

SENATE'S CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
COMMENTS ON THE 10TH WEEKLY REPORT
OF THE PRESIDENT DATED 01 JUNE 2020

I. PROVIDE EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO ALL AFFECTED SECTORS

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

- After two extensions from the original deadline of distribution, the first tranche of emergency cash aid failed to reach 359,027 poor households. Both the DSWD and DILG should explain the inability to achieve the target (17,938,422) despite the provided time and resources.¹
- We seek clarification on the target number of beneficiaries under the Emergency Subsidy Program. Based on the Report, the target number of beneficiaries under DSWD is 17,938,422 which is different from 17,933,769 beneficiaries stated in the 8th and 9th reports.²
- There are several news reports about a number of SAP beneficiaries who returned the emergency cash subsidy given to them. The DSWD must also be transparent on the total number of beneficiaries who returned their cash aid including the total amount of cash remitted in the next report of the President to Congress.³
- The Executive Department should set a more accurate target in terms of the number of 4Ps and Non-4Ps beneficiaries in the distribution of the second tranche of the SAP as a result of the validation and cross-checking processes made by the concerned agencies.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 government should also provide an update on their plan to complete the implementation of the SAP for drivers considering that only 68.9% of its beneficiaries were served. What are the challenges which prevent the speedy distribution of such assistance?⁶

¹ Sen. De Lima (Annex B, p. 1)

² Sen. Villanueva (Annex C, p. 1) and Sen. Lacson (Annex D, p. 1)

³ Sen. De Lima (Annex B, p. 1)

⁴ Sen. De Lima (Annex B, p. 2)

⁵ Sen. Lacson (Annex D, p. 2)

⁶ Sen. Villanueva (Annex C, p. 1) and Sen. Revilla (Annex F, p. 2)

- LTFRB identified 435,619 drivers of PUVs who will receive financial support under the SAP. 380,508 of which are drivers of four-wheeled PUVs—such as jeepneys, UV Express, buses, among others, while 55,111 are drivers of motorcycle taxis. However, during the May 11 public hearing of the Senate Committee on Public Services, LTFRB admitted that the distribution of such aid under this program was “slow” and said that many of the target beneficiaries have yet to receive the subsidy. What is the update on this?⁷
- To reiterate, there have been pronouncements circulating about the distribution of the package’s 2nd tranche. Before considering this, however, 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?⁸

SAP for Small Business (p. 4)

- As of 27 May 2020, there are over 180,000 beneficiaries who have yet to receive their wage subsidy. DOF, SSS, and other involved agencies must fully accomplish the payout for the 1st tranche of the SBWS. Moreover, we reiterate our suggestion to involve more remittance centers or utilize additional distribution modalities to hasten subsidy distribution.⁹
- In implementing the current SBWS, as inquired before, how do we determine if there is duplication or any other form of leakage in the payout of subsidies? Will there be a new edition of SBWS?¹⁰
- 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.¹¹

⁷ Sen. Revilla (Annex F, p. 2)

⁸ Sen. Lacson (Annex D, pp. 2-3)

⁹ Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 1)

¹⁰ Sen. De Lima (Annex B, p. 2)

¹¹ Sen. Lacson (Annex D, p. 3)

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

- According to 40 Philippine Overseas Labor Offices (POLOs), there are 100,000 OFWs who remain stranded abroad as of 29 May 2020. What is the plan of DFA and DOLE on the repatriation of the said OFWs? It is reported that these OFWs are either affected by lockdowns in their respective host countries or whose work contracts have expired, but cannot return to the Philippines due to absence of commercial flights.¹²
- OWWA and other concerned agencies should improve the local coordination on its repatriation efforts so LGUs are prepared to host returning OFWs and that their COVID-19 control and prevention measures are not undermined.¹³
- Per the Report, MIAA and MMDA, together with the National Task Force for COVID-19 and various agencies, provided the same figure of 3,925 OFWs as of 28 May 2020 in its “Hatid-Probinsya para sa OFWs” project. Are we referring to the group of OFWs? Kindly clarify.¹⁴
- We hope to see a more reasonable transportation plan for workers in light of the limited operations of our mass transport systems. Our transport regulators should be able to make adjustments in their plans and strategies so that our workers will not have to worry about getting to work while maintaining physical distancing.¹⁵
- DOTr and DILG, with the assistance of ULAP, should study the proposal to contract registered public transport vehicles for public transportation services along specified routes in NCR, Cebu City and its surrounding LGUs, and other cities.¹⁶
- IATF and DOTr should also augment transportation to support our commuters, either through contracting more utility buses and jeepneys or relaxing restrictions on public transport.¹⁷
- IATF and DOTr should reconsider the resumption of operations of jeepneys given the need for more public utility vehicles to support the movement of workers and resumption of businesses. Not only will they be able to meet the transport needs of the returning workers, they may also earn a living to provide for their families. Their operations should still be compliant with the minimum health standards and protocols imposed on other PUVs.¹⁸

¹² Sen. De Lima (Annex B, p. 2) and Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 2)

¹³ Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 1)

¹⁴ Sen. De Lima (Annex B, p. 2)

¹⁵ Sen. Villanueva (Annex C, p. 4) and Sen. Revilla (Annex F, p. 2)

¹⁶ Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 2)

¹⁷ Sen. Revilla (Annex F, p. 2)

¹⁸ Sen. Revilla (Annex F, p. 2)

- The government may want to reconsider allowing back riding in motorcycles among relatives, who are expected to be living in the same home. This will further decongest our trains and allowed vehicles.¹⁹
- Given the limited transportation, DOTr and MMDA, in coordination with DPWH and LGUs should expedite the establishment of bike lanes. Regulations should be in place to ensure that bikers are adequately protected by requiring mandatory use of helmets, knee/elbow caps and blinkers/reflectors on bikes.²⁰

Protection of Consumers and Related Measures (p. 5)

- LGUs must constantly regulate health facilities to ensure that no illegal pharmacies and underground hospitals are operating within their jurisdiction in coordination with the FDA, PNP and NBI.²¹
- 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.²²
- 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?²³
- 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?²⁴

Other Assistance to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), and Productive Sector (p. 6)

- We again observe the low turn out of beneficiaries in the lending programs of the DA. After two and a half months of rolling out, why are there only 10,544 beneficiaries served from the targeted number of 40,000 for MSFFs, and only 51 recipients out of the target 150 agri-fishery MSEs? Can't the DA rethink these lending programs, as repeatedly asked in our previous comments, and maybe convert them into straight subsidy projects?²⁵
- The DA or the Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC) should explain why P593.363 million or more than half of the P1 billion budget was already utilized but only about one-fourth of the program's clientele for MSFFs has benefitted.²⁶

¹⁹ Sen. Villanueva (Annex C, p. 5)

²⁰ Sen. Cayetano, Sen. Villanueva (Annex C, p. 5), and Sen. Dela Rosa (Annex A, p. 2)

²¹ Sen. Dela Rosa (Annex A, p. 1)

²² Sen. Lacson (Annex D, p. 5)

²³ Sen. Lacson (Annex D, p. 5)

²⁴ Sen. Lacson (Annex D, p. 5)

²⁵ Sen. De Lima (Annex B, p. 3)

²⁶ Sen. De Lima (Annex B, p. 3)

- The DTI and the Small Business Corporation should provide updates on other assistance for MSMEs, particularly the COVID-19 P3-Enterprise Rehabilitation Facility (P3-ERF).²⁷

Access to Agri-Fishery Products and Ensuring an Uninterrupted Supply Chain (p. 6)

- We are reiterating our comment for the 5th time and awaiting a response - that since packed and canned foods are the default relief products, more effort should be given towards the delivery of fresh and nutrient-rich food. Is there any agency monitoring whether in fact people are being fed nutritious food? Did the National Nutrition Council issue guidelines on nutritional requirements for relief products? Healthy food can and should be made available during times of calamity. In fact, we have been distributing vegetables since the start of ECQ while LGUs in NCR have been successfully purchasing fresh produce from vegetable producing regions. It is high time that we put into place nutrition guidelines during times of calamities and emergencies.²⁸
- What measures are being taken towards addressing food waste and the new measures that have been put into place to meet the new sanitary requirements and social distancing measures?²⁹
- Given that the farmers in the Philippines are relatively old, are they being given protective equipment such as masks and gloves and even face masks when the trucks come to pick up the produce?³⁰

Assistance to Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) (p.8)

- We commend the development at the BJMP that 90 elderly PDLs have been released per court order. We would like to hear more good 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.³¹
- The Board of Pardons and Parole (BPP) reported that an additional 22 applications for conditional pardon are being processed. So far, 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.³²
- We recommend the inclusion of data regarding PDLs and other BuCor personnel as an outbreak in these closed-spaced facilities poses a great risk that can increase the positive cases immensely.³³

²⁷ Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 1)

²⁸ Sen. Cayetano

²⁹ Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 2)

³⁰ Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 2) and Sen. Dela Rosa (Annex A, p. 1)

³¹ Sen. De Lima (Annex B, p. 4)

³² Sen. De Lima (Annex B, p. 4)

³³ Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 3) and Sen. Cayetano

Other Forms of Assistance and Partnership with LGUs (p. 9)

- We reiterate our previous inquiry if there is any budget realigned to fund the implementation of the Balik Probinsya program? If so, please provide the details of any fund sourcing and utilization in the next report.³⁴

Assistance to Students, Educators, and Educational Institutions (p. 9)

- We hope to see the total number and regional distribution of teachers and stakeholders trained by DICT in relation to the adjustments necessary to deliver online or blended learning.³⁵
- Based on the Report, DICT is providing digital literacy training for teachers, educators and other stakeholders. Is DICT equipped to conduct the said training? Wouldn't the expertise in digital learning be with educators who specialize in this and not DICT?³⁶
- DICT must also ensure that the trained teachers and stakeholders have the proper equipment and software to be able to effectively conduct online learning.³⁷
- DepEd should provide a concrete plan and the relevant timelines with regard to the preparation and dissemination of the distance learning curriculum before the opening of schools in August.³⁸
- DepEd should likewise provide a comprehensive assessment of the issues on alternative learning systems as well as the availability of ICT equipment and other materials, which may affect the delivery and effectiveness of education once classes resume.³⁹
- Based on the Report, of the 120,798 target student- beneficiaries, 67,650 were already able to receive their TES. This means that 44% of the target student-beneficiaries have yet to receive their TES. CHED should fast track the disbursement of the said funds and assist beneficiaries that have difficulty completing the submission of their documents due to the ongoing community quarantine.⁴⁰

Assistance to Women, Children and Other Vulnerable Groups (p. 10)

- DSWD, PCW, PNP, and other concerned agencies should explore ways wherein women are able to report abuse or violence. In France, for example, victims use a codeword to pharmacists to let them know about their abuse. We can adopt

³⁴ Sen. De Lima (Annex B, p. 3)

³⁵ Sen. Villanueva (Annex C, p. 3)

³⁶ Sen. Cayetano

³⁷ Sen. Villanueva (Annex C, p. 3)

³⁸ Sen. Villanueva (Annex C, p. 3)

³⁹ Sen. Villanueva (Annex C, p. 3)

⁴⁰ Sen. Villanueva (Annex C, p. 8)

similar initiatives to make it easier for women to report domestic violence during this pandemic.⁴¹

- Provide an update on the government's efforts in cracking down cybercrime activities, considering the news reports that online child sexual abuse cases in the country significantly increased by over 260% during the lockdown period.⁴²
- The DOH should clarify its protocols regarding the management of babies and children who are infected or suspected to be infected with COVID-19 and are required to undergo quarantine. We recommend that at least one of the parents be allowed to give the appropriate child care, provided that the parent should wear a full protective gear/hazmat.⁴³

Continuing Efforts on Information Dissemination (p. 10)

- It is also important to have a more comprehensive and more aggressive information campaign to inform the public about the importance of strictly observing the minimum health standards and guidelines imposed by the government, and how easily one can contract the disease without following strict health and hygiene protocols. The government should employ effective communication strategies to convey such programs and policies. Apart from strengthening our defenses through more testing and more laboratories, we must also gain public support at this crucial time through proper education and information.⁴⁴
- 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.⁴⁵

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

Human Resources for Health (HRH) (p. 10)

- Two and a half months have passed and only 2,753 HRH have been hired out of the DOH-approved 6,807 slots and the DBM-allotted positions for 15,757 for temporary health workers. This problem has to be decisively solved as it

⁴¹ Sen. Cayetano

⁴² Sen. De Lima (Annex B, pp. 4-5) and Sen. Cayetano

⁴³ Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 3)

⁴⁴ Sen. Revilla (Annex F, p. 3) and Sen. Cayetano

⁴⁵ Sen. Villanueva (Annex C. p. 6)

definitely hampers the operations of our testing centers, laboratories and hospitals.⁴⁶

- 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.⁴⁷
- What are the efforts being done to augment and train more laboratory personnel which could increase the efficiency of our accredited laboratories and complement the accreditation of more laboratories?⁴⁸
- 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.⁴⁹
- As previously commented, a clear assistance program must be available for health workers banned from working abroad, considering that aside from their foregone incomes, they have also incurred huge expenditures to complete employment requirements such as language proficiency and other certifications that would eventually expire.⁵⁰
- DOLE and DOH should also coordinate to ensure that returning OFW-healthcare workers and stranded healthcare workers are integrated into the DOH human resource hiring.⁵¹

Referral Hospitals, COVID-19 Bed Capacity, and Equipment (p. 11)

- DOH should provide granulated data on the available and occupied COVID-19 beds, including information on the type of hospitals across regions. Such information is necessary to assess the health sector's capacity to accommodate cases during the peak of the pandemic.⁵²
- 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.⁵³

⁴⁶ Sen. De Lima (Annex B, p. 4)

⁴⁷ Sen. Villanueva (Annex C, p. 7)

⁴⁸ Sen. Revilla (Annex F, p. 3)

⁴⁹ Sen. Lacson (Annex D, p. 10)

⁵⁰ Sen. Villanueva (Annex C, p. 6)

⁵¹ Sen. Villanueva (Annex C, p. 6)

⁵² Sen. Villanueva (Annex C, p. 2)

⁵³ Sen. Villanueva (Annex C, p. 7)

Quarantine Facilities (p. 11)

- Reiterating the question, how many quarantine officials are there? Is there one assigned to every airport/port of entry and in every quarantine facility? If there is a shortage, how will this be addressed?⁵⁴
- As previously commented, based on the 9th President's Report, DepEd has approved 2,852 school facilities for COVID-19 related concerns. As per our previous comment, Republic Act 10821 or the Children's Emergency Relief and Protection Act calls for limited use of school facilities as evacuation centers, to wit: "only in cases where there is no other available place or structure which can be used as general evacuation center may a school or child development center be used as an evacuation center." Given that students will not be going back to the school premises soon, there may be no urgency now. However, this must still be addressed because teachers may have to access materials in their classroom at some point.⁵⁵
- We hope that there is a clear delineation of duties among the OWWA, DOH, BOQ, DOT, and other government agencies in the management of privately commissioned quarantine facilities.⁵⁶
- The government should address the delays in swabbing schedules and issuance of certificates of completion of the mandatory quarantine for our balikbayans.⁵⁷
- Similarly, please provide updates on what happened to the more than 2,000 OFWs who have been stranded in the different quarantine facilities in Metro Manila? According to reports, they have been complaining about the conditions of the facilities, and the 2-month delay in the release of their COVID-19 tests.⁵⁸
- To free up quarantine rooms for OFWs, perhaps OWWA could prioritize the PCR testing of OFWs who already went through strict isolation in embassies and/or ships. This is also to shorten their agony of being alone and away from their families.⁵⁹

Update on Test Kits, Testing Centers, and Expanded Testing (p. 12)

- As previously commented, COVID-19 Deputy Chief Implementer Vince Dizon remarked that we currently have a capacity of 12,000 tests per day. Why do we set our testing goal at a low of 8,000 if we have daily laboratory capacity of 12,000? What is our benchmark in identifying the target number of people to be tested? Barring any problems with 12,000 daily tests, how long will it take us to cover at least 0.1% of the population?⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Sen. Cayetano

⁵⁵ Sen. Cayetano

⁵⁶ Sen. Villanueva (Annex C, p. 7)

⁵⁷ Sen. Villanueva (Annex C, p. 4) and Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 2)

⁵⁸ Sen. De Lima (Annex B, p. 2)

⁵⁹ Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 2)

⁶⁰ Sen. Lacson (Annex D, p. 7) and Sen. Revilla (Annex F, p. 3)

- Does the DOH/IATF have a new timeline set for actually reaching the set objective of 30,000 tests per day? If so, when can the country reach the desired 30,000 tests per day? And more importantly, when can we expand testing to include workers not covered by the DOH guidelines on testing?⁶¹
- Can the DOH provide details on the procurement of P1.6 billion PCR test kits? How many tests can these 9 different types of PCR test kits conduct? How would these test kits be allocated nationwide?⁶²
- Provide an update on the procurement of needed testing peripherals mentioned by the DOH such as reagents.⁶³
- As previously commented, according to Dr. Benjamin Co, an infectious disease and clinical pharmacology expert, adding outdated data to the current case statistics and then announcing these without providing proper context might cause public confusion. We echo his recommendation for DOH to form a separate team to evaluate all latent data such as tests, deaths, and recoveries.⁶⁴
- DOH should present a clear action plan on how it will achieve its goal of completing the validation of more than 6,000 tests and improve its human resource and technical capability in order to address this persistent backlog. What is the status of our backlogs as of date?⁶⁵
- 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?⁶⁶
- As previously commented, the mass testing effort should be matched by a massive sequencing of the genetics of COVID-19 so that we can map its spread and detect mutations accurately. It is therefore recommended that the government should make massive genome sequencing of COVID-19 as one of the top priorities and as a parallel strategy of mass testing. The government should appropriate the needed amount in order to carry out the massive genome sequencing by providing sufficient funding to the Philippine Genome Center (PGC), the RITM, and other research centers/laboratories.⁶⁷
- As of 3 June 2020, the bulk of our active cases totaling 13,699, are considered as cases with “mild” symptoms comprising 12,826 cases (94%). Of this number,

⁶¹ Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 4)

⁶² Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 4)

⁶³ Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 4)

⁶⁴ Sen. Cayetano

⁶⁵ Sen. Villanueva (Annex C, p. 2), Sen. Lacson (Annex D, pp. 6-7), and Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 4)

⁶⁶ Sen. Lacson (Annex D, p. 6)

⁶⁷ Sen. Lacson (Annex D p. 7-8)

11,371 individuals are “pending admission status” (1,383 are already admitted and 72 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 13,361 as of this writing, 4,704 (35%) of which is already occupied, how do we guarantee that we have adequate care provision for these 11,371 COVID-19 patients waiting admission?⁶⁸

- As previously suggested, 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-19.⁶⁹
- On testing centers, is there a contingency plan for testing labs to sustain their capacities in case of unforeseen disruptions?⁷⁰
- Based on reports, different factors affect laboratory operations including the limited availability of laboratory supplies in the market and health human resources, equipment and infrastructure issues. Would the DOH consider focusing the resources on increasing the efficiency of the existing and accredited laboratories and realizing the current testing capacity to 30,000 first, rather than setting up new laboratories that would only be hampered by unresolved operational issues? The resolution of such issues would be crucial as we move to a new target of conducting 50,000 tests daily, and the NCR has already shifted to GCQ.⁷¹
- We also endorse the recommendation of UP-OCTA for the government to urgently scale up the other aspects of the test, trace, and treat strategy, especially in fast tracking the accreditation of COVID-19 laboratories and deployment of information systems and other interventions to improve the turnaround time of testing centers.⁷²

Strengthening Contact Tracing Measures (p. 13)

- 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.⁷³

⁶⁸ Sen. Lacson (Annex D, p. 10)

⁶⁹ Sen. Villanueva (Annex C, p. 6)

⁷⁰ Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 4)

⁷¹ Sen. Revilla (Annex F, p. 3)

⁷² Sen. Cayetano

⁷³ Morris, L. & Beck, L. “While U.S. struggles to roll out coronavirus contact tracing, Germany has been doing it from the start.” 25 May 2020. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved on 28 May 2020, from

- We note, however, that 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.⁷⁴
- The DOH says that 94,000 more contact tracers are needed to be hired to achieve the ideal ratio of 1:800. What steps are being taken to make sure that every LGU has the necessary manpower for contact tracing? How many contact tracers are there nationwide? Breakdown in terms of LGU?⁷⁵
- The report mentioned 3,476 public health associates assigned in Regional Epidemiology and Surveillance Units and Provincial Epidemiology and Surveillance Units to assist in contact tracing and surveillance efforts of the government. This is dismally far from the target of hiring around 94,000 contact tracers. This implies slow response or complete inaction on this urgent concern from the DOH.⁷⁶
- What is the process of hiring contact tracers? What are the qualifications for one to be a contact tracer? Who trains and orients the hired contact tracers?⁷⁷
- Are there guidelines / standards for ensuring that contact tracers do their job well? How will the DILG / LGUs make sure that contact tracers send their reports in a timely manner?⁷⁸
- As we have previously pointed out, hiring contact tracers should be a top priority of the government. Contact tracing has helped slow down previous epidemics, such as SARS and Ebola outbreaks. It is thus critical in battling COVID-19, more so now that we are reopening some businesses. As such, DOH, in coordination with LGUs, should provide standardized training for our contact tracers to ensure that they conduct contact tracing according to established protocol.⁷⁹
- We wish to reiterate our view that since many are involved in contact tracing (DOH, DILG, LGUs), is there an agency or point-person who will ensure that actionable information is shared real-time and that the relevant groups in fact act on said information in a timely manner?⁸⁰
- Meanwhile, the *StaySafe.ph* application should also be further promoted in order for more Filipinos who have smartphones to join this community-driven contact tracing and health condition reporting system, with the assurance that the said

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/contact-tracing-coronavirus-germany/2020/05/24/7e59a668-93c1-11ea-87a3-22d324235636_story.html

⁷⁴ Sen. Cayetano

⁷⁵ Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 5)

⁷⁶ Sen. De Lima (Annex B, p. 3)

⁷⁷ Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 5)

⁷⁸ Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 5)

⁷⁹ Sen. Cayetano and Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 8)

⁸⁰ Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 5) and Sen. Cayetano

app has proper mechanisms to protect the privacy of the individuals using the application.⁸¹

- As per our previous comment, are OFWs and other foreign visitors required to download *StaySafe.ph* or other contact tracing apps and have these operational on their phones while in the Philippines?⁸²
- To reiterate, aside from the efforts made by the DOH such as the deployment of FASSSTER and TanodCOVID, the national government, through the DOH, should employ a ground level contact tracing measure through the participation of law enforcement agencies. For instance, when a person has tested positive with COVID-19, contact tracing and investigation on the patient's travel history must immediately be conducted. With the data gathered, the government should subject those contacted people to tests.⁸³

Provision of Healthcare Resources, Supplies, and Equipment (p. 13)

- We reiterate our comment that since there is an increasing need for medical equipment and supplies, especially for the PPEs of our frontliners, the distribution of said healthcare resources should be done immediately. As such, what is the reason for the slow distribution of medical supplies and equipment?⁸⁴
- As previously commented, the government should have a system wherein they prioritize the distribution of medical supplies and PPEs to health facilities in the areas with the highest prevalence of COVID positive or suspected cases; that would be Metro Manila and Central Visayas. But it should also ensure that the entire country has PPEs as every health personnel needs to take extra precautions at this time.⁸⁵

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

Budgetary Measures to Fund COVID-19 Efforts (p. 16)

- News reports last 31 May 2020 revealed that the government had entered into foreign loans and received grants for COVID-19 response amounting to USD 4.858 billion or about P246 billion from foreign institutions and commercial markets. Provide information on the institutions that gave these loans and grants and where the government intends to use these borrowings, on top of the realigned budgets.⁸⁶

⁸¹ Sen. Cayetano

⁸² Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 5)

⁸³ Sen. Lacson (Annex D, p. 8-9)

⁸⁴ Sen. Cayetano

⁸⁵ Sen. Cayetano

⁸⁶ Sen. De Lima (Annex B, p. 5)

- PhilHealth reported having released P13.278 billion to 562 PhilHealth-accredited Health Care Institutions through its Interim Reimbursement Mechanism (IRM) as of 20 May 2020. How many claims or requests for application has PhilHealth received? The Private Hospitals Association of the Philippines, Inc. (PHAP) complains of some hospitals being financially drained due to delays in the release of the IRM. As such, Philhealth should provide a breakdown of the funds it released to healthcare institutions, specifying the amount released per hospital, the date disbursed, the basis for the release, and other relevant information.⁸⁷
- Provide a detailed list of unreleased appropriations and unobligated allotments of each department.⁸⁸

IV. RESPONSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE RECOVERY PLAN

Tourism

- The DOT should provide trainings, which incorporates the significance of digital technology for workers in the tourism-related enterprises, especially our local tour guides to enhance their qualifications and learn new skills.⁸⁹
- The DOT should also craft a program that will provide assistance to certain establishments to get legitimate accreditation from DOT.⁹⁰

Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals, and Futures Thinking

- As previously commented, we should ensure a budget for futures thinking in Higher Education, as this is an important component in rebuilding the country after the pandemic. SUCs play an important role in generating innovative ideas that can be developed to help us prepare and adapt for all possible outcomes in the New Normal.⁹¹
- As we have pointed out, this pandemic reveals our weaknesses but also presents new opportunities such as the realization that farm to market can actually happen. As we grapple with the reality that we are dependent on imports for much of our food products, the DA should create a futures thinking group that is solely dedicated to studying the alternative futures we will be confronted with and what we will need to do to feed our people.⁹²

⁸⁷ Sen. Cayetano

⁸⁸ Sen. De Lima (Annex B, p. 5)

⁸⁹ Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 3)

⁹⁰ Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 4)

⁹¹ Sen. Cayetano

⁹² Sen. Cayetano

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP)

- Aside from the loans being granted by the DA, do farmers have access to low-rate credit from local banks with a risk assessment criterion that reflects the farming condition reality and is customized to local conditions?⁹³
- Is real-time funding, which is urgently needed by the farming sector, available to them given that banks are operating with reduced staff and on shorter hours?⁹⁴
- Are loans being granted to other players in the supply chain such as those in the production, transport, storage and post-harvest handling, food processing and agro-processing?⁹⁵

Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)

- With regard to crop insurance, is real-time funding available to those whose crops were affected?⁹⁶
- Are global pandemics covered under the present crop insurance policies?⁹⁷
- Are they able to regulate peer-to-peer lending via crowdfunding platforms which has emerged as an alternative form of financing for farmers or companies looking to enhance productivity?⁹⁸

V. OTHER COMMENTS / CONCERNS

Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine

- With the increase in the number of COVID-19 positive cases in the NCR and in other areas during the first week of GCQ, a review of the minimum health safeguards and quarantine mechanisms that must be in place in high-risk areas is also recommended. Responsibly “opening up” can only be done with these mechanisms in check.⁹⁹
- As recommended in a study by UP-OCTA, the easing of quarantine restrictions must be matched with tighter monitoring, stricter physical distancing measures, wearing of PPEs, and increased testing and surveillance.¹⁰⁰
- To reiterate, in a study made by UP-OCTA, it was determined that after 10 days of MECQ (May 16 to 25), there was almost no change in the week-to-week number of new COVID-19 cases in NCR, based on current data from the DOH. The estimates are based on confirmed COVID-19 cases, and do not include cases that are still for validation, which as of May 25 account for 1,498 cases in

⁹³ Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 5)

⁹⁴ Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 5)

⁹⁵ Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 5)

⁹⁶ Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 6)

⁹⁷ Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 6)

⁹⁸ Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 6)

⁹⁹ Sen. Cayetano

¹⁰⁰ Sen. Cayetano

NCR, nor do they include the 7,119 individuals nationwide. The average number of new COVID-19 cases in NCR over the past week (May 19 to 25) is greater than 5 per day per million of population. 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 and should be classified as “High Risk.”¹⁰¹

Land and International Travel

- Considering that there are still at least 200 positive cases of COVID-19 reported by the DOH everyday, both inbound and outbound international leisure travels should still be prohibited until further notice.¹⁰²
- PNP and AFP should retain checkpoints in city and provincial borders to control land travel and ensure that only essential travel will be permitted even during the implementation of GCQ and MGCQ.¹⁰³

Testing of Employees

- As previously commented, the government should provide assurance to employers and employees that proper government assistance with regard to testing employees will be given, especially as most of the country shifts to General Community Quarantine.¹⁰⁴
- 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.”¹⁰⁵
- Are workers in the transport and processing chain being required to be tested before returning to work, and even after they return? What is the frequency of the testing?¹⁰⁶

Face Masks for the Public

- As previously stated, among the concerns of the public is the cost and limited availability of face masks. As such, people have been using makeshift masks which, more often than not, do not pass medical standards. It is, therefore, recommended that the national government, in coordination with the LGUs,

¹⁰¹ Sen. Lacson (Annex D, p. 8)

¹⁰² Sen. Dela Rosa (Annex A, p. 1)

¹⁰³ Sen. Dela Rosa (Annex A, p. 2)

¹⁰⁴ Sen. Villanueva (Annex C, p. 7)

¹⁰⁵ Sen. Villanueva (Annex C, p. 7)

¹⁰⁶ Sen. Angara (Annex E, p. 2)

should ensure the availability of masks suitable to prevent transmission and infection.¹⁰⁷

Philippine Offshore Gaming Operators (POGOs)

- We reiterate our disagreement with the decision of the IATF-EID or Task Force on classifying the POGOs 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.¹⁰⁸
- Consistent with our earlier recommendation to adopt a sectoral policy in gradually lifting the lockdown, it is our humble opinion that POGOs 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.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Sen. Lacson (Annex B, p. 6)

¹⁰⁸ Sen. Villanueva (Annex C, p. 7)

¹⁰⁹ Sen. Villanueva (Annex C, p. 8)