Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION No. 887

Introduced by
BAYAN MUNA Representatives FERDINAND R. GAITE,
CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE and EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT

RESOLUTION
EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TO RECOMMEND THE INCREASE OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE UNDER THE
DOLE-AKAP PROGRAM FOR DISTRESSED OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS
AND FOR SIMPLE, EASY, SPEEDY, ORGANIZED AND SAFE ACCESS AND
DISTRIBUTION OF FINANCIAL AID UNDER THE PROGRAM

WHEREAS, Section 9 Article II of the 1987 Philippine Constitution affirms that “(t)he State
shall promote a just and dynamic social order that will ensure the prosperity and independence of
the nation and free the people from poverty through policies that provide adequate social services,
promote full employment, a rising standard of living, and an improved quality of life for all;”

WHEREAS, Section 18 Article II of the 1987 Philippine Constitution provides that “(t)he State
affirms labor as a primary social economic force. It shall protect the rights of workers and promote
their welfare;”

WHEREAS, Section 3 Article XIII of the 1987 Philippine Constitution affirms that “(t)he State
shall afford full protection to labor, local and overseas, organized and unorganized, and promote
full employment and equality of employment opportunities for all;”

WHEREAS, Section 2 (c) of Republic Act 8042 or the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos
Act of 1995 asserts that “(w)hile recognizing the significant contribution of Filipino migrant
workers to the national economy through their foreign exchange remittances, the State does not
promote overseas employment as a means to sustain economic growth and achieve national
development. The existence of the overseas employment program rests solely on the assurance
that the dignity and fundamental human rights and freedoms of the Filipino citizens shall not, at
any time, be compromised or violated. The State, therefore, shall continuously create local
employment opportunities and promote the equitable distribution of wealth and the benefits of
development;”

WHEREAS, for many decades, the Philippine government has relied on Overseas Filipino
Workers (OFWs) remittances to save the country’s economy. Now that the OFWs are the ones in
need of saving, it shall be imperative for our government to extend financial help to our distressed
OFWs due to the health and economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic;

WHEREAS, the Department of Labor - Abot Kamay ang Pagtulong (DOLE-AKAP) for OFWs
was announced by Philippine Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III on March 25, 2020 as a one-time
financial assistance by the Philippine government to be given to displaced OFWs – both sea-based and land-based – around the world, due to COVID-19;

WHEREAS, DOLE declared that the amount of the one-time financial assistance is Php 10,000 or $200 per beneficiary and that the allotted P1.5 billion special fund released for the program for an estimated 150,000 OFWs;”

WHEREAS, many affected OFWs proceeded to the various Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO) & Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) offices to seek for the DOLE-AKAP program but some faced negative results. It was reported that when OFW’s went to the POLO offices in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Philippine officials called the local police to disperse distressed OFWs who trooped to the Philippine Embassy in Riyadh. The OFWs were merely seeking out the US$200 financial assistance promised to them by the Duterte government through Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III. They were yelled at and harassed by embassy officials and personnel;”

WHEREAS, in another incident on April 20, 2020, the POLO in Dubai and Northern Emirates issued a public statement informing OFWs that they have temporarily suspended the acceptance of applications for the DOLE-AKAP. In the UAE alone, there is an estimated 650,000 OFWs, most of them are employees who were laid off from work, whose wages have been delayed, whose wages have been cut by 25 to 50 per cent; and who have been put under “no work, no pay” arrangements;”

WHEREAS, based on the 7th report submitted by President Rodrigo Duterte to the Joint Congressional Oversight Committee last May 11, 2020, the assistance for OFWs under CAMP-AKAP has the highest backlog among all SAPs, with 51.099% or 76,648 OFWs still without aid out of 150,000 target beneficiaries. However, the target number of beneficiaries is conservative given that an estimated 300,000 to 400,000 OFWs will be laid off or suffer pay cuts due to the pandemic;”

WHEREAS, the DOLE admitted that it would need an additional P2 billion in emergency funds to be able to service a significant portion of the 368,703 OFWs who had sought the cash aid as of May 5, 2020;”

WHEREAS, all OFWs and fellow Filipinos, whatever their visa status, as long as they are affected by the Covid-19 pandemic should be given financial assistance. Moreover, OFWs who have been laid off from work, whether staying in the host country or in the Philippines, those who have been placed under “forced unpaid leave” and “no work, no pay” arrangements and those whose wages have been cut and are delayed shall likewise be included in the DOLE-AKAP financial assistance program;”

WHEREAS, the DOLE-AKAP financial assistance shall cover women migrants who are staying in shelters, OFWs who are in quarantine or self-isolation, workers who are supposed to return to work but are stranded in the Philippines, OFW frontliners, OFW health workers who are affected by the suspension of overseas deployment of health workers and household workers who have been dismissed or who ran away because of abuses by employers;

WHEREAS, the DOLE-AKAP program shall extend financial assistance and repatriation to distressed OFWs who are stranded due to the pandemic and who desire to come home to the Philippines to be with their families and loved ones;”
NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the House of Representatives express its sense to recommend the increase of financial assistance under the DOLE-AKAP Program for distressed Overseas Filipino Workers and for simple, easy, speedy, organized and safe access and distribution of financial aid under the program.

Adapted,

REP. FERDINAND R. GAITE
Bayan Muna Partylist

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