

NEWS RELEASE

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Brion endorses reforms in the deployment of domestic helpers

Labor Secretary Arturo D. Brion is seeking to improve the lot of household workers through a package of reforms that includes upgrading of skills of the workers, orientation course on country-specific culture and language, protective mechanisms at the job sites, obliging employers to shoulder the cost of deploying the domestic helper, and increasing the minimum salary to a level commensurate to their acquired competencies.

In upgrading the capabilities of the worker, Brion wants all applicants for domestic helper to undergo skills assessment by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). TESDA-certified workers will be issued Certificate of Competency. Domestic helpers with years experience as household workers abroad can directly go through TESDA skills assessment system.

The worker will also undergo a country-specific language and culture training to be sponsored by the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA).

The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration shall not process contracts of employment of domestic helpers without the TESDA-issued COC and the OWWA-issued certificate of completion of the orientation of country-specific language and culture.

The “no-placement-fee” policy will be deliberated by the POEA Governing Board specifically in the recruitment of domestic helpers instead of the “one-month salary placement fee”. No salary deduction onsite shall be allowed for any payment of service or placement fee.

With highly trained household workers, recruiters in the Philippines can demand higher service fees from employers, which include the placement fee that is usually asked from the worker, Brion said.

As to the upgrading of the minimum salary pegged at present at US\$200 in all countries, Brion is prepared to submit to the POEA Governing Board the same minimum wage of domestic workers in Hong Kong as the benchmark for trained and highly prepared Filipino domestic helpers.

Brion also want the Philippine Overseas Labor Offices (POLO) to network with agencies and organizations at the worksite to determine the employer’s fitness to hire domestic workers, including personal interview of the employer. The POLO and the POEA shall blacklist employers who have committed cases of abuse and

maltreatment against Filipino workers and cases of contractual breaches especially non-payment or underpayment of salaries.

The policy will require the cooperation of the host countries. Brion said he will try to convince host governments on the policy that only domestic helpers with documents processed by the POEA should be given work visas which will be stamped or released at their respective embassies and consulates in the Philippines.

Brion expressed strong support to host governments like the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which recently passed regulations imposing stricter sanctions to employers who employ workers on visit visas.

“This policy reforms will minimize departure of inexperienced, ill-trained and undocumented workers who are most prone to abuses by both recruiters and employers,” Brion said. ###