

United Filipinos in Hong Kong (UNIFIL-HK)

Submission to the Panel on Manpower of the HK Legislative Council

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Stop overcharging and underpayment, prosecute recruitment agencies and employers that violates the law.

1. Many Filipinos working in Hong Kong as household service workers are required to pass to recruitment agencies. This process was approved and included in the labor code of the Philippine's Department of Labor and Employment and implemented by the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA).
2. Many Filipino household service workers are paying the recruitment agencies both in the Philippines and Hong Kong between P50, 000 to P75, 000 pesos (HK\$10-15,000) and sometimes up to 120,000 pesos (HK\$24,000). A huge amount of money that ordinary worker doesn't have. To be able to pay the recruitment agencies, foreign domestic workers were forced to borrow money from lending companies with big interest or mortgage their properties or worst sell them.
3. According to new Philippine Overseas and Employment Agencies (POEA guidelines of 2006), all household service workers need not to pay the recruitment agencies. Any violations on this policy will be prosecuted accordingly.
4. According to HK employment ordinance, worker shall only pay 10% of his/her first month salary to the recruitment agencies, but this is not followed.
5. Because of big agency fee and overcharging, workers have no choice but to pay them and be indebted for many months and sometimes years, because the debt cycle.
6. Some employers are doing illegal deductions from the wages of foreign domestic workers. They took away significant amount of wages from helper's salary. Instead of giving directly the wages to the workers, employers opt to give a significant amount of foreign domestic workers salary to the agency. This condition left the workers with almost no wages and no money to send back to their families.
7. Helpers were always threatened by the recruitment agencies that if they don't pay them, the worker's contract will be terminated. At the end of the day, domestic workers always in the losing end.

With this problem, we are putting forward some recommendations;

1. The labor department shall strictly implement and monitor the prosecution of recruitment agencies that overcharge the workers.
2. Remove the license of any recruitment agencies that overcharge the workers and the employers.
3. Prosecute the employers, who were proven guilty of illegal deduction from helpers wages.

United Filipinos in HK (UNIFIL-HK), is an alliance of Filipino migrant organization in HK established in 1985. Our objectives are to consolidate the Filipino migrant workers in HK, to promote their welfare and wellbeing while in Hong Kong.