Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION No. 1065

Introduced by
BAYAN MUNA Representatives FERDINAND R. GAITE,
CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE and EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT
ACT TEACHERS Party-List Representative FRANCIS L. CASTRO,
GABRIELA Women’s Party Representative ARLENE D. BROSAS
and KABATAAN Party-List Representative SARAH JANE I. ELAGO

RESOLUTION
URGING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES THROUGH THE COMMITTEE
OF OVERSEAS WORKERS AFFAIRS TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF
LEGISLATION, ON THE INCONSISTENCIES OF GOVERNMENT FIGURES
REGARDING OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS AFFECTED BY COVID-19 AND
RECOMMEND URGENT MEASURES TO STREAMLINE DATA REPORTING

WHEREAS, on April 26, 2020, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) through its
40 Philippine Overseas Labor Offices (POLOs) across the globe reported that a total of 89,436
OFWs were displaced from their jobs mostly on a no-work, no-pay status due to lockdowns and
economic restrictions in host countries;

WHEREAS, by June 2, DOLE reported that 343,551 OFWs were affected by the pandemic. The
labor agency further claimed that at least 200,000 affected OFWS refused to go home. On July 8,
DOLE further revised this figure to 400,000 worldwide citing an additional 80,000 OFWs who
have lost their jobs and therefore require repatriation. Earlier on June 4, DOLE Secretary Silvestre
Bello III estimated that around 1 million OFWs might lose their jobs abroad;

WHEREAS, the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) on April 26 initially
reported receiving 233,015 requests for assistance under the DOLE-AKAP program. This became
the basis of an additional Php1.5B top-up on May to the social amelioration fund for OFWs to
increase target beneficiaries to 250,000 OFWs. This data was later on updated to 572,442 as
applications for the cash assistance program increased two-fold in the succeeding months;

WHEREAS, on June 2, OWWA’s official figures indicated that 95,000 stranded OFWs have
expressed intent to return home. Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) data however suggested
that 167,626 OFWs still require repatriation as of June 26;

WHEREAS, according to the latest figures from OWWA, 95,702 OFWs have been repatriated
so far by the government. This is in contrast to data released by the Department of Foreign Affairs

2 https://manilastandard.net/mobile/article/325127
3 https://globalnation.inquirer.net/189333/dole-chief-covid-19-affected-jobs-of-over-400000-ofws
4 https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1286124/1-million-ofws-may-lose-jobs-dueto-covid-19-pandemic-dole
(DFA) as of July 13 that a total of 82,057 OFWs have been repatriated from 60 countries across the globe 38,308 of whom are sea-based while 43,749 are land-based migrant workers. Earlier on July 8, Department of Defense (DoD) Secretary and National Task Force against COVID-19 Chair Delfin Lorenzana announced that 75,895 OFWs displaced by the pandemic have been repatriated and were able to return to their hometowns⁶;

WHEREAS, based on abovementioned reports, government data regarding the situation of OFWs affected by the pandemic comes from multiple agencies such as DOLE, DFA, OWWA and DoD. Moreover, the data reported by these agencies vary greatly making it difficult for both policymakers and responders to get an accurate picture on the situation of OFWs at any given time;

WHEREAS, based on numerous reports from OFWs abroad seeking assistance from Philippine embassies and POLOs in their host countries, Philippine officials have not been able to properly acknowledge repatriation and assistance requests sent by distressed OFWs. As a result, many stranded OFWs are uncertain whether they are counted in official figures released by the State. This casts serious doubts on the accuracy of data reported by these government agencies and poses serious challenges in the ability of relevant agencies and other branches of government to respond accordingly;

WHEREAS, in order for Congress to formulate laws that can effectively respond to the needs of our migrant workers, it is crucial to get a realistic approximation of OFWs affected by the pandemic. Critical to the implementation of policies that can cater to the urgent needs of Filipino workers is the foresight to know how many are expected to return and how many are affected ideally coming from the most credible data source possible. With conflicting data from different government agencies and inconsistencies in reporting, it has become difficult to get an accurate picture of OFWs affected worldwide. Moreover, inaccurate data reporting makes it harder to measure progress on government programs such as social amelioration and repatriation for OFWs;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the House of Representatives, through the Committee on Overseas Workers Affairs, to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the inconsistencies of government figures regarding overseas Filipino workers affected by COVID-19 and recommend urgent measures to streamline data reporting.

Adopted,

[Signature]
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Bayan Muna Partylist

REP. CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE  
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REP. EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT  
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