

HON. WILTON T. KHO
Chairperson
Committee on Rural Development
House of Representatives
Quezon City

Dear **Representative KHO**,

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) **supports House Bills Numbered 1006, 1788, 1957, and 5034** entitled, “*An Act Providing for a Rural Employment Assistance Program and Appropriating Funds Therefor*” or the “**Rural Employment Assistance Program Act**”, introduced by Representatives Marlyn L. Primicias-Agabas, Luis Raymund “LRay” F. Villafuerte Jr. et al., Yedda Marie K. Romuladez, and PM Vargas, respectively, that seek to develop, rebuild, and rehabilitate livelihood assets destroyed or lost due to natural disasters and address the growing unemployment rate in the Philippines, to uplift the lives of workers and their families.

The DSWD believes that the passage of these bills can be an instrument to structural transformation, allowing people in the countryside to rise above the poverty line.

To contribute to the bills’ enhancement, the DSWD respectfully recommends the following:

1. General Comments

- 1.1. To consolidate the bills into one.
- 1.2. To include the Department of Agriculture (DA) since the target beneficiaries, seem to be farmers who seemed to have lost their products or are in dire need of assistance and seemed to have faced an issue with their farmland and/or products.
- 1.3. To consider deleting “Unskilled Labor” in the provision to avoid any negative insinuation. Instead, explore a more neutral and perhaps positive term to describe these types of workers.
- 1.4. To expand the coverage of the proposed bills not only for the availability of short-term employment assistance that would only last 45 days but not more than 90 days. The sustainability of livelihood and or employment assistance is a crucial strategy for effective interventions.

This shall not be used directly or indirectly to circumvent the right to security of tenure of government employees.

2. Sec. 3. Rural Employment Assistance Program

- 2.1. To increase number per household that can be able to participate in this assistance program or to link one of the adult members to a sustainable employment program.
- 2.2. To include not only the Local Government Unit (LGU), but also with other government agencies such as Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and other private enterprises in coordination with the DSWD as they are instrumental in the successful implementation of the program.
- 2.3. To indicate in the provisions that beneficiaries subject to livelihood under this program do not have an employee-employer relationship with neither the DSWD nor the LGU, and therefore cannot avail of the protection of employees under the Labor code.

3. Sec. 4. Definition of Terms

To define the words, "Qualified Head of Family" and "Qualified Poor Family", for clarity.

4. Sec. 5. Qualifications for Availment of Employment Assistance

- 4.1. To develop an evaluation and monitoring tool, which is critical in the course of preventing unscrupulous individuals who will take advantage of the program.
- 4.2. To include distressed Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in the qualifications.

5. Sec. 5. Rate of Assistance under HBN 1957

- 5.1. To remove the last sentence stating entitlement to social security such as PhilHealth, Pag-IBIG, and Social Security System since the beneficiaries of the Rural Employment Assistance Plan are volunteers per Section 3, which means that entitlement to payment of mandatory social security dues is not applicable due to non-employee-employer relationship.
- 5.2. To consider an inclusive and comprehensive-based approach leading to a sustainable implementation of the REAP program.

6. Sec. 9. Appropriations

- 6.1. To detail this section in crafting the IRR since the DSWD has its own internal policies in accepting donations in different circumstances.
- 6.2. To charge the funding against the Internal revenue of LGUs for the implementation of the bills.
- 6.3. For the LGU to conduct the assessment in the rural areas instead of DSWD.

7. Sec. 10. Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR)

To include other agencies in the formulation of the IRR such as but not limited to the DOLE, DA, Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Budget and Management (DBM), League of Municipalities/Cities/Provinces.

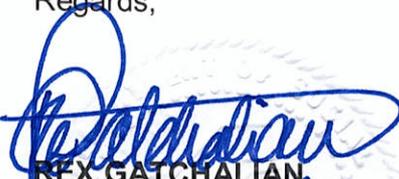
8. Other Comment

To consider the DSWD's MC, No. 04, Series of 2021 or the *"Enhanced Guidelines on the Cash and Food for Work, Training and Caring (C/FFW/W/T/C) of the Department for Disaster and Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM)"* in the consolidation and finalization of the proposed measures.

This is being submitted for the Chairperson's consideration.

Thank you.

Regards,


REX GATCHALIAN
Secretary
Date: FEB 28 2023

