Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Resolution No. 844

Introduced by
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Representative, Trade Union Congress Party

A RESOLUTION
DIRECTING THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON OVERSEAS WORKERS AFFAIRS TO
CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON COVID-19 ON-SITE
ASSISTANCE, REPATRIATION, AND REINTEGRATION OF OFWS BOTH LAND-
BASED AND SEA-BASED, IN VIEW OF THE NEED FOR SEAMLESS
COORDINATION AMONG CONCERNED GOVERNMENT AGENCIES SUCH AS THE
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (DFA) AND THE DEPARTMENT OF
LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT (DOLE) THROUGH THE PHILIPPINE OVERSEAS
LABOR OFFICE (POLO), OVERSEAS WORKERS' WELFARE ADMINISTRATION
(OWWA) AND PHILIPPINE OVERSEAS EMPLOYMENT ADMINISTRATION
(POEA), AND NEED FOR AN OVERSEAS EMPLOYMENT PLAN IN THE LIGHT OF
MASSIVE JOB LOSS WORLDWIDE

WHEREAS, by end of March over 100 countries are in either full or partial
lockdown as the most common control approach worldwide to flatten the curve
of transmission of COVID-19 or SARS-COV-2 affecting billions of people from Asia
and the Pacific, Europe, Americas and Sub-Saharan African countries;¹

WHEREAS, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Department of Labor and
Employment data, as collated by the POEA, shows that as of April 22, 2020, the
number of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) affected by the virus has reached
1,114 with 159 deaths and there are 707 stranded Filipinos in various parts of the
world, and still counting;

WHEREAS, while several swift and positive interventions on-site to assist our
OFWs were noted, cases of mishandling such as the verbal abuse of OFW Joy

¹ April 06, 2020. Coronavirus: The world in lockdown in maps and charts. Available at:
https://bbc.com/
Parafina by an OWWA officer in Dubai, the POLO initiation/prosecution for
deportation of OFW Elanel Egot Ordidor in Taichung, Taiwan for alleged crime of
cyber libel, and recently, the physical and verbal abuse of OFW Marvin Agdigos
inside the Philippine Consulate in Jeddah;

WHEREAS, it is worth reiterating that these cases show grave disconnect with the
mandate of the personnel of DOLE POLO as provided in Administrative Order No.
168, Series of 2013; or the Manual of Operations of Philippine Overseas Labor
Office (POLO), implicitly states that it is DOLE’s “overseas operating arm in the
implementation of Philippine labor policies and programs for the protection of the
rights and promotion of the welfare of Filipinos working abroad, and the functions
and responsibilities of POLO include: 1) ensuring the protection and the rights and
promote the welfare and interests of overseas Filipino migrant workers and assist
them on all problems arising out of employer-employee relationship; and (2)
perform other functions as may be directed by the Secretary of Labor and
Employment;”

WHEREAS, on the seafarers plight, the TUCP-Partylist Representative and
HCOWA chairperson have first-hand experiences of being tossed from one agency
to another with respect to stranded Filipino seafarers at Dormitel, United Nations
Avenue in Manila, the repatriation of stranded seafarers in Cebu and other cases,
these emphasized the need for empathy and seamless coordination among the
concerned government agencies and the local government units to facilitate the
return of OFWs to their respective homes without discrimination or being left on
their own;

WHEREAS, other than the one-time financial assistance of USD200.00 or
P10,000.00 for displaced OFWs, or DOLE-AKAP for OFWs, or the usual
reintegration package of maximum of P20,000.00 for returning OFWs, no
assistance or an Overseas Employment Plan has been discussed or presented on
jobs that are available to displaced OFWs locally or overseas in post COVID-19
scenario in the light of massive job loss worldwide;

WHEREAS, it should be noted that overseas jobs may no longer be available for
our OFWs, in fact the International Labour Organization (ILO) has forewarned that
the COVID-19 crisis is expected to wipe out 6.7 per cent of working hours globally
in the second quarter of 2020 – equivalent to 195 million full-time workers, and
large reductions are foreseen in the Arab States (8.1 per cent, equivalent to 5
million full-time workers), Europe (7.8 per cent, or 12 million full-time workers)
and Asia and the Pacific (7.2 per cent, 125 million full-time workers) while the

2 http://ilab.dole.gov.ph/app/webroot/js/ckfndr/nj/files/AO%20168-
13%20Manual%20of%20Operations,%20Policies%20&%20Guidelines%20for%20the%20POL
O.pdf

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most at risk sectors include accommodation and food services, manufacturing, retail, and business and administrative activities.\textsuperscript{3}

\textbf{WHEREAS}, as jobs overseas are disappearing due to the global economic slowdown brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an urgent need not only to ensure that on-site assistance are expeditiously extended to our OFWs and their rights are protected, including their right to repatriation and reintegration, if called for by circumstances, but more importantly, to ensure, in aid of legislation, the readiness of an Overseas Employment Plan under the new normal.

\textbf{NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED}, by the House of Representatives to direct the Committee on Overseas Workers Affairs to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the implementation of COVID-19 on-site assistance, repatriation and reintegration of OFWs both land-based and sea-based, coordination among concerned government agencies such as the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and Department of Labor and Employment through the Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO), Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) and Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), and the readiness of an Overseas Employment Plan.

Adopted,

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RAYMOND DEMOCRITO C. MENDOZA
TUCP Partylist

\textsuperscript{3}April 07, 2020. ILO: COVID-19 causes devastating losses in working hours and employment. Available at: https://www.ilo.org.