The movement of people across localities in the country has become one of the most significant demographic processes currently driving socioeconomic structures and activities, including human settlement arrangements, infrastructure development and sociocultural changes in certain localities both in sending and receiving areas.

The congestion of population in highly urbanized areas likewise significantly affects the resiliency of people and their communities in these localities specifically during crisis situations. As the country currently experiences the unprecedented health crisis due to the communicable COVID-19 virus, data have shown the vulnerability of congested communities because of the lack of physical distancing and as exacerbated by poor socioeconomic conditions.

Socioeconomic disparity across regions in the Philippines has become more pronounced in recent years. In 2018, three highly urbanized regions: National Capital Region (NCR), CALABARZON (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon; or Region IVA), and Central Luzon (Region III) accounted for about two-thirds (62%) of the total gross domestic product (GDP) of the entire country, while the remaining one-third was shared by the rest of the 14 regions. This condition reflects a highly unequal and inequitable socioeconomic development across regions in the country. With the concentration of economic growth in highly urbanized regions, relatively poorer regions are left out of national development. Interestingly, the heightened economic
productivity in the three urbanized regions coincides with the high level of population size in these areas.

Recognizing that population congestion in a certain locality enhances the vulnerability of the poor families, women, children, older persons and adolescents to emerging pandemic or epidemic and other crisis situations caused by other factors such as natural disasters; and that congestion and crowding in highly urbanized areas is primarily caused by unmanaged internal migration, the passage of this measure is aims to:

1. attain equitable voluntary spatial distribution of its population and strengthen resiliency of families and communities by nudging urban population to return and be reintegrated in their areas of origin within the context of informed choice and voluntarism;

2. influence population movement within the context of human rights and sustainable and inclusive socioeconomic development;

3. attain an inclusive regional development to nudge population in rural areas to stay and productively contribute to the development of their communities; and

4. mitigate push factors in their home localities and support migrants who are willing to return back and be reintegrated in their area of origin through viable and sustainable socioeconomic opportunities and environment.

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

SHARON S. GARIN
AAMBIS-Owa Party-list
AN ACT

INSTITUTING A BALIK PROBINSYA PROGRAM AND OTHER STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS FOR MANAGING INTERNAL MIGRATION FOR INCLUSIVE REGIONAL AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES DURING CRISIS SITUATIONS

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

Section 1. Title. This Act shall be known as the "Balik Probinsya Program Act of 2020."

Section 2. Declaration of Policy. The State shall guarantee and foster the constitutional right of every Filipino to liberty of abode and of changing the same within the limits prescribed by law and the right to travel except in the interest of national security, public safety, or public health, as may be provided by law.

The State shall also foster and protect the right of individuals to sustainable and inclusive development and shall continuously build their capacities to increase their share in the fruits of socioeconomic progress ensuring that no one is left behind.

Section 3. Definition of Terms. For purposes of this Act, the following terms and concepts shall have their corresponding meanings:

(a) Highly urbanized cities – refers to cities or localities with at least 200,000 inhabitants and with an annual income of at least 50 million pesos based on 1991 constant prices, as certified by the city treasurer.
(b) Inclusive development – refers to the development or economic growth distributed fairly and equitably across society and which creates opportunities for all (Organization of Economic Co-operation for Development [OECD]);

(c) Internal migration – refers to a form of geographic or spatial mobility of people involving a change of usual residence within a country (region, province, municipality, city) during a specified period of observation (PSA, 2017);

(d) Migrant – pertains to the person who moved from one geographic or political area to another involving a change in usual residence during a specified period of observation (PSA, 2017);

(e) Migration - the form of geographic or spatial mobility of people involving a change of usual residence between clearly defined geographic or political units (such as country, region, province, city or municipality) during a specified period or observation for a reason such as economic, social, political and cultural (PSA, 2017);

(f) Population management – refers to interventions that aim to attain population outcomes (e.g. population size, age-sex composition, and spatial distribution) that are consistent and facilitative of socio-economic development;

(g) Reintegration – refers to the process of integrating someone back into society or community where he/she originally belong;

(h) Return migration – pertain to the voluntary and involuntary return of migrants or people to their place of origin;

(i) Spatial distribution of population – refers to the dispersion or distribution of population in certain geographic or administrative areas;

(j) Sub-urban areas - is a mixed-use or residential area, existing either as part of a city or urban area or as a separate residential community within commuting distance of a city.

**Section 4. Instituting and Implementing an Integrated and Sustainable Balik Probinsya Program.** There shall be a Balik Probinsya Program which generally aims to reduce the vulnerability of congested urban localities especially during pandemic and crisis situations and consequently promotes more equitable population spatial distribution and regional socioeconomic development. It shall have the following specific objectives:

(a) facilitate and promote return migration or reintegration of urban population to their area or origin to prevent congestion in highly urbanized areas and mitigate their vulnerability to pandemic and other crisis situations;
(b) establish mechanisms for viable and sustainable reintegration of migrants or families from urban areas into their area of origin or into relocation communities outside highly urbanized areas which shall include access to livelihood, employment, housing and human settlement and social services and maintaining a desirable degree of quality of life;

(c) engage and establish collaborative framework for effective cooperation and partnership between and among public and private institutions to support the establishment and sustainability of mechanisms and communities for viable and effective reintegration of migrants or urban residents; and

(d) institute and implement other effective strategies for mitigating the vulnerabilities of congested localities during crisis situations caused by epidemic or natural disasters.

Section 5. Balik Probinsya Program Strategies. The Balik Probinsya Program shall prioritize socioeconomically poor families in the highly urbanized cities who are willing to return to their province of origin. The program shall be implemented as an integrated population management and socioeconomic development strategy.

The reintegration strategy shall be pursued through: a) voluntary return of individuals and families to their area of origin or, b) systematic voluntary relocation of beneficiaries to a built-up human settlement or communities with sustainable living and working environment with consent and well-coordinated planning with host localities.

The Program shall have the following specific strategies or program components:

(a) Provision of financial and logistics support for transportation and physical transfer of urban residents to areas of origin or sub-urban communities. This shall include the provision of necessary support to facilitate the physical transfer of individuals and/or families to areas of origin or sub-urban communities identified as relocation site.

(b) Provision of conditional cash transfer or subsidies for the transition period. All individuals and families qualified and enrolled in the Program shall be provided with conditional cash transfer for their survival and adjustment until they are fully reintegrated in their new communities. Subsidies may be in the form of cash payouts or food or cash for work programs.

(c) Ensuring access to education, health, and other social services. Mechanisms to link and ensure access of program beneficiaries to education, health, and other basic social services in the communities into which they shall be reintegrated shall be established and sustained. Financial and technical support to host or receiving local government units (LGUs) shall be provided
for this purpose. Such services shall then be eventually integrated in local
development strategies.

(d) Ensuring livelihood and employment opportunities and subsidies.
Subsidies for livelihood and support to employment or income generating
activities shall be provided to beneficiaries. Arrangements for this shall be
made prior to relocation to ensure that the target beneficiaries shall not be
prompted to return to the cities. Subsidies of livelihood and employment may
include, but not limited to, financial loans for micro or small-scale enterprise
or business or livelihood activities that are implemented in a systematic and
effective manner. This shall also be pursued through partnership and
collaboration between LGUs and private business institutions within the
relocation area.

(e) Construction of viable local communities, economies, and human
settlements for relocation of poor families from the cities. An
integrated and sustainable human settlement program for Balik Probinsya
beneficiaries shall be developed and implemented. Such human settlement
strategy shall be integrated within the mainstream of socioeconomic
development within the host locality such that access to livelihood and
economic opportunities, social services (i.e. health, education, nutrition, and
similar services), cultural development, and other services that are needed for
integrated human development shall be ensured. Priority relocation sites shall
be in the suburban areas to maintain its linkage with the cities for its
interdependent economic support. Financial support, incentives, and technical
assistance to LGUs participating in the relocation and human settlement
program for beneficiaries from the cities shall be provided with adequate
financial appropriation.

(f) Addressing the push factors of internal migration to the cities and
urban areas. To address the root causes and factors that push people to
migrate to the cities, a long-term intervention such as integrated population
management and poverty reduction strategy shall be instituted and
implemented. This shall include the intensive implementation of family
planning program among the poor to reduce intergenerational poverty,
interdependent urban-rural development particularly to support agricultural
development in the rural areas, and evidence-based regulation of internal
migration and settlements especially in hazardous areas in the cities.

(g) Setting-up of a Regional and Provincial Balik Probinsya Centers. A
Balik Probinsya Center shall be set-up and sustained to provide information
and necessary referral services to beneficiaries and prospective migrants and
other stakeholders. The Center shall be set-up and operated by regional and
provincial local population offices in the country.
(h) **Setting-up an internal migration information or registry system.** An administrative information system that tracks population movement at the barangay or community level shall be established and used for the Balik Probinsya and other relevant interventions including the development of crisis response mechanisms. This internal information system shall have the capability to register in- and out-migrants within the community which shall be protected with existing policies and laws on data privacy.

**Section 5. Equitable Redistribution of Socioeconomic Activities and Development.** National and regional socioeconomic and infrastructure planning shall review current policies and strategies to ensure that economic activities are equitably distributed across regions and localities. Based on local zoning policies and existing development spatial strategies, areas and strategies for economic development shall be planned and properly distributed across localities within the province, region, and country. Incentive and support mechanism to businesses and participating private institutions shall be provided.

**Section 6. Incentive System for Relocation of Investments to Countryside or Suburban Areas.** To motivate the private sector to relocate their investments in the countryside and suburban areas there shall be an incentive system for participating institutions such as, but not limited to tax rationalization, financial subsidies, and other administrative support for viable businesses and economic enterprises and investments;

**Section 7. National and Regional Balik Probinsya Medium-Term Action Plan.** A national and regional Balik Probinsya inter-agency and multisectoral medium-term plan shall be formulated to guide the implementation of various component strategies of the program at various levels. The plan shall be integrated as part of the Regional and Provincial Development Plans and approved by the concerned Provincial Governor and Sanggunian Panlalawigan. Implementation will be managed by the provincial and city governments and to be supported by local population offices.

**Section 8. Interagency Committee for the Balik Probinsya Program.** To plan and ensure the implementation of the Balik Probinsya Program, the existing Board of Commissioners of the Commission on Population and Development (POPCOM) consisting of the following members and per Presidential Decree (PD) No. 79, PD 1204 and Executive Order 160 shall be mobilized as an interagency committee for the program:

- (a) The Secretary of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) as the Chairperson;
- (b) The Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD);
- (c) The Secretary of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG);
- (d) The Secretary of the Department of Health (DOH);
- (e) The Secretary of the Department of Agriculture (DA);
(f) The Secretary of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR);
(g) The Secretary of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI);
(h) The Secretary of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE);
(i) The Secretary of the Department of Education (DepEd);
(j) The Secretary of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH);
(k) The Director of the University of the Philippines Population Institute (UPPI);
and
(l) Three (3) private sector representatives.

The following relevant agencies shall be new members of the POPCOM Board of Commissioners with voting rights:

(a) The Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR);
(b) The Secretary of the Department of Human Settlement and Urban Development (DSSHUD);
(c) The Secretary of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM);
(d) The Chief Minister of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao;
(e) The Chairperson of the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA); and

The following shall likewise serve as ex-officio member of the BOC during meetings related to the implementation of this Act:

(a) The Executive Director of the Commission on Population and Development (POPCOM).
(b) Chairpersons of the following Congressional Committees
   1. Senate Committee on Health and Demography;
   2. Senate Committee on Urban Planning, Housing and Resettlement;
   3. HOR Committee on Housing and Urban Development; and
   4. HOR Committee on Population and Family Relations.

Other relevant agencies shall be invited as resource persons as needed. A Technical Working Group shall likewise be created consisting of designated technical staff from the agency members to provide technical support to the Committee.

The POPCOM shall continue to provide Secretariat support to the interagency committee for the program. For this purpose, the POPCOM shall determine the necessary additional staffing complement needed for the implementation of the Program and shall be integrated in their annual budget.

Section 9. Additional Functions of the POPCOM Board of Commissioners. For purposes of this Act, the POPCOM Board of Commissioners, in addition to their functions under PD 79 and other relevant issuances, shall perform the following roles and functions:
(a) Provide overall policy and technical guidance and direction in the implementation of the strategies of the Balik Probinsya Program;

(b) Define the role and responsibilities of member agencies in the implementation of this Act and deputize other relevant agencies, as necessary;

(c) Steer the formulation and implementation of the national, regional, and provincial Balik Probinsya Action Plan;

(d) Generate and mobilize needed resources for the implementation of the program;

(e) Resolve emerging policy and program issues and concerns; and

(f) Recommend policies to the executive and legislative department for the enhancement of the program.

Section 10. Authority to Receive Donations and/or Grants. – The POPCOM is hereby authorized to accept grants, contributions, donations, endowments, bequests, or gifts in cash, or in kind from local and foreign sources in support of the development and implementation of Balik Probinsya plan and strategies: Provided, That in case of donations from foreign governments, acceptance thereof shall be subject to prior clearance and approval of the President of the Philippines upon recommendation of the Secretary of Foreign Affairs: Provided, further, That such donations shall not be used to fund personal services expenditures and other operating expenses of the Commission.

Section 11. Funding Allocation for Balik Probinsya Program. – All relevant government agencies and local government units (LGUs) shall allocate from their annual appropriation adequate funds for the formulation, development and implementation of relevant strategies and activities to support the implementation of this Act. The Balik Probinsya Program shall be funded through Program Convergence Budgeting (PCB) to ensure complementation of agency activities. The PCB process shall be coordinated by NEDA through POPCOM.

Section 11. Joint Congressional Oversight Committee. – There is hereby created a Joint Congressional Oversight Committee to monitor the implementation of this Act. The Oversight Committee shall be composed of five (5) Senators and five (5) Representatives to be appointed by the Senate President and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, respectively. The Oversight Committee shall be co-chaired by a Senator and a Representative to be designated by the Senate President and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, respectively. Its funding requirement shall be charged against the appropriations of Congress.

Section 12. Annual Report. – The POPCOM shall submit to the President and to both Houses of Congress, not later than March 30 of every year following the effectivity of this Act, or upon the request of the Congressional Oversight Committee, a report giving a detailed account of the status of the implementation of this Act, a progress report on the implementation of the National Balik Probinsya Plan and recommend legislation, where applicable and necessary. Regional and Provincial/City Population
Offices shall submit annual progress reports on the implementation of their respective action plans to POPCOM within the first quarter of the following year.

**Section 13. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** The expanded POPCOM Board of Commissioners, in consultation with other relevant agencies and stakeholders from public and private sector, shall formulate and issue within one hundred twenty (120) working days upon the effectivity of this Act, the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this policy.

**Section 14. Appropriations.** – The sum of One Billion Pesos (Php1,000,000,000.00) is hereby appropriated as initial operating fund. The sum shall be sourced from the appropriate sources. Thereafter, the amount necessary to effectively carry out the provisions of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

**Section 15. Repealing Clause.** All laws, decrees, orders, ordinances, rules and regulations or parts thereof inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

**Section 16. Separability Clause.** If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or otherwise invalid, the validity of the other provisions shall not be affected thereof.

**Section 17. Effectivity.** This shall take effect fifteen (15) days after publication in at least 4 two (2) newspapers of general circulation.