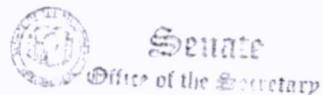


SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Second Regular Session)



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SENATE

P. S. RES. NO. 452

RECEIVED BY:

Introduced by **SENATOR LEILA M. DE LIMA**

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE NEWLY-LAUNCHED IDENTIFICATION CARD OF OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS (OFW ID) WITH THE END IN VIEW OF ESTABLISHING MORE TRANSPARENT GUIDELINES FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION

WHEREAS, under Article XIII, Section 3, the Constitution provides that “[t]he State shall afford full protection to labor, local and overseas, organized and unorganized, and promote full employment and equality of employment for all. Toward this end, the State shall provide adequate and timely social, economic and legal services to Filipino migrant workers”;

WHEREAS, under Republic Act (R.A.) No. 8042, also known as the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995, as amended by R.A. No. 9422 and R.A. No. 10022, the government is mandated “to ensure that the rights and interests of distressed overseas Filipinos, in general, and Filipino migrant workers, in particular, documented or undocumented, are adequately protected and safeguarded”;

WHEREAS, Rule IX, Section 2 of the Rules and Regulations Governing the Recruitment and Employment of Land-based Overseas Workers, issued by the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), provides that “[d]eparting overseas Filipino workers may secure overseas employment certificate at the labor assistance centers under such circumstances as may be determined by the Administration,” and that “POEA shall cease issuing [Overseas Employment Certificates (OECs)] as soon as the computerized ID system is implemented”;

WHEREAS, OFWs regard the system of OEC issuance as an unnecessary burden which requires them to spend their precious and limited vacation time queuing in POEA centers just to renew their OEC and claim travel tax refunds every time they return to the Philippines;

WHEREAS, the red tape and bureaucracy associated with the issuance of OECs have led to “even more confusion, even longer waiting time, and [that] some had been taken advantage of by fixers who charged them way more than what the OEC costs”;¹

WHEREAS, on 12 July 2017, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) has launched a new Identification Card of Overseas Filipino Workers (or OFW ID) to replace the OEC;

WHEREAS, the DOLE’s decision to scrap the OEC, by virtue of Resolution No. 12, passed by the Governing Board of the POEA on 4 August 2016, was also meant to streamline the government processes and eliminate the long queues that have become common in our international airports;

WHEREAS, DOLE Secretary Silvestre Bello III announced that the new OFW ID, also referred to as “iDOLE” (ID of the DOLE), is the Duterte administration’s “best gift to OFWs” because it rationalizes and consolidates into one all other membership cards for Social Security System, Pag-ibig Fund, Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth), Philippine Post, and Philippine Development Bank, at no additional cost to OFWs, especially to the new hires;

WHEREAS, Secretary Bello assured that the fee to acquire the new OFW ID/iDOLE amounting to a total of ₱701 per ID, of which ₱501 will be charged to defray the cost of plastic card and another ₱200 for the delivery, shall be shouldered by the OFW’s foreign employer;

WHEREAS, many OFWs, however, are apprehensive that such proposed payment scheme by the Duterte administration for the acquisition of the new OFW ID/iDOLE would, in practice, be passed on by their recruitment agencies, acting on behalf of their foreign employers, to the OFWs who are already heavily burdened with all the fees and costs of their recruitment application;

WHEREAS, DOLE has also announced it is seriously contemplating replacing the existing passport for OFWs with the newly-launched OFW ID/iDOLE, subject to consultation with other concerned government departments and agencies, notably the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Bureau of Immigration (BI);

WHEREAS, news reports² disclosed that the lack of implementing guidelines on the new OFW ID/iDOLE, which has a validity of two years, has left many OFWs, not only wary that the cost would ultimately be passed on to them, but also, and most importantly, confused regarding its benefits and functions;

WHEREAS, the seemingly rushed implementation of the new OFW ID/iDOLE without the benefit of proper public consultations, not only among concerned government departments and agencies, but also, and most importantly, among

¹ OFWs in Hong Kong call for scrapping of OEC. *GMA News Online*. 31 January 2017. Retrieved from: <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/pinoyabroad/597742/ofws-in-hong-kong-call-for-scrapping-of-oc/story/>

² Hapal, Don Kevin. Lack of Guidelines on newly launched OFW ID causes confusion. *Rappler*. 17 July 2017. Retrieved from: <http://www.rappler.com/nation/175894-ofw-id-confusion-guidelines>

legitimate organized OFW groups and associations of recruitment agencies is a matter of significant concern to our OFW countrymen and their families;

WHEREAS, our OFWs, whose annual foreign currency remittances have continually helped in keeping our country's economy afloat, should be protected from efforts and schemes that, while hailing them as our modern-day heroes, surreptitiously make them the usual milking cows, not only of government offices, but also of private entities with vested interests;

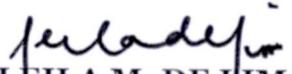
WHEREAS, Congress should ensure that the new OFW ID/iDOLE, which seems to serve the same functions as that of the old OEC (which only costs between ₱100 or ₱200), would not be used as another money-making scheme that was hastily hatched to benefit some government officials in cohorts with some quarters or private business groups;

WHEREAS, Congress should also scrutinize how the new OFW ID/iDOLE would benefit the OFWs estimated between 13 and 14 million, and ensure that the basic sensitive personal information contained in the new identification card would be adequately protected and not land in the full control and management of some sinister groups that have vested business and political interests;

WHEREAS, our government should stop pulling the legs of our hapless OFWs by requiring them to obtain the new OFW ID/iDOLE to serve as their exit permit, as well as their badge to avail of the tax exemptions granted to them by law, because it not only duplicates, but also is costlier than, the OEC and may be used to siphon the OFWs' hard-earned money into the pockets of some corrupt individuals;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, as it is hereby resolved, to direct the appropriate Senate Committee to conduct an immediate inquiry, in aid of legislation, into the newly-launched identification card of overseas Filipino workers (OFW ID) with the end in view of establishing more transparent guidelines for its implementation.

Adopted,


LEILA M. DE LIMA