

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF THE REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 5946



**INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVES LORD ALLAN JAY VELASCO AND
KRISTINE SINGSON MEEHAN**

**AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR PROTECTION OF THE REMITTANCES OF OVERSEAS
FILIPINO WORKERS**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This measure aims to protect the rights of our Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) who have been touted as our modern-day heroes. To reciprocate their valuable contribution to our country, the state shall promote their welfare by introducing measures that will protect their hard-earned money against usurious interest rates and exorbitant fees charged by financial institutions that deplete the value of their remittances to the Philippines. This measure also aims to equip OFWs and their families with adequate financial literacy to provide possible ideas on sources of livelihood and on how to preserve or increase their savings even after their overseas employment. Under this bill, education and training on financial planning and management of finances or savings shall be provided to OFWs.

OFWs leave their families with a heavy heart to work abroad in the hopes of providing them better lives. Unknown to most Filipinos, OFWs not only provide for their families, they also contribute to our economy to a great extent through their regular remittances to the Philippines. According to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, personal remittances from OFWs have in fact reached US\$ 31.42 billion in 2021 alone. Notably, these remittances to their families in the Philippines are not possible without going through financial intermediaries, such as financial and non-bank financial institutions, which charge several fees and, usually, high remittance charges. These fees and charges pile up and eat up a substantial portion of the remittances which could have instead been received, utilized and enjoyed by their families. Imposition of high remittance charges should be stopped if we want to truly help the OFWs. Specific measures in line with this objective include: (1) providing a limit on the amount of remittance charges which may be imposed by intermediaries; (2) providing discounts on OFW remittance fees; and, (3) providing tax incentives to intermediaries providing such discounts.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate approval of the bill is earnestly sought.



REP. LORD ALLAN JAY VELASCO



REP. KRISTINE SINGSON MEEHAN

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) Remittance Protection Act.”

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – The Constitution affirms that labor is the primary social economic force and mandates the State to protect the rights of the workers and promote their welfare.

Recognizing the significant contribution of OFWs to the national economy through their foreign exchange remittances, the State shall adopt measures to protect the hard-earned money they remit home against usurious interest rates and exorbitant fees charged by financial institutions that deplete the value of their remittances and provide them and their families adequate education and training on financial literacy, such as financial planning and management of finances or savings, to help ensure a source of livelihood even after their overseas employment.

SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.* - As used in this Act:

- (a) Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) refers to a person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a state of which the person is not a citizen or on board a vessel navigating the foreign seas other than a government ship used for military or non-commercial purposes or on an installation located offshore or on the high seas; to be used interchangeably with migrant worker.
- (b) Remittance refers to the foreign exchange earnings sent home by OFWs or their employers or agents through formal channels.
- (c) Remittance Fee refers to the service fee or charge imposed by bank

and non-bank financial intermediaries for sending money of OFWs through formal channels.

SEC. 4. *Applicability of this Act.* – The provisions of this Act shall be applicable to all OFW remittances, whether voluntary or mandated by law, orders, issuances, or rules and regulations.

SEC. 5. *Discount on Remittance Fees and Tax Deduction Granted to Establishments.* – Bank and non-bank financial intermediaries may impose fees for services rendered in sending money of OFWs to their immediate family members, subject to a fifty percent (50%) discount. Bank and non-bank financial intermediaries providing discounts on remittance fees may claim the discounts granted as a tax deduction based on the cost of services rendered to OFWs. The discounts granted should be treated as an ordinary and necessary expense deductible from the gross income of the intermediary falling under the category of itemized deductions: Provided, That the total deduction from the gross income of establishments providing discounts on remittance fees shall not exceed Twenty-four thousand pesos (P24,000) per OFW every taxable year: Provided, Further, that the Secretary of Finance shall, upon the recommendation of the Commissioner of Internal Revenue, issue the revenue regulation for the purpose.

SEC. 6. *Requirement of Posting of the Peso Equivalent of the Currency to be Exchanged.* – All bank and non-bank financial intermediaries offering remittance services to OFWs shall be required to post in a conspicuous place within the establishment's premises the Philippine peso equivalent rate of the foreign currencies being transacted. The Philippine peso equivalent of the amount as remitted will be the same amount that will be received by the beneficiary of the remittance.

SEC. 7. *Prohibition from Raising Remittance Fees.* – All banks and non-bank financial intermediaries offering remittance services to OFWs are prohibited from raising their current remittance fees without prior consultation with the Department of Finance (DOF), Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), and the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA).

SEC. 8. *Other Prohibited Acts.* – The following acts are also prohibited:

- (a) Misappropriation or conversion, to the prejudice of the OFW or beneficiary, of foreign exchange remittances received in trust, or on commission, or for administration, or under any other obligation involving the duty to make delivery of, or to return the same, or by denying having received such foreign exchange remittance;
- (b) Taking of foreign exchange remittances without the consent of the OFW or beneficiary;
- (c) Imposition of remittance fees in excess of those prescribed under Section 5 of this Act;
- (d) Failure to post in a conspicuous place of the establishment the Philippine Peso rate of the foreign currency being transacted; and
- (e) Failure to conduct consultation with the DOF, BSP, and the POEA before raising remittance fees.

SEC. 9. Penalties. –

- (a) Any person who is found guilty of any of the acts described in Section 8 (a) hereof shall be punished by:
 - (i) Imprisonment of four (4) years, two (2) months and one (1) day to eight (8) years if the amount of the remittance is over Twelve thousand pesos (Php 12,000.00) but does not exceed Twenty two thousand pesos (Php 22,000.00);
 - (ii) Imprisonment of six (6) years to eight (8) years, adding one (1) year for each additional Ten-thousand pesos (Php 10,000.00), but not exceeding twenty (20) years, if the amount of the remittance is more than Twenty two thousand pesos (Php22,000.00);
 - (iii) Imprisonment of two (2) years and four (4) months to four (4) years and two (2) months, if the amount of the remittance is over Six thousand pesos (Php 6,000.00) but does not exceed Twelve thousand pesos (Php 12,000.00);
 - (iv) Imprisonment of four (4) months and one (1) day to two (2) years and four (4) months, if the amount of the remittance is over Two hundred pesos (Php 200.00) but does not exceed Six thousand pesos (Php 6,000.00); and
 - (v) Imprisonment of two (2) months and one (1) day to six (6) months, if the amount of the remittance does not exceed Two hundred pesos (Php 200.00).

- (b) Any person who is found guilty of violating Section 8 (b) of this Act shall be punished by:
 - (i) Imprisonment of six (6) years and one (1) day to ten (10) years, if the amount of the remittance is over Twelve thousand pesos (Php 12,000.00) but does not exceed Twenty-two thousand pesos (Php 22,000.00);
 - (ii) Imprisonment of ten (10) years and one (1) day to twelve (12) years, adding one (1) year for each additional Ten thousand pesos (Php 10,000.00) but not exceeding twenty (20) years, if the amount of the remittance exceeds Twenty two thousand pesos (Php22,000.00);
 - (iii) Imprisonment of two (2) years, four (4) months and one (1) day to six (6) years, if the amount of the remittance is over Six thousand pesos (Php 6,000.00) but does not exceed Twelve thousand pesos (Php 12,000.00); and
 - (iv) Imprisonment of six (6) months and one (1) day to four (4) years and two (2) months, if the amount of the remittance is over Two hundred pesos (Php 200.00) but does not exceed Six thousand pesos (Php 6,000.00); and

- (c) Any person who is found guilty of violating Section 8 (c), (d) and (e) of this Act shall be punished by an imprisonment of six (6) months and one (1) day to six (6) years and one (1) day and a fine of Fifty thousand pesos (Php 50,000.00) but not exceeding Seven hundred fifty thousand pesos (Php 750,000.00).

Aside from the criminal liability provided in the preceding paragraphs, institutions governed and supervised by the BSP found to have violated the provisions of Section 8 of this Act shall be subjected to the necessary fines, penalties, and sanctions as provided under the Republic Act No. 7653, or the “New Central Bank Act”, Republic Act No. 8791, or the “General Banking Law of 2000”, and other pertinent banking regulations.

In case the violation is committed by a corporation or partnership, the liability shall be imposed on the president, managing director or partner, general manager, or other responsible officers of the corporation or partnership.

SEC. 10. *Mandatory Financial Education for OFWs and their Families.* – The DOF, together with the BSP, POEA, and other agencies, shall ensure that a mandatory financial education program will be provided to OFWs and their families.

The program shall include instruction on financial management, budgeting, investment options and similar topics, which shall educate the OFWs and their families in the handling of their earnings and remittances.

SEC. 11. *Liability under the Revised Penal Code and Other Laws.* – Prosecution under this Act shall be without prejudice to any liability for violation of any provision of the Revised Penal Code or other laws.

SEC. 12. *Implementing Agency.* – The DOF shall, in consultation with the BSP, Department of Overseas Filipino Workers, Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, Department of Foreign Affairs, Bankers Association of the Philippines, Association of Bank Remittance Officers, Inc., Philippine Association of Foreign Exchange Dealers, Money Changers and Remittance Agents, Inc., representatives from the placement or recruitment industry, non-government organizations advocating the rights and welfare of OFWs, and other stakeholders, issue the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act, within ninety (90) days after the approval of this Act.

SEC. 13. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, executive orders, issuances, rules and regulations which may be inconsistent with any of the provisions of this Act are hereby deemed repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

SEC. 14. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is held unconstitutional or invalid, such holding shall not affect other provisions not affected thereby.

SEC. 15. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,