

Comments on Senate Bill Nos. 46, 86, 137, 216, 586, 640, 720, 822 that seeks to advance
the welfare of sea-based migrant workers

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I would like to commend these various efforts to come up with a comprehensive policy for the benefit of our seafarers. Being the global top supplier of seafarers based on the 2021 report of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), it is essential to have a clear and encompassing set of policies for our seafarers and the industry.

As a researcher of labor migration, I applaud greatly the inclusion of research components in the bills such as the proposed strengthening of the research capability of the National Maritime Polytechnic in SB no 822, the creation of a research unit in the proposed National Seamen Administration in SB 720. This is very important towards understanding more deeply the situation of our seafarers, for purposes of informing the design of policies as well as their implementation. There are just some technical details that I would like to emphasize like the importance of regular data collection and standardized formats of data publication because one of the constraints for researchers like myself is the lack of regular and standardized data reporting which makes it difficult to track the trends and any progress in the situation of our migrant workers, as well as the profile of manning companies and other stakeholders.

I also commend the proposal to create information systems like the creation of National Registry of Seafarers in SB No. 822 though not only for the education and employment of seafarers but also to guide the formulation of policies and regulations. I hope that there would be data transparency so that researchers like us at PIDS can also access their data. Our statistical system is just beginning to capture our seafarers in national data collections such as in the National Migration Survey conducted by the Philippine Statistics Authority, but I hope that there would be greater importance provided to our seafarers and their families in our statistical system. Admittedly, there has not been much done in terms of research on the situation of seafarers, as far as PIDS is concerned, partly because of data constraints.

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It is crucial that in the information systems that will be built, other stakeholders in the industry are included such as but not limited to manning agencies and shipowners as it is important to assess their profile and keep track of their performances as well in the promotion of welfare and upholding the rights of our seafarers. This will provide the data for understanding the seafaring industry, again for policymaking purposes.

I know that these are details that can be suggested perhaps for the more advanced stages of the proposed measures but I just want to mention these at this point hoping that they would be spelled out in the consolidated version. Research evidence can aid in all the phases of the policy process and it is important that we continuously assess the conditions of seafarers so that we are not blind and things are closely monitored.