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## Bill offering incentives for hiring seniors filed

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A BILL offering incentives to companies that hire older workers has been filed in the Senate, with perks like expanded deductions on the salaries of seniors and training expenses incurred on such workers.

“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,” Senator Emmanuel Joel J. Villanueva said in a statement on Thursday.

“This bill will further support and promote equal work opportunities for our senior citizens,” he added.

Senate Bill 360, which seeks to amend Republic Act 9994 or the expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010, increases the allowable deduction from gross income of private entities that employ senior citizens to 25% from 15% on the cost of salaries and wages, as well as training provided to senior citizens.

The measure also proposes to waive fees and charges charged to senior citizen jobseekers on documents needed for hiring like licenses, proofs of identification, clearances, certificates, and others.

If passed, the bill will allow the employment of all qualified seniors, and gives employers discretion on benefits, working conditions and terms of employment for such workers beyond the minimum standards required by law.

The bill requires the Department of Labor and Employment to provide job-matching and employment facilitation services for seniors.

The Philippine Statistics Authority estimates that 7.5 million Filipinos are aged 60 and above as of 2015, with 4.8 million over 64 years old. Some 42% or 3.2 million of these age cohorts remain at work, including 1.2 million skilled agricultural, forestry, and fishery workers, 499,000 in elementary occupations, and 427,000 managers.

The Philippine Institute for Developmental Studies has projected that the Philippines will “join the ranks of countries with an aging population” by 2032 with at least 7% of the population older than 64. This percentage is expected to double by 2069, with the country eventually becoming “an aged society.”