

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 2330

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Introduced by **REP. ANICETO D. BERTIZ, III**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) and prospective OFWs spend significant amounts of time and resources for the application and renewal of their passports. It takes 2 to 3 months to secure an appointment with the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and an additional 15-25 days for its release and issuance. If we take into account the period for securing requirements such as birth certificate from the National Statistics Office (NSO) and clearances from the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) or the Philippine National Police (PNP), an applicant would have to wait for a minimum of four months for the release of his/her passport.

Passport application or renewal also entail substantial costs. Government fees covering passport, birth certificate, and law enforcement clearances amounts to at least P1,395.00. The applicant would have to spend additional funds for transportation not to mention the loss of income that they have to endure while lining up to get all the necessary documents.

The number of OFWs has steadily increased. In 2015, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) reported that 1.8 million OFWs were deployed. The POEA estimates that 6,092 OFWs leave the country every day. There are indications that the number will continue to rise as additional labor markets are opened up in the ASEAN countries and other growth areas.

As such, long queues for passport application and renewal have become a common sight in Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) offices all over the country. President Rodrigo Duterte himself recounted during his first State of the Nation Address that he himself witnessed applicants sleeping in front of DFA offices in Davao City.

This situation is untenable for OFWs and for other applicants. If left unresolved, the queues and the waiting time will get longer and the costs shouldered by the applicant will only get higher. As it is, OFWs are already adversely affected by the waiting time since most of the Balik Manggagawa are only given two weeks to a month

of leave time by their foreign employers while they have to wait for 15 to 25 days for the release of their passports not to mention the waiting period for an appointment.

The bill amends Republic Act 8239 or the Philippine Passport Act of 1996 to increase the validity of regular passports issued to adult applicants from the current five (5) years to ten (10) years. This seeks to significantly reduce the frequency and volume of application for passport renewals. This is expected to reduce, if not eliminate, long queues at DFA offices and the waiting time for securing an appointment and release of passports. The proposed 10-year validity is in line with what is being observed in the United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Australia, to name a few.

The bill gives the DFA powers to limit the validity of a person's passport to less than 10 years if such restriction is necessary to national economic interest or political stability. This serves as a mechanism for the DFA to pro-actively deal with possible threats to the economy or to public safety.

In view of the foregoing, I urge the early approval of this bill.



ANICETO D. BERTIZ III

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Introduced by **REP. ANICETO D. BERTIZ III**

AN ACT

EXTENDING THE VALIDITY OF THE REGULAR PHILIPPINE PASSPORT ISSUED TO ADULT APPLICANTS TO TEN (10) YEARS, AMENDING FOR THIS PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8239 OR THE PHILIPPINE PASSPORT ACT OF 1996

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

SECTION 1. Section 10 of Republic Act No. 8239 is hereby amended to read as follows:

SEC. 10. *Validity.* - Regular passports issued **TO ADULT APPLICANTS** under this Act shall be valid for a period of **[five (5)] TEN (10) years, WHILE THOSE REGULAR PASSPORTS ISSUED TO MINORS SHALL BE VALID FOR A PERIOD OF FIVE (5) YEARS:** Provided, however, that the issuing authority **IN ITS DISCRETION** may **[limit] DECREASE** the period of validity **IN BOTH INSTANCES [to less than five (5) years;]** whenever in the national economic interest or political stability of the country such restriction is necessary: Provided, finally, that a new passport may be issued to replace one which validity has expired, the old passport being returned to the holder after cancellation.

SEC. 2. *Repealing Clause.* - Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or and regulation inconsistent with the provisions of this Act is hereby repealed, modified or amended accordingly.

SEC. 3. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,