



**Villanueva urges private companies to hire senior citizens**

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Senator Joel Villanueva has filed a bill to expand and give equal employment opportunities to senior citizens and to encourage private companies to hire the elderly.

Villanueva said "there is a need to provide opportunities for our senior citizens who are still able and willing to obtain gainful employment and wish to continue to become economically active and productive during their golden years."

"This bill will further support and promote equal work opportunities for our senior citizens," Villanueva added.

Senate Bill No. 360 will amend Republic Act No. 9994, otherwise known as the expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010, mandating the Department of Labor and Employment to provide a matching and employment facilitation services for senior citizens.

Furthermore, the bill provides the following: Increases the allowable deduction from gross income of private entities that will employ senior citizens as employees from 15 percent to 25 percent of the total amount paid as salaries and wages, as well as trainings provided to senior citizens, in accordance with Section 34 of the National Internal Revenue Code; removes the provision that the annual income of the senior citizen should not exceed the latest poverty threshold, to encourage employers to hire senior citizens from all walks of life, as long as they are able, willing and qualified to do the job.

The bill also provides waiving of fees and charges from a senior citizen jobseeker if such fee or charge is paid in connection with the application for and the granting of licenses, proofs of identification, clearances, certificates, or other documents usually required in the course of employment; and allowing employers the flexibility to grant greater benefits or improve the working conditions and terms of employment of senior citizens beyond the minimum requirements provided under applicable laws.

"Given the foregoing, this bill will contribute to the benefits of millions of senior citizens who wish to remain economically active and productive," Villanueva said.

Based on the latest available data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) on total population by age group, as of 2015, there were 7,548,769 Filipinos aged 60 years old and above, while 4,787,586 Filipinos are aged 65 years and over, accounting for 7.5 percent and 4.7 percent of the country's total population of 100,981,437 persons, respectively.

The Philippine Institute for Developmental Studies (PIDS) noted that the Philippines will "join the ranks of countries with aging population" by 2032 (or at least 7 percent of the population is aged 65 or above) and "eventually become an aged society" by 2069 (or at least 14 percent of the population is aged 65 or above).

Nonetheless, in 2015, PSA data show that among the senior citizens, 42.1 percent or 3.17 million are still gainful workers, with 1.19 million who are skilled agricultural, forestry, and fishery workers (37.7percent), 499,000 as workers engaged in elementary occupations (15.8 percent), and 427,000 as managers (13.5 percent).