

SENATE'S CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
COMMENTS ON THE 11TH WEEKLY REPORT
OF THE PRESIDENT DATED 08 JUNE 2020

I. PROVIDE EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO ALL AFFECTED SECTORS

Update on the Social Amelioration Programs (SAPs) (p. 1)

- The DSWD failed to provide any explanation about its inability to distribute the cash aid to 305,647 poor households, thereby missing its own adjusted target of reaching 17,938,422 families, despite the lapse of 3 months from effectivity of the “Bayanihan to Heal as One Act”.¹
- How was it possible that despite being included in the 4Ps database from way back, DSWD could still not reach 52,387 poorest of the poor? Who and where are these families? What is the DSWD’s plan for them and their aid allotment?²
- What is the total number of families included in the list of eligible but waitlisted/left-out SAP beneficiaries? What percentage has been subjected to validation by DSWD? When is the expected payout?³
- Similar to last week, there have been changes in the number of estimated beneficiaries. The estimated beneficiaries of the AICS program has been increased to 17,946,554 from 17,938,442. May we be clarified on the reason why there has been a sudden increase of estimated beneficiaries? Does it contemplate the first or the second tranche? The next report should provide the reason for changing the estimated beneficiaries.⁴
- As previously commented, the results of a special SWS survey revealed that the number of Filipino families who are hungry due to lack of food almost doubled amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the survey, hunger rate rose in all areas, with the highest in Metro Manila, where 20.8% or 693,000 families increased from the 9.3% or 307,000 families in December 2019; and Mindanao where 24.2% or 1.4 million families rose from 12.7 percent or 709,000 families. This could have been prevented, if the distribution of the SAP has been fully implemented. What programs are in place to address this?⁵
- The DSWD reported to the media that 3,723 beneficiaries have returned cash aid amounting to P344.7 million due to duplication. However, the figures seem to be partial only considering that supposed beneficiaries from Region III, Region IV-A, Region IB-B, Region VIII, Region IX, Region XI, NCR, and Region XIII (8 of the 17 regions) were reported to have returned their cash assistance. DSWD should provide an official and comprehensive report on this matter.⁶

¹ Sen. De Lima (Annex A, p. 1) and Sen. Lacson (Annex D, p. 2)

² Sen. De Lima (Annex A, p. 1)

³ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 1)

⁴ Sen. Lacson (Annex D, p. 1)

⁵ Sen. Lacson (Annex D, p. 2)

⁶ Sen. De Lima (Annex A, pp. 1-2) and Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 1)

- We reiterate our comment that before considering the distribution of the 2nd tranche, it is imperative that the full implementation of the 1st tranche be made first. In addition, there must be proper liquidation and recording of the first tranche of SAPs. Considering that we are already talking about having a second tranche of SAPs, when will the 1st tranche be fully implemented?⁷
- The DSWD is yet to commence the distribution of the 2nd tranche of SAP. Why is this taking so long? We also note that no corresponding Joint Memorandum Circular has been released, with a full account of the final number of target beneficiaries for the 2nd tranche, factoring in the additional 5 million households that were left out from the 1st tranche. Incidentally, what is the result of the validation and cross checking process of the DSWD and other concerned agencies on the 1st tranche beneficiaries?⁸
- Based on recent reports, 11 DSWD employees tested positive for COVID-19 and that over 900 social workers were also quarantined during the 1st tranche of the SAP distribution. How will these affect the distribution of the 2nd tranche, especially since the DSWD is the lead implementer of the said program? What are the measures in place to protect our frontliners during the SAP distribution?⁹
- With unemployment rate reaching 17.7% as of April 2020, which is equivalent to 7 million unemployed Filipinos, we recommend the continuation of the CAMP wage subsidy alongside the SWBS Program to cover a wider population in the labor sector.¹⁰
- Of the Php 2.5B allotment for CAMP-AKAP, DOLE has utilized only 58% or Php 1.452B, which benefitted 142,039 affected OFWs or 57% of the target. We would like to reiterate our apprehension for the low utilization of the fund considering that more than 300,000 OFWs were reportedly affected by the pandemic. What are the measures being undertaken by the DOLE to effectively reach out to our affected OFWs?¹¹
- The TUPAD was cited by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation for its social protection and assistance to workers in the informal sector. What other programs and assistance are being implemented by DOLE for those informal workers who are affected by the pandemic but did not benefit from the BKBK?¹²
- We also hope that TESDA scholarship programs will be made available and accessible to the affected workers in order to retool, reskill or upskill them to new jobs post-COVID-19.¹³

⁷ Sen. Lacson (Annex D, p. 2)

⁸ Sen. De Lima (Annex A, p. 2), Sen. Dela Rosa (Annex B, p. 1) and Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 8)

⁹ Sen. Cayetano

¹⁰ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 5)

¹¹ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 1)

¹² Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 1)

¹³ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 5)

- There should be an urgent implementation of the relief assistance of the government. Clear guidelines for target beneficiaries and for validation must be released and disseminated immediately. Priority must also be given to the PUV drivers, most specially those who were not allowed to return to work and those who have not availed or given any assistance during the entire duration of the community quarantine.¹⁴

SAP for Small Business (p. 3)

- Provide clarification on the SBWS accomplishments wherein it was stated that the DOF Secretary has allowed the extension of the payout period beyond the approved schedules “to allow already eligible employees under the program but are encountering application issues to receive their payouts.” Does the statement pertain only to employees referred to in the previous statement, i.e., those who appealed for pre-qualification with the BIR on or before 30 April 2020 and who were allowed to complete their application until 12 May 2020, or to a different group of employees who failed to appeal by 30 April and/or missed the deadline for completion of requirements on 12 May 2020?¹⁵
- As previously commented, in a Memorandum dated 30 April 2020 issued by the BIR, it was ordered that all requests for appeal of taxpayers for pre-qualification to SBWS program shall be issued a denial letter. The pro-forma denial letter means that those who are not in the original list will not be included regardless if their present situation necessitates their inclusion therein. Thus, we must be clarified as to what are the bases/criteria in determining who falls under the “most vulnerable of our countrymen”. It seems that the national government merely responds to a limited number of beneficiaries without considering the actual number of affected people.¹⁶
- We call on the DOF and the SSS to clarify the time frame by which an employee cannot resign as a condition for the grant of the Small Business Wage Subsidy. We recommend that the end- period to which an employee cannot resign should be based on the sunset provision of RA 11469 or the "Bayanihan to Heal As One Act".¹⁷
- DTI should provide an allocation of the COVID-19 Assistance to Restart Enterprises (CARES) Program that is proportional to the number of MSMEs per region and to the impact of the community quarantine in their specific locality to ensure that small businesses nationwide have an equal opportunity to avail of the loan program.¹⁸

¹⁴ Sen. Dela Rosa (Annex A, p. 1)

¹⁵ Sen. De Lima (Annex A, p. 2)

¹⁶ Sen. Lacson (Annex D, p. 3)

¹⁷ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 2)

¹⁸ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 2)

- A total of Php 77.939M was allocated for the 2nd quarter implementation of the Livelihood Seeding Program-Negosyo Serbisyo sa Barangay Program. Please provide a report on the physical and financial accomplishments of the 1st quarter implementation of the Livelihood Seeding Program-Negosyo Serbisyo sa Barangay.¹⁹
- We also urge the DSWD and LTFRB to extend financial aid to other drivers in areas placed under ECQ outside NCR.²⁰
- We call other government agencies that are also providing financial assistance to various sectors to also tap the assistance of GCash and other virtual payment applications, and other remittance centers to ensure speedy distribution of the cash aid.²¹
- The April 2020 Labor Force Survey covering the height of the ECQ in Luzon (20 April to 16 May) stated that the unemployment rate rose to 17.7% or 7.3 million of unemployed Filipinos. With the relaxation of the community quarantine in the whole country and the gradual opening of more industries, DOLE and DTI must start accounting for the number of unemployed due to closure of business, bankruptcy or retrenchment brought about by the new normal. This will help in devising assistance that the government may provide for our kababayans.²²

Transportation, Repatriation, and Mobility Assistance to Healthworkers, Frontliners, OFWs, Stranded Passengers, Foreign Nationals in the Country, and Other Entities or Individuals (p.4)

- In view of our transition to GCQ, DOTr, in coordination with MMDA, and LGUs should expand our public transport supply by developing active transport infrastructure in order to ease the burden of our commuters and to avoid further transmission of the virus.²³
- To ensure safety of our commuters who are using non-motorized vehicles as a mode of public transportation, we request the DOTr, LTFRB, MMDA, and DICT in consultation with LGUs to design a program where people can register their bicycles via mobile phones free of charge. This will also help the government agencies to have actual data as the government prepares to integrate bicycle lanes in the transportation system.²⁴
- According to reports, there has been a surge in bicycle use as an alternative mode of transportation during this pandemic. As an essential means of transportation, the DOTr in coordination with LGUs should urgently create guidelines on the use of bicycles, including the creation of safe pathways, bike

¹⁹ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 2)

²⁰ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 2) and Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 8)

²¹ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 2)

²² Sen. Dela Rosa (Annex B, p. 1)

²³ Sen. Cayetano, Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 3) and Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, pp. 11-12)

²⁴ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 3)

lanes, and related facilities, as well as the necessary safety precaution of cyclists.²⁵

- What is the DOTr doing to help the public utility vehicle operators, drivers, and workers transition to the new normal?²⁶
- The CAB issued a memorandum on the resumption of operations of different airline companies where LGUs are given an option whether or not to allow the opening of airports in their respective jurisdictions. We appeal to the national government through the IATF in close coordination with LGUs, to immediately lay down clear guidelines on how the airlines and shipping companies can operate.²⁷
- According to the Report, 44% of the 14,629 LSIs have already returned to their respective provinces. What is the status of the remaining 8,187 LSIs and are health protocols being followed when accepting returning LSIs?²⁸
- We urge the OWWA, LGUs, and other relevant agencies to coordinate with each other regarding the return of repatriated OFWs and those availing of the Balik Probinsiya Program of the government. Provinces and other LGUs must continue to ensure quarantine and safety protocols for all returning residents. They should also implement additional safety and quarantine measures amid reports that some OFWs tested positive for COVID-19 upon their return to the provinces even after undergoing strict 14-day quarantine in Metro Manila.²⁹
- What is the protocol being followed in bringing the remains of Filipinos abroad who died of COVID-19 back to the Philippines? How many remains were brought home to date?³⁰
- We take note that the funding of the “Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pagasa’ Program” is being charged to the existing P/A/Ps of the concerned agencies implementing the program. How much budget was already spent and how many beneficiaries were assisted?³¹

Protection of Consumers and Related Measures (p. 4)

- NBI, FDA, DTI, and other relevant agencies should heighten and intensify operations in the arrest and confiscation of smuggled medical equipment and PPEs and the unauthorized online selling of the same. These smuggled items may pose health risks to users, as these may not be compliant with the safety and minimum health standards set by the DOH and FDA. The BOC has also

²⁵ Sen. Cayetano

²⁶ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 3)

²⁷ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 3)

²⁸ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 3) and Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 7)

²⁹ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 7), Sen. Dela Rosa (Annex B, pp. 1-2) and Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 9)

³⁰ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 3)

³¹ Sen. De Lima (Annex A, p. 4)

recently reported the seizure of smuggled PPEs and alcohol which are sold with high prices online.³²

- We reiterate our question on the basis for setting a price ceiling in Department Order No. 2020-0058 when there has been no declaration of state of emergency during the time it was issued.³³
- In addition, as previously asked, what has been the reason for the huge increase in the price of some medical supplies such as face masks despite the existence of a price ceiling as early as 31 January 2020?³⁴
- How do we determine the ceiling price? What have been the considerations/grounds used by the DOH? Now that the price of face masks is dropping, is the DOH mulling on setting a new price ceiling for the same? When will this happen?³⁵
- There are no updates regarding the NBI's report last week about the discovery of an underground medical facility in Fontana Leisure Park in Pampanga, and the arrest of 2 Chinese nationals reportedly operating an illegal pharmacy in Angeles City, Pampanga. Provide progress reports on these two incidents in the subsequent or separate submissions. Likewise, we would like to know of any update on similar incidents, such as the discovery of an underground hospital for Chinese POGO workers in Makati City.³⁶
- There should be immediate prosecution and punishment of those liable in the operation of "underground hospitals and COVID-19 testing centers" and "makeshift medical facilities" not accredited by the government.³⁷
- The IATF should reconsider the presentation of quarantine pass, specifically in malls and grocery stores in order to control the number of people entering such establishments.³⁸

Other Assistance to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), and Productive Sector (p. 5)

- We again observe the dismally low turn out of beneficiaries in the lending programs of the DA. After almost 3 months of commencing the programs, there are only 15,374 beneficiaries served from the targeted number of 40,000 for MSFFs, and only 64 recipients out of the target 150 agri-fishery MSEs. It is high time for the DA to re-evaluate these programs, as consistently pointed out in our comments on previous reports, and maybe convert them into simple subsidy

³² Sen. Dela Rosa (Annex B, p. 2)

³³ Sen. Lacson (Annex D, p. 5)

³⁴ Sen. Lacson (Annex D, p. 5)

³⁵ Sen. Lacson (Annex D, p. 5)

³⁶ Sen. De Lima (Annex A, p. 4) and Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 2)

³⁷ Sen. Dela Rosa (Annex B, p. 1)

³⁸ Sen. Dela Rosa (Annex B, p. 1)

projects, just like the SBWS and the cash aids for poor households and small rice farmers.³⁹

- As previously pointed out, the DA or the Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC) should explain how it happened that PhP863.93 million, or more than 80% of the PhP 1 billion budget, was already utilized but only about a little over one-third of the program's clientele for MSFFs has benefitted, as of this time.⁴⁰
- What are the plans and measures taken by the DA, the ACPC in particular, to increase the number of MSFFs and agri-fishery based MSEs beneficiaries availing of the concessionary loans under the Expanded SURE Aid and Recovery Project?⁴¹
- What is the extent of the involvement of the DA in the Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pag-asa Program that is meant to spur countryside development? Will the aid program shoulder any of the costs of agricultural cooperatives and farmers for recruiting people who are returning to the provinces? What support is the DA providing to applicants who are interested in beginning agri/aqua ventures in the provinces?⁴²

Access to Agri-Fishery Products and Ensuring an Uninterrupted Supply Chain (p. 5)

- With regard to the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI), will the government subsidize costs for enrollment in technical classes in farming, aquaculture or animal husbandry or for the operation of cutting-edge agricultural machinery given that most people from the cities do not have any farming experience? If so, how much funding is available and what is the potential number of scholars? How will funding be distributed across the regions/provinces?⁴³
- Has the DA taken advantage of the deployment of short and long-term financing made available by the World Bank?⁴⁴
- What is the DA doing in order to mitigate as well as provide immediate and long-term support to respond to "crisis-within-a-crisis" problems?⁴⁵
- Given that the emerging infectious diseases in humans have their source in animals what is the DA doing in terms of short- and long-term prevention such as strengthened veterinary services, disease surveillance and food safety?⁴⁶
- It was reported that tons of ripe tomatoes are being dumped on roadsides in Nueva Vizcaya and Ifugao due to oversupply and low market prices. Some farmers have decided not to harvest almost 20 tons of tomatoes while farmers from Ifugao said that the price of tomatoes dropped dramatically from P15-P20

³⁹ Sen. De Lima (Annex A, p. 4) and Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 5)

⁴⁰ Sen. De Lima (Annex A, pp. 4-5)

⁴¹ Sen. Angara (Annex C, pp. 1-2) and Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 6)

⁴² Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 4)

⁴³ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 4)

⁴⁴ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 4)

⁴⁵ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 4)

⁴⁶ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 5)

per kilo to a measly P2-P5 per kilo after the supply chain was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. How can DA assist the tomato farmers to have better access to markets so that prices remain stable and our farmers have a steady income?⁴⁷

Other Forms of Assistance and Partnership with LGUs (p. 6)

- Are there any efforts from the government to standardize the punishment for curfew and public utility vehicle violators?⁴⁸

Benefit Packages for COVID-19 Patients (p. 7)

- The Php 3,409 price is a big cut down from the Php 8,150 original price for a complete testing package. What is PhilHealth's explanation for this drastic drop in price?⁴⁹

Assistance to Students, Educators, and Educational Institutions (p. 7)

- Based on the Report, small private schools are not qualified to get assistance from the SBWS program. As such, how will the government provide support for these schools, their teaching personnel and non-teaching personnel during the pandemic?⁵⁰
- Considering that there is much uncertainty on the enrollment of students, which would consequently affect the ability of many private schools to sustain themselves, teachers, part-time faculty, and non-teaching personnel in private educational institutions should also be given assistance to help them cope with the effects of the pandemic.⁵¹
- According to CHED, there are 264 private colleges and universities that have not submitted the required documents for the release of the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES), which will affect the stipend of about 6,628 qualified student-grantees. What will happen to these students if those higher education institutions (HEIs) will not submit the requirements? Can the CHED make some kind of arrangement to already provide the stipend of these students, especially since some colleges and universities may open in August, but still make the HEIs accountable to provide the requirements?⁵²
- NEDA recommended opening classes by September for tertiary schools. The CHED is however considering a “rolling” opening of classes for Colleges and Universities. Those that are ready with a flexible learning system may open in August, while others may open on a later date. Does the CHED already have an

⁴⁷ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 5)

⁴⁸ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 5)

⁴⁹ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 6) and Sen. Cayetano

⁵⁰ Sen. Cayetano

⁵¹ Sen. Cayetano

⁵² Sen. Cayetano and Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 11)

inventory of colleges and universities with the capability to conduct online classes?⁵³

- What is the target date of completion of the installation of free wifi internet access in public educational institutions considering that classes in public schools will begin soon? How much will the government spend on this program and how many internet routers are they going to install?⁵⁴
- Given the shift to blended learning, we wish to reiterate our call for financial and other forms of support to all institutions of learning to ensure that their faculty, students, and other staff have the appropriate ICT equipment, program, and required software to be able to continue learning in the new normal.⁵⁵

Assistance to Women, Children and Other Vulnerable Groups (p. 7)

- Provide updates on the government's efforts in cracking down cybercrime activities, especially those that adversely affect women, children and other vulnerable groups? In particular, the next report should also include updates on the cases and actions of the NBI and the PNP on cybercrime activities such as online scams, sexual harassments, and most especially the online child sexual exploitation, which is reportedly prevalent at this time of lockdown.⁵⁶

II. SECURING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES FOR THE HEALTH SECTOR AND OTHER FRONTLINERS

Human Resources for Health (HRH) (p. 9)

- We are again faced with the recurring problem of low hiring and poor deployment of HRH by DOH. Almost three months have lapsed and only 3,027 HRH have been hired out of the DOH-approved 6,866 slots and the DBM-allotted positions for 15,757 for temporary health workers. This seemingly chronic problem has to be urgently addressed as it certainly derails the operations of our testing centers, laboratories, and hospitals. What is the timeline for completing the hiring of the 15,757 HRH?⁵⁷
- We wish to know if any of the 3,027 additional hires are OFWs or healthcare workers affected by the deployment ban. This is in line with our persistent call for DOLE and DOH to coordinate with each other to ensure that returning OFWs and other affected healthcare workers are referred and encouraged to apply to the hiring program of DOH.⁵⁸

⁵³ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 6)

⁵⁴ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 6)

⁵⁵ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 4)

⁵⁶ Sen. De Lima (Annex A, p. 5) and Sen. Cayetano

⁵⁷ Sen. De Lima (Annex A, pp. 6-7), Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 7), and Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 3)

⁵⁸ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 3)

- We reiterate our request for DOH to present the target number of health care workers that both the public and private health sectors require to address the COVID-19 pandemic, and to estimate the shortage from the current pool of health care workers in the country.⁵⁹
- The Report only gave details on the compensation given to beneficiaries of health workers who died from COVID-19. No data, however, was mentioned with respect to health workers who were severely affected by COVID-19. What is the timeline for the payout of compensation given to those who severely contracted the disease?⁶⁰
- As previously commented, there have been reports that there are health workers who have yet to receive their Special Risk Allowance (SRA). We would like to be informed as to how much has already been released and the reason why there has been a delay in the implementation of the SRA.⁶¹
- We reiterate our comment that with the expected increase in cases (partly due to the gradual easing of restrictions), we hope to see a more concrete plan to reduce such risks to our healthcare workers by providing them with adequate PPEs and informing them on the correct protocols to avoid community transmission.⁶²

Referral Hospitals, COVID-19 Bed Capacity, and Equipment (p. 9)

- As of 7 June 2020, the bulk of our active cases totaling 16,362, are considered as cases with “mild” symptoms comprising 15,627 cases (96%). Of this number, 14,103 individuals are “pending admission status” (1,418 are already admitted and 106 are in home isolation). What is the primary reason for categorizing them as “pending admission status?” Is the admission dependent on the availability of hospital beds? Further, considering that our total bed capacity (ward, isolation, and ICU) is only at 13,550 as of 9 June 2020, 4,675 (35%) of which is already occupied, how do we guarantee that we have adequate care provision for these 14,103 COVID-19 patients waiting admission?⁶³
- We hope to see a plan on addressing the potential shortage of beds for suspected and probable cases (those with mild or critical symptoms and are yet to be tested or are awaiting conclusive results). As of June 10, 2020, the gap between the beds and the cases is only at 5,032.⁶⁴
- As previously commented, DOH should provide granulated data on the available and occupied COVID-19 beds, including information on the type of hospitals

⁵⁹ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 7)

⁶⁰ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 6) and Sen. De Lima (Annex A, p. 3)

⁶¹ Sen. Lacson (Annex D, p. 9)

⁶² Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 9)

⁶³ Sen. Lacson (Annex D, p. 9)

⁶⁴ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 1)

across regions. Such information is necessary to assess the health sector's capacity to accommodate cases during the peak of the pandemic.⁶⁵

Quarantine Facilities (p. 9)

- We would like to reiterate the need to ensure that there is enough number of quarantine beds in the provinces especially in destination locations of repatriated or returning OFWs. Although they may be allowed to go home after testing negative in PCR tests and undergoing isolation, there is a chance that they may get the virus while in transit.⁶⁶
- A number of constructions of multipurpose buildings (MPB) were funded under the Local Program of the DPWH for the past years and these MPBs are situated in most barangays nationwide. How can these MPBs be efficiently converted into quarantine or health facilities to increase our nationwide bed capacity?⁶⁷
- How many more mega-quarantine facilities are in the pipeline for construction? Will there be similar projects in the provinces?⁶⁸
- As previously pointed out, there should be a clear delineation of duties among the OWWA, DOH, BOQ, DOT, and other government agencies in the management of privately commissioned quarantine facilities.⁶⁹

Update on Test Kits, Testing Centers, and Expanded Testing (p. 10)

- Despite accrediting 11 more testing laboratories, the DOH seems to be unable to cope with the increase of applicant- laboratories on their desk. As of the latest tally, from 88 pending applications last week, there are now pending 140 applicants subject to evaluation this week. News reports also cited Mr. Vince Dizon saying that licensed laboratories in the country are now capable of conducting a maximum of nearly 42,000 tests a day. However, the actual number of samples tested daily has remained at an average of some 10,000 to 11,300 tests in the past week. Likewise, there are reports that overall testing capacity of our system has been impaired by the lack of supplies such as the reported shortage of testing kits in some facilities. The DOH and IATF, including the office of Mr. Vince Dizon, should address these glaring issues so we can finally move to mass testing.⁷⁰
- Does the DOH/IATF have a new timeline set for actually reaching the objective of 30,000 tests per day? If so, when can the country reach the desired 30,000 tests per day? When can we expand testing to include workers not covered by the DOH guidelines on testing?⁷¹

⁶⁵ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 2)

⁶⁶ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 7)

⁶⁷ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 7)

⁶⁸ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 7)

⁶⁹ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 9)

⁷⁰ Sen. De Lima (Annex A, p. 6)

⁷¹ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 8)

- Does the IATF/DOH still aim to test 2% of the population and 10%-13% of epicenters? What is the timeline to accomplish this?⁷²
- We reiterate that the sample size should indicate the base number (denominator) to be broken down into whether the patient tested is SUSPECT, PROBABLE, or CONFIRMED - instead of just stating the number of persons tested.⁷³
- On DOH PhP1.6 billion procurement of PCR test kits, can the DOH provide details of this procurement? How many tests can these 9 different types of PCR test kits conduct? How would these test kits be allocated nationwide?⁷⁴
- Can the Senate get an update on the procurement of needed testing peripherals mentioned by the DOH such as reagents?⁷⁵
- It appears that we have two kinds of backlogs: one is the backlogs on swab testing, and two, the backlogs on validation of positive tests results. Based on the June 1 Situationer, the Epidemiology Bureau of DOH announced that all backlog cases for validation have already been cleared. However, as of June 2, the DOH reported that there are already 23,843 total positive individuals and 17,224 total validated cases, but 6,618 positive cases have yet to be validated.⁷⁶
- We continue to call on DOH to exhaust all efforts to address the backlog of confirmed cases vs positive individuals listed by testing centers especially as most of the country is now under GCQ. Timely validation of data is instrumental in the formulation of policies by the national and local government.⁷⁷
- With the new format of reporting of DOH on confirmed cases (separating fresh and late cases), can we still claim that we are flattening the curve of the pandemic?⁷⁸
- As suggested before, in order to detect potential underreporting of COVID-19 deaths, DOH should include regular updates on the number of individuals tagged as suspected and probable cases who died without being tested for COVID-19.⁷⁹
- As previously commented, there have been no submissions of test results on May 29 from the Philippine Red Cross (PRC) and from May 30 to 31 from both PRC and PRC Logistics & Multipurpose Center. Considering that the said laboratory centers conduct the bulk of our RT-PCR tests, their non-reporting may significantly impact our data, particularly the backlogs on data reporting. What are the reasons for the non-submission of daily output of these testing centers? Was their lack of submission taken into account in keeping track of our backlog in the validation of cases?⁸⁰

⁷² Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 8)

⁷³ Sen. Lacson (Annex D, p. 6)

⁷⁴ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 8)

⁷⁵ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 8)

⁷⁶ Sen. Lacson (Annex D, p. 6)

⁷⁷ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 8) and Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 7)

⁷⁸ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 8)

⁷⁹ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 8)

⁸⁰ Sen. Lacson (Annex D, p. 5)

- Is there a contingency plan for testing labs to sustain their capacities in case of unforeseen disruptions?⁸¹

Clinical Trials (p. 10)

- The DOH is facilitating the delivery and receipt of Avigan (Favipiravir) for at least 100 patients. The Philippine General Hospital has started to enroll patients who will participate in the Virgin Coconut Oil clinical trials which are expected to last for 1 year. Which country or pharmaceutical company has the earliest scheduled clinical trial for COVID-19 vaccine?⁸²

Strengthening Contact Tracing Measures (p. 11)

- We reiterate our comment on the need to heighten information dissemination campaigns to encourage the general public to take part in contact tracing. There was a recent report on how Germany is using an effective yet very low tech approach. Germany's tracing method is centered on calling recently diagnosed patients and asking for their movements and the people they had close contact with, which contact scouts record in a central database. Our government should consider doing the same. But in addition, require everyone to record every place they have been to for easier contact tracing. We also suggest that instead of just 1, there should be at least 3 to 5 trainers on contact tracing in each RESU. This is to ensure that multiple training sessions can be conducted, which in turn would speed up the growth of the country's pool of trained contact tracers.⁸³
- Former DICT Undersecretary Eliseo Rio pointed out in his statement the limitations of the *StaySafe.ph* app, especially its weaknesses on privacy protocols. What tests did the DICT conduct in order to ensure the reliability of this contact tracing app? What safety measures were implemented to protect the privacy of its users?⁸⁴
- How many LGUs are now using the *StaySafe.ph* system? For those who are not using online means of data gathering, how do they report out their collected data?⁸⁵
- Aside from the *StaySafe.ph*, what other digital solutions are being evaluated by the DICT? Are there some ready for roll-out soon?⁸⁶
- We reiterate our call that a unified platform / database for contact tracing should be set up, one where all agencies and local government units involved have access, and there are necessary safeguards for privacy in place.⁸⁷

⁸¹ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 8)

⁸² Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 9)

⁸³ Sen. Cayetano and Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 9)

⁸⁴ Sen. Cayetano, Sen. Angara (Annex C, pp. 9-10), and Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, pp. 7-8)

⁸⁵ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 9) and Sen. Cayetano

⁸⁶ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 10) and Sen. Cayetano

⁸⁷ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 10)

- As previously pointed out, the DOH indicated the need for 94,000 more contact tracers at P30,000/contact tracer. Given that many LGUs are using their local personnel who are familiar with the community, DOH can improve contact tracing by funding LGUs instead. But P30,000/contact tracer seems quite excessive, unless this amount is meant for data analysts or other professionals who will run the system. Please clarify what is the system in place and how DOH intends to address the slow pace tracing and reporting of data. What is the process of hiring contact tracers and the minimum qualifications for one to be a contact tracer? Are there guidelines/standards to ensure that contact tracers do their job properly?⁸⁸
- The Report does not indicate any plan at all regarding the implementation of a coordinated contact-tracing sub-program, which is very alarming, given the call from many Senators and even from the WHO. What is the plan, if any, of achieving the target of hiring around 94,000 contact tracers. What is the position of the DOH and IATF on tapping around 400,000 barangay health workers and parent-leaders from the 4Ps program, who are spread all around the country to be contact tracers?⁸⁹
- We hope to know the regional and local distribution of contact tracers nationwide, by type of facility of designation and type of work.⁹⁰
- How often do these “training of trainers” sessions occur? May we request for copies of the materials used during the training sessions? How many trainers is the DOH targeting to train before June 15? Before June 30? Before July 31?⁹¹

Provision of Healthcare Resources, Supplies, and Equipment (p. 11)

- The Office of the Civil Defense is mandated to consolidate all donations from foreign governments, private entities, non-government organizations or any group or individual. The report, however, is silent with regard to donations from foreign governments. Did we get any donations from other governments? Can we be provided a summary of said donations?⁹²
- We have received reports that some of the PPEs given to hospitals were of poor quality. As such, we would like to seek assurance from the government that the PPEs it purchased are of good quality and that the FDA has properly tested and certified said PPEs.⁹³

⁸⁸ Sen. Cayetano and Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 9)

⁸⁹ Sen. De Lima (Annex A, p. 5)

⁹⁰ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 3)

⁹¹ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 9)

⁹² Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 10)

⁹³ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 8)

III. ESTABLISHING SOUND FISCAL AND MONETARY ACTIONS THAT ARE RESPONSIVE TO ALL STAKEHOLDERS

Budgetary Measures to Fund COVID-19 Efforts (p. 14)

- It should be noted that Section 5 of the Bayanihan Act directs the President to include in the weekly reports not only the amounts used and augmentation but also those that were "reprogrammed, reallocated and realigned". This crucial information has never been included in any of the previous reports submitted to Congress. Pursuant to the said provision, the weekly reports should also cover a detailed list of unreleased appropriations and unobligated allotments of each department. We shall expect an attachment with this detailed list in succeeding reports.⁹⁴
- In the Report, the DOF stated that the government has signed a US\$500 million loan with the World Bank and another loan amounting to US\$400 million from the Asian Development Bank. May we be given a comprehensive report on the total number of loans and the aggregate sums being borrowed from foreign banks in response to the current pandemic? May we likewise be given copies of the loan contracts, financing agreements and related papers for purposes of transparency and the right to public information?⁹⁵

IV. RESPONSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE RECOVERY PLAN

Tourism

- We call on the DOT, DTI, and DICT to create more digital application initiatives for all tourism businesses including promotion of digital skills since it is expected that COVID-19 pandemic will accelerate the digital transformation, shifting towards a more smart, personalized, and non- contact travel.⁹⁶

V. OTHER COMMENTS / CONCERNS

General Community Quarantine

- The constantly changing patterns of new COVID-19 cases in the constituent LGUs suggest that NCR should be considered as a single region for quarantine purposes. In accordance with our risk assessment, NCR is classified as "High Risk."⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Sen. De Lima (Annex A, p. 6)

⁹⁵ Sen. De Lima (Annex A, pp. 6-7)

⁹⁶ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 10)

⁹⁷ Sen. Lacson (Annex D, p. 8)

National Action Plan

- We would like to follow up the submission of the “National Action Plan” to the Senate, which was promised during the Committee of the Whole Hearing, as well as the revisions made on the said plan in light of the lifting of lockdowns.⁹⁸

Asymptomatic and Recovered Individuals

- It is important to note the population demographics of the country. The Philippines is considered to have a young population with the majority aged between 0 and 24. Data from other countries would suggest that most of the asymptomatic individuals come from this age group. The problem with these asymptomatic individuals is that there is no other way to detect whether they are infected other than having them tested. Hence, it is vital that we zero in on these asymptomatic individuals to prevent further spread of the virus. Our solutions must not simply be to copy the methodology employed by other countries as there are also variations in every nation’s demographics. It is important that we design our solutions in accordance to the profile of our country. With this said, the asymptomatic or the PUMs should merit focus from the government or at the very least, a classification of its own.⁹⁹
- We hope that the official DOH portal and the Bayanihan Report also include updates on the current number of asymptomatic patients with confirmed COVID-19 cases, and the number of confirmed COVID-19 patients who are currently recovering. Among others, such information can help assess potential shortage in the available facilities.¹⁰⁰

Testing of Employees

- As previously commented, the government should provide assurance to employers and employees that proper government assistance, with regard to testing of employees, will be given, especially as most of the country shifts to GCQ.¹⁰¹
- Also, to reiterate, relevant government offices should clarify their guidelines on the testing of employees, stating that only a sample of the returning employees needs to be tested. In this regard, we note that while the Guidelines on Workplace Prevention and Control of COVID-19 issued by DTI and DOLE provides that “[e]mployers may test workers for COVID-19,” the guidelines issued by DPWH provides that “[c]onstruction personnel shall be required to undergo any available COVID-19 test.”¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 4)

⁹⁹ Sen. Lacson (Annex D, p. 8)

¹⁰⁰ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 1)

¹⁰¹ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 8)

¹⁰² Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 8)

Assistance to Persons Deprived of Liberty

- We commend the development at the BJMP that, as of 22 May 2020, 90 elderly PDLs have been released on court order. We would like to hear more news on this aspect, especially since the 5th weekly report has stated that 1,927 elderly PDLs have existing medical conditions and 804 are non-recidivists, making them all qualified for early release.¹⁰³
- The Board of Pardons and Parole reported that an additional 22 applications for conditional pardon are being processed. We have yet to know of any release based on the interim rules on parole and executive clemency. We hope the process can be expedited, and that future reports can reflect much progress on this matter.¹⁰⁴

Immunization Program

- According to the DOH, even before the COVID-19 pandemic started, we already have enough supply of vaccine for the expanded program on immunization. However, due to the pandemic, parents are scared to bring their children to health centers for vaccination. What is the DOH doing in order to continue the immunization program despite the scare brought by COVID-19? How many children were vaccinated during the start of the quarantine period? How much is the decrease as compared to the percentage of children vaccinated before the lockdown started?¹⁰⁵

Accurate Presentation of Data

- As previously requested, please provide an accurate presentation of comparable key indicators, such as addressing discrepancies in officially reported figures on contacts traced as reported by DOH and the NRRMC, and SAP beneficiaries as reported by the LTFRB and the Bayanihan Report. These are critical in assessing the progress of the implementation of the Bayanihan Act and in guiding policy makers to adopt appropriate policies and actions.¹⁰⁶

Online Government Services

- DICT, in coordination with executive agencies, should provide a concrete plan on how to digitize their frontline processes and services for stakeholders and constituents. Likewise, the DOH must assist these agencies to refine their protocols to protect the health and occupational safety of their employees.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Sen. De Lima (Annex A, p. 5)

¹⁰⁴ Sen. De Lima (Annex A, p. 5)

¹⁰⁵ Sen. Cayetano

¹⁰⁶ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 7)

¹⁰⁷ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 5)

Mental Health Support to Patients and the General Public

- Considering the fear and anxiety associated with the pandemic, how has the National Center for Mental Health Crisis Hotline been effectively utilized? What is the number of confirmed COVID-19 patients, suspected and probable cases, and persons under monitoring provided with psychological first aid and processing to address their mental health needs?¹⁰⁸

Philippine Offshore Gaming Operators (POGOs)

- We reiterate our disagreement with the decision of the IATF-EID or Task Force on classifying the POGO's as members of the BPO sector. On 5 May 2020, we sent a letter to IATF-EID but we have yet to receive any response.¹⁰⁹
- Consistent with our earlier recommendation to adopt a sectoral policy in gradually lifting the lockdown, it is our humble opinion that POGO's not only do not have significant contribution to the economy, they also pose serious threat to our country's efforts to flatten the curve of transmission of SARS-COV-2. Thus, allowing them to re-open at this time, when there is still very little testing done, is ill-advised.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 6)

¹⁰⁹ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 10)

¹¹⁰ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 10)