginalized Sectors* – vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of citizens in
13 Philippine society including, but not limited to farmers, peasants, landless rural
14 workers, fisherfolk, workers in the formal sector, workers in the informal sector,
15 urban poor, rural poor, indigenous peoples and cultural communities, and
16 disaster survivors.

17 **SEC. 5. Prohibition of Strict Dress Codes in Government Frontline Service Offices. -**

18 All government institutions with frontline service offices shall be barred from implementing
19 strict dress codes that prevent citizens, especially those belonging to marginalized sectors,
20 from making inquiries or undertaking simple transactions. The said institutions shall not be
21 allowed to prescribe the types of clothing and footwear that can or cannot be worn by
22 citizens whom they are serving in their respective frontline service offices; *Provided*, That
23 the attire of the citizen acting as a client is not integral or essential to the transactions being
24 undertaken

25 **SEC. 6. Prohibition of Strict Dress Codes in Public Meetings. -** All government

26 institutions, including legislative bodies, shall be barred from implementing strict dress
27 codes that prevent citizens, especially those belonging to marginalized sectors, from
28 attending public meetings as guests, observers, or participants.

29 **SEC. 7. Administrative Liability. -** Failure to comply with this Act shall be tantamount

30 to gross neglect of duty and shall constitute grounds for administrative and disciplinary
31 sanctions against any public officer or employee who deliberately and knowingly
32 implements a strict dress code which shall prevent any citizen from accessing government
33 frontline services or attending public meetings.

34 **SEC. 8. Implementing Rules and Regulations. -** The Civil Service Commission (CSC), in

35 consultation with the Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor (PCUP) and the National
36 Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), shall promulgate the necessary rules and
37 regulations within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act.

38 **SEC. 9. Separability Clause. -** If any section or part of this Act is held

39 unconstitutional, no other section or provision shall be affected.

40 **SEC. 10. Repealing Clause. -** All provisions of existing laws, presidential decrees or

41 issuances, executive orders, letters of instruction, administrative orders, rules and

1 regulations contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed,
2 amended, or modified accordingly.

3 **SEC. 11. Effectivity.** - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete
4 publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation

5 *Approved,*