

SENATE'S CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
COMMENTS ON THE 9TH WEEKLY REPORT
OF THE PRESIDENT DATED 25 MAY 2020

I. PROVIDE EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO ALL AFFECTED SECTORS

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

- 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?¹
- The total number of household beneficiaries under the 4Ps reached 4.211 million, an increase of 76,489 beneficiaries from the 8th report. Out of the actual number of household beneficiaries, 3.825 million or 90.84% are cash card account holders. What are the reasons why not all 4Ps household beneficiaries are registered as cash card account holders?²
- The DSWD SAP-Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS) was not able to distribute the cash aid to 447,721 households at a considerable total amount of Php 2.49 billion. What is the reason for this?³
- In DILG MC No. 2020-086, the barangays were directed to prepare the initial list of waitlisted/left-out families. What is the total number of families included in the initial list? What percentage has been validated by the DSWD? When is the expected pay out?⁴
- There have been changes in the number of estimated beneficiaries. This week has shown additional 100,000 beneficiaries for OFWs. May we be clarified as to the reason why there has been a sudden increase of estimated beneficiaries? Does it contemplate the second tranche?⁵
- Based on the 9th IATF Report, there are still 27,972 driver-beneficiaries who have yet to receive SAP—this is despite the fact that a memorandum of agreement has already been signed with alternative cash distribution systems like GCash. We request for an explanation as to why the DSWD has yet to complete the distribution of the 1st tranche of SAP to TNVS and PUV drivers in National Capital Region (NCR).⁶

¹ Sen. Lacson (Annex B, p. 1) and Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 2)

² Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 1)

³ Sen. De Lima (Annex D, p. 1)

⁴ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 2)

⁵ Sen. Lacson (Annex B, p. 1)

⁶ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 1) and Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 8)

- Based on previous reports, the government will provide cash aid under the SAP to an additional 5 million qualified recipients on top of the initial 18 million beneficiaries. We would like to request for the regional distribution of the 5 million recipients, including the basis for their inclusion. In selecting the additional 5 million recipients, was the previous list of beneficiaries endorsed by LGUs considered? Will these “excess slots” benefit LGUs that have more poor households?⁷
- Are tricycle and pedicab drivers included in the list of additional 5 million low-income household beneficiaries to be given financial assistance under SAP?⁸
- As the DOT is distributing tourist vouchers worth P2,000, we request that said agency consider granting travel vouchers to domestic tourists or implementing interventions that other countries are doing to support their tourism industry.⁹
- The increase of P1 billion in the budget of CAMP-AKAP was due to the corresponding increase in target beneficiaries from 150,000 to 250,000. However, there was a drastic drop in assisted beneficiaries from 69.72% in the previous report to less than 50% in the current report. Fund utilization also suffered a reduction in the previous report from 77.80% to 50.16%. What are the reasons for the decrease in number of beneficiaries and reduction in utilization?¹⁰
- We seek clarifications on the guidelines of AKAP, which states that qualified OFWs must either be displaced due to their host country’s imposition of lockdowns or community quarantines; must either be overseas, about to return abroad as balik manggagawa; and must not receive any financial support from employers or their host country.¹¹
- The DOLE granted assistance to all of its target beneficiaries under the TUPAD for informal workers program while also increasing its fund utilization rate to 95.97%. Does the DOLE have plans to increase the funding and the number of beneficiaries under TUPAD?¹²
- DA’s FSRF increased the assistance granted to rice farmers from 525,478 to 584,491 or 98.86% of its target beneficiaries. Of its total allotment of P3 billion, P2.956 billion or 98.53% of its total allotment was transferred to the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP). Of the P2.956 billion transferred to LBP for the FSRF, how much has been actually received by the beneficiaries?¹³
- The MSFF was only able to reach 7,496 beneficiaries and utilize P517.488 million of its total allotment. What are the plans and measures taken by the DA,

⁷ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 3)

⁸ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 1)

⁹ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 1)

¹⁰ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 2)

¹¹ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 1)

¹² Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 2) and Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 4)

¹³ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 2)

the ACPC in particular, to increase the utilization of the MSFFs and Agri-fishery based MSEs?¹⁴

- There were several news reports about a number of honest beneficiaries across the country who voluntarily returned the emergency cash subsidy under the SAP. As such, the Executive Department should include in the next report the total number of said beneficiaries who returned their cash aid and the total amount they remitted?¹⁵
- May we know the status of the validation and cross-checking process of qualified beneficiaries who received ESP, CAMP and TUPAD to ensure that there is no duplication of cash aid given by the government in the second tranche?¹⁶
- Reportedly, 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?¹⁷
- The Memorandum dated 22 May 2020 from the Executive Secretary implies the exclusion of SAP beneficiaries from GCQ areas in the second tranche, except those who belong to industries and sectors affected by the continuous restrictions in their operation. I put on record my strong opposition to this pronouncement, as it goes against the "Bayanihan to Heal as One Act", which clearly provides that around 18 million low-income families are entitled to subsidies in the amount ranging from P5,000.00 to P8,000.00 for two months. Those who are qualified to receive the first tranche, as long as they did not receive any other assistance from other government programs, are still eligible to receive the second tranche of cash aid.¹⁸
- On 25 May 2020, Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque announced that the distribution of the second tranche of cash aid may begin. What improvements have we set in place to ensure that the lapses in the first batch of distribution will not be repeated?¹⁹
- We commend the creation of an online portal to streamline the process of registering for this second tranche. What mechanisms are in place for those areas that have difficulty accessing the internet?²⁰

¹⁴Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 2)

¹⁵ Sen. De Lima (Annex D, p. 1)

¹⁶ Sen. De Lima (Annex D, pp. 1-2)

¹⁷ Sen. Lacson (Annex B, p. 1)

¹⁸ Sen. De Lima (Annex D, p. 2)

¹⁹ Sen. Dela Rosa (Annex A, pp. 2-3)

²⁰ Sen. Dela Rosa (Annex A, p. 3)

SAP for Small Business (p. 4)

- Of the 199,377 pre-qualified small business employers notified by the BIR, how many have actually applied for the SBWS program? DOF should urge the remaining pre-qualified employers to apply to ensure that the whole 3.4 million target beneficiaries will be given assistance.²¹
- 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.²²
- According to the Report, there has been no discrimination on community-based cooperatives and family run shops. This, however, is not reflective of what is happening on the ground. The denial letter implies that there is discrimination against those who do not belong to the pre-qualification list.²³
- What is the estimated number of formal sector workers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic but are unfortunately unable to receive assistance from neither the SWBS nor the CAMP, and information on the kind and scope of assistance, if any, provided to them.²⁴
- More than 50 MSMEs with around 190,000 employees have submitted a temporary closure notice to the DOLE due to the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. What are the plans of DOLE to help these MSMEs and their respective employees?²⁵

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

- As previously commented, some LGUs under MECQ have started operating tricycles. Does the IATF have guidelines for transportation under MECQ? We have to ensure clear and consistent implementation of the precautions that LGUs have to take.²⁶

²¹ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 2)

²² Sen. Lacson (Annex B, p. 2)

²³ Sen. Lacson (Annex B, p. 5)

²⁴ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 4)

²⁵ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 2)

²⁶ Sen. Cayetano

- What is the projected number of OFWs to be repatriated in the next two to three months? What is the quality and total capacity of available mandatory quarantine facilities?²⁷
- Some posts on social media show that a number of OFWs have been in quarantine for 2 months, and have been declared negative from COVID-19, and yet they still are unable to return home because their certificates have not been printed. Have these claims been verified? What is OWWA doing about this? Can DOLE/OWWA provide details on the process of receiving repatriated OFWs until they are sent home?²⁸
- DOH, DILG, DOLE, OWWA, and other appropriate agencies should explain what may have caused the alleged delay in swab tests, release of results, or issuance of OFWs' quarantine clearances.²⁹
- In DILG MC No. 2020-087, the receiving LGUs may subject the locally-stranded individuals (LSIs) to their local health protocols and procedures, such as 14-day quarantine and rapid antibody testing for COVID-19 disease. Who is responsible for the costs of these quarantine and tests?³⁰

Protection of Consumers and Related Measures (p. 5)

- What was 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?³¹
- 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?³²
- 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?³³

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

- The next submission should include a detailed report on fund utilization and number of beneficiaries served/assisted under the Livelihood Seeding Program-Negosyo Serbisyo sa Barangay Program of the DTI.³⁴

²⁷ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 5)

²⁸ Sen. Dela Rosa (Annex A, p. 1), Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 3), and Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 5)

²⁹ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 3) and Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 5)

³⁰ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 7)

³¹ Sen. Lacson (Annex B, p. 5)

³² Sen. Lacson (Annex B, p. 5)

³³ Sen. Lacson (Annex B, p. 5)

³⁴ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 2)

- Based on the Report, the DA has provided 1,029,445 households and individuals nationwide with seeds, starter kits, and livestock through the Urban Agriculture Program. What kind of monitoring and support will the DA provide to ensure that these households and individuals actually succeed with these seeds, starter kits and livestock? Further, given its huge number of beneficiaries, how is the DA monitoring its Urban Agriculture Program? Are there metrics in place to assess its effectiveness?³⁵
- Aside from the Agriculture Training Institute, has the DA considered partnering with TESDA and SUCs for training on urban / backyard agriculture? The University of the Philippines - Los Banos has been engaging in edible landscaping as a way of augmenting local food supplies while supporting environmental efforts. The DA can forge partnerships with UPLB and other SUCs with similar programs to implement such activities in local communities and even at the household levels. Is there a plan for DA to coordinate all similar efforts on urban agriculture?³⁶
- DA should partner with DTI's GoLokal Program to help bring products (food and non-food) of our MSMEs to a larger market through the DA's KAK-on-Wheels and KAK-Online platforms.³⁷

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

- We are reiterating our comment for the 4th 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? We have been distributing vegetables since the start of ECQ. Meanwhile, LGUs in NCR have been successfully purchasing fresh produce from the vegetable producing regions which prove that healthy food can be made available during times of calamity. It is high time that we put into place nutrition guidelines during times of calamities and emergencies.³⁸
- As we have pointed out before, the DA should provide an update on its efforts to improve storage facilities across the country in the light of the pandemic. This is not just a concern during this pandemic. It must be addressed for the long term for the sustainable production of our local produce.³⁹
- Which government agency is in charge of using the Supply Chain Analysis (Scan) Dashboard and Reporter Application? Did the government test the

³⁵ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 4)

³⁶ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 4) and Sen. Cayetano

³⁷ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 4)

³⁸ Sen. Cayetano

³⁹ Sen. Cayetano

efficiency of the supply chain system? Is the system accessible to the public? Can it be accessed via mobile devices?⁴⁰

- What are the collaboration efforts taken by the DAR and DTI to effectively market the agricultural products of Agrarian Reform Beneficiary Organizations (ARBOs)?⁴¹

Assistance to Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) (p. 7)

- There are observers who claim that the government has not fully reported all prison deaths, which is disconcerting considering that COVID-19 is spreading more quickly and widely in closed and severely congested places such as jails and prisons, as evidenced by the alarming incidents of outbreaks in a jail in Cebu City and the women's correctional facility in Mandaluyong City. Where can complete data on infection and deaths in our jails and prisons be accessed? More importantly, what have we been doing to contain the viral spread and responding to the health concerns of our personnel and inmates in such facilities?⁴²
- The measures on testing, isolation and treatment being implemented in Cebu City should be replicated in other jails and prisons where there are suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases to ensure the safety of both PDLs and the employees working in these places.⁴³

Other Forms of Assistance and Partnership with LGUs (p. 8)

- Is there any budget realigned to fund the implementation of the Balik Probinsya program that is based on the provisions of Republic Act No. 11469, otherwise known as the "Bayanihan to Heal as One Act"? If so, provide the details of any fund sourcing and utilization in the next report.⁴⁴

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

- We again call on DBM to reconsider the discontinuation of appropriations for capital outlays of all SUCs (amounting to P17.93 billion), since doing so would be detrimental to their goal of improving the quality and culture of research and development in SUCs.⁴⁵
- As previously requested, please provide an assessment of the basic education sector's infrastructure, human, technical, and financial resources to ensure readiness for school reopening on August 24.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 3)

⁴¹ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 3)

⁴² Sen. De Lima (Annex D, pp. 2-3)

⁴³ Sen. De Lima (Annex D, p. 3)

⁴⁴ Sen. De Lima (Annex D, p. 4)

⁴⁵ Sen. Cayetano and Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 10)

⁴⁶ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 6)

- We reiterate our query on the summer activities/programs of DepEd now that classes have been suspended. Are there any being implemented?⁴⁷
- According to a survey published in the *We Recover As One* report of the NEDA, 46% of their respondents had at least 1 member of the family who is a student. Of this number, only 40% claimed that the student is ready for digital learning. Several social media posts show that some students have to brave through impossible situations just to access their online classes and quizzes. How will this issue be addressed? The DepEd and CHED must be willing to make adjustments in response to such cases, especially since it is a hard-hitting truth that some parts of the country still do not have internet access.⁴⁸
- During the Education Committee Hearing last 14 May 2020, NTC mentioned that households need to have additional digibox for the educational channel. It will cost P500 - P1,000 per household. As such, even with the proposal for IBC-13 and DepEd to provide TV broadcasting-based education as an alternative learning platform, there will still be huge technology and equipment gaps. These will need to be addressed immediately if the education of our children is to continue in any meaningful way, amid this pandemic.⁴⁹
- From what schools did the students who were included in the DOTr's *Hatid Estudyante Para Makabalik sa Probinsya Program* come from? How many are still in need of the said program? What are the requirements or guidelines to be considered for a student to qualify in the program?⁵⁰

Assistance to Women, Children and Other Vulnerable Groups (p. 9)

- Republic Act No. 9775 or the *Anti-Child Pornography Act of 2009* provides that Internet Service Providers (ISPs) “shall install available technology, program or software to ensure that access to or transmittal of any form of child pornography will be blocked or filtered.” As such, ISPs that fail to install the necessary filtering technology for child pornography must be penalized. With regard to the victims, psycho-social rehabilitation and treatment must be provided for them.⁵¹
- It may also be good to consider the creation of a Joint Task Force involving both the DOJ and the DSWD to expedite the arrest, investigation, and prosecution of persons involved in the abuse of children through online sexual exploitation.⁵²

⁴⁷ Sen. Cayetano

⁴⁸ Sen. Dela Rosa (Annex A, p. 3) and Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 4)

⁴⁹ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 4)

⁵⁰ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 5)

⁵¹ Sen. Dela Rosa (Annex A, p. 2)

⁵² Sen. Dela Rosa (Annex A, p. 2)

Continuing Efforts on Information Dissemination (p. 9)

- We wish to highlight the recommendation of UP OCTA in their Forecast Report No. 8 dated 26 May 2020, that the government should employ effective communication strategies to convey the government's programs and policies in response to the pandemic. The government must work with communications stakeholders including the academe and civil society organizations to develop communication plans for immediate implementation. Also, in terms of scientific and/or technical information on COVID-19, an expert in epidemiology or public health must be tapped to better explain difficult concepts to the public.⁵³
- We encourage all national government agencies to conduct virtual meetings with their respective sectors to inform/update them of the existing response plans and relief measures of the government for their sector. Such virtual meetings can easily serve as a platform for the sectors to raise their concerns and suggest how the government can further help them as we prepare for the new normal scenario.⁵⁴
- We reiterate our request for accurate presentation of comparable key indicators in the Bayanihan Reports, 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. The next report should also have pertinent data on the total and distribution of suspected and probable cases, the number of LGUs with contact tracing teams, the number and distribution of tricycle and pedicab drivers who were provided aid under the Emergency Subsidy Program, and the weekly target PPEs required by facilities.⁵⁵

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

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

- What explains the slow progress of the emergency hiring of healthcare personnel? What are the top reasons/factors? Which are immediately actionable? Which need interventions from Congress?⁵⁶
- Include in the next report the target number of health workers actually needed to augment our health care system, with particulars on how many should be deployed to public and private hospitals and facilities. We need these targeting and mapping-out exercises to know the human resource component of our

⁵³ Sen. Cayetano

⁵⁴ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 5)

⁵⁵ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 8)

⁵⁶ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 5)

capability to meet the potential challenge of 2nd wave of infections as we gradually ease up the lockdown measures.⁵⁷

- DOH should improve its personnel and technical capability in validating the actual number of active COVID-19 cases in the country by prioritizing the hiring of trained data encoders and organizers that will be able to improve the accuracy of their reported data.⁵⁸
- Are our healthcare workers being tested regularly for COVID-19 regardless of symptoms? Given the continuous exposure of our healthcare workers to COVID-19 patients and the insufficient supply of PPEs, the DOH should be proactive in protecting our health frontliners from contracting the virus.⁵⁹
- 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.⁶⁰
- As previously raised, a perusal of AO 28, which authorizes the grant of SRA to frontline public health workers, would show that the Executive went beyond the mandate of Congress as provided under RA 11469. Congress did not intend the SRA to be a one-time grant. The intention was to provide such benefit so long as there exists a state of emergency due to their continued exposure to the risk of COVID-19. Thus, AO 28 should be properly amended to remove such unnecessary qualifications.⁶¹
- Provide a regular/weekly update on the health and non-health frontliners employed by the government, specifying information on the portion of them who are (i) adequately protected with PPEs, (ii) infected with COVID-19, and (iii) paid with COVID-19 Hazard Pay.⁶²
- 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.⁶³
- We also reiterate our recommendation for DOH, DOLE and POEA to closely coordinate with each other in order to connect the healthcare workers, who are banned from working abroad, to the ongoing recruitment activities of DOH.⁶⁴

⁵⁷ Sen. De Lima (Annex D, p. 3) and Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 1)

⁵⁸ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 2)

⁵⁹ Sen. Angara (Annex C, P. 5)

⁶⁰ Sen. Lacson (Annex B, p. 11)

⁶¹ Sen. Lacson (Annex B, p. 11)

⁶² Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 2)

⁶³ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 1)

⁶⁴ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 1)

Referral Hospitals, COVID-19 Bed Capacity, and Equipment (p. 10)

- With the gradual easing of lockdown and quarantine, what are the preparations being done to avoid overwhelming the healthcare system in the country, to curb the unacceptably high fatality rate, and to arm our health workers with the necessary knowledge and skills to care for sick patients?⁶⁵
- Occupancy rate remains the same at 39.7%, which is the same for all hospitals enumerated. Why is there no change in the number of admitted and discharged patients?⁶⁶
- What are the actions being taken to fast track the procurement of mechanical ventilators and increase the number of hospital beds?⁶⁷

Quarantine Facilities (p. 10)

- 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?⁶⁸
- While there are 64 quarantine facilities within Metro Manila as stated in the Report, we would like to reiterate the importance of establishing isolation facilities in different regions nationwide especially the provinces near the NCR. According to the data of DOH on Ligtas COVID Facilities, as of May 24, there are some regions in the country that have a very low number of bed capacity and cannot accommodate patients should the provinces face an unprecedented increase in the number of cases.⁶⁹
- We urge the DOT, in close coordination with the DOLE and OWWA, to further increase the number of available rooms and beds for repatriated OFWs, as the current number may not be sufficient for the coming weeks as thousands of working Filipinos from abroad are expected to arrive.⁷⁰
- Under the section pertaining to “assistance to OFWs”, may we know if there were any confirmed positive cases among the 24,000 OFWs who were cleared and allowed to go home? We would appreciate the inclusion of the summary of test results conducted in the next report.⁷¹
- According to 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

⁶⁵ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 6)

⁶⁶ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 6)

⁶⁷ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 6)

⁶⁸ Sen. Cayetano

⁶⁹ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 6)

⁷⁰ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 7)

⁷¹ Sen. De Lima (Annex D, p. 2)

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.⁷²

- Which schools are included in the 2,852 school facilities which DepEd approved for COVID-19 related concerns? What are the target areas for distribution? How will these facilities be used?⁷³

Update on Test Kits, Testing Centers, and Expanded Testing (p. 11)

- 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?⁷⁴
- On access to testing, now that the country can do a maximum daily testing capacity of around 30,000/day, has the scope of testing expanded? If not, when do we expand? When would we be able to include essential workers from the private sector?⁷⁵
- As previously requested, there should be more granulated data on mass testing (e.g., regional distribution, age, gender, pre-existing conditions), which can provide an accurate picture of the spread of COVID-19. This information will help policymakers determine what steps should be taken in order to stem the spread of the virus.⁷⁶
- During the Committee of the Whole hearing, DOH and IATF mentioned that the testing capacity of the country is not maximized because of the lack of peripherals such as reagents. What is the DOH/IATF doing to address this?⁷⁷
- Despite our ramped-up testing capacity given the increase in accredited testing laboratories for COVID-19, the IATF admitted during the Committee of the Whole hearing that we still have a big number of testing backlog. May we know the current number of backlogs? Deputy Chief Implementer Vince Dizon stated that they target finishing the backlog by May 31. Considering that there are only a few days left prior to this target date, the government must show a clear plan of action on how to achieve its goal of finishing said backlogs.⁷⁸
- According to Dr. Benjamin Co, an infectious disease and clinical pharmacology expert, adding outdated data to the current case statistics and then announcing

⁷² Sen. Cayetano

⁷³ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 4)

⁷⁴ Sen. Lacson (Annex B, p. 5)

⁷⁵ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 8)

⁷⁶ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 2)

⁷⁷ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 7)

⁷⁸ Sen. De Lima (Annex D, p. 4) and Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 2)

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.⁷⁹

- Under the DOH Situationer #28, test results as of May 24 (*most recent report of DOH on testing capacity*) show that there are already 21,149 individuals who tested positive (undergoing case information, validation, and processing). As of the same day or on 24 May, we have a record of 14,035 total cases. There appears to be an evident discrepancy between the data of total cases and individuals who tested positive. Hence, there should be a clarification on the process of case information, validation and processing of cases for us to understand and remedy the bottlenecks in the confirmation of cases.⁸⁰
- Notwithstanding the efforts of the DOH, we should revisit which areas are problematic (i.e. encoding, monitoring and validation) and consider augmenting its manpower or collaborating with other government agencies to expedite the process. The backlog of 7,114 positive results yet to be validated is glaring, and can substantially change our appreciation of the problem.⁸¹
- There are now 4 Mega Swabbing Sites in the country, but 3 of them are in Metro Manila and 1 is in Bulacan. When can we open Mega Swabbing Sites in Visayas and Mindanao? What are the requirements for a site to become a Mega Swabbing Site?⁸²
- Currently, we have 37 accredited COVID-19 active testing laboratories, which is good, considering that from the previous report we had 34. However, given that there are 78 laboratories still being evaluated, we may need to fast-track the evaluation process even further.⁸³
- On contingency for testing centers, is there a contingency plan for testing labs to sustain their capacities in case of unforeseen disruptions?⁸⁴

Strengthening Contact Tracing Measures (p. 12)

- 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

⁷⁹ Sen. Cayetano

⁸⁰ Sen. Lacson (Annex B, p. 7), Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 7), and Sen. Cayetano

⁸¹ Sen. Lacson (Annex B, p. 7) and Sen. Cayetano

⁸² Sen. Dela Rosa (Annex A, p. 2)

⁸³ Sen. Dela Rosa (Annex A, p. 3)

⁸⁴ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 8)

to record every place they have been to for easier contact tracing.⁸⁵ 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 app has proper mechanisms to protect the privacy of the individuals using the application.⁸⁶

- We take note of the Advanced Passenger Processing (APP) system deployed by the Bureau of Immigration to help with contact tracing. How is the information collected, shared or transmitted to the DOH, DILG or IATF? Is there interoperability between the BI's APP system and *StaySafe.ph* and FASSSTER of DOST?⁸⁷
- Are OFWs required to download a contact tracing app like *StaySafe.ph* before they are allowed to go through immigration—similar to the practice in Hong Kong?⁸⁸
- 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.⁸⁹
- A detailed update and status of the hiring of the needed 94,000 contact tracers, or an equivalent program, in the next report will be highly appreciated.⁹⁰ 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.⁹¹
- How do the Provincial, City, and Municipality Epidemiology and Surveillance Units (P/C/M/ESUs) check on the health status of individuals who have been

⁸⁵ 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 https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/contact-tracing-coronavirus-germany/2020/05/24/7e59a668-93c1-11ea-87a3-22d324235636_story.html

⁸⁶ Sen. Cayetano and Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 3)

⁸⁷ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 9)

⁸⁸ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 9)

⁸⁹ Sen. Cayetano and Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 8)

⁹⁰ Sen. De Lima (Annex D, p. 4) and Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 8)

⁹¹ Sen. Lacson (Annex B, p. 8-9)

traced as contacts of a positive case? Who from the government is monitoring these individuals closely?⁹²

- How many of the over 14,000 individuals with confirmed COVID-19 cases have at least one contact traced by the government. Furthermore, we hope to see how many of the total contacts traced (i) have been tested, (ii) are referred to isolation facilities, (iii) are referred to quarantine facilities, or (iv) are sent to COVID-19 hospitals.⁹³

Provision of Healthcare Resources, Supplies, and Equipment (p. 12)

- The increasing need for medical equipment and supplies, especially for the PPEs of our frontliners entails that distribution of said healthcare resources should be done immediately. As such, why is the delivery of donated medical supplies is only at 69.48%? What is the reason for the slow distribution of PPE sets, such as the 4,027,750 face masks pending allocation?⁹⁴
- 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.⁹⁵
- To reiterate, there is also a need to distribute protective gear to the PNP as they help maintain social distancing and serve as manpower in various checkpoints.⁹⁶

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

Extension of Submission of Documents, Deadlines, and Renewal of Permits (p. 15)

- The DILG must encourage LGUs to take the initiative to further extend deadlines on payment of local business taxes, real property taxes, and other taxes, charges, and fees on lessors and tenants alike.⁹⁷

Budgetary Measures to Fund COVID-19 Efforts (p. 15)

- We reiterate our consistent observation in our past comments that there is no transparency in the utilization of public funds being used in the government's

⁹² Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 8)

⁹³ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 3)

⁹⁴ Sen. Cayetano

⁹⁵ Sen. Cayetano

⁹⁶ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 9)

⁹⁷ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 7)

COVID-19 response. We call on the Executive Branch to put up a transparency portal that will show complete and accurate data on public funds realigned and spent in the government's response to this pandemic. The portal should also show all loan contracts and financing agreements entered into by the government for COVID-19 response and efforts to boost our economy for the sake of transparency and accountability to the public.⁹⁸

- We reiterate our query on the P45.7 billion budget released to the DOH. The said amount was in the DBM list of fund releases for COVID-19. The appropriations cover used was the "Unprogrammed Appropriations." Why is such a huge amount not part of the 6th, and all succeeding reports of the President to Congress?⁹⁹
- 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.¹⁰⁰

IV. RESPONSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE RECOVERY PLAN

COVID-19 Employment Recovery Plan for OFWs

- Provide more details about DOLE's Employment Recovery Plan, including the roles of each relevant agency in attaining the goal of generating 1 million jobs, as well as the plan to reintegrate into the labor market the OFWs who would not be able to return to work immediately after the COVID-19 crisis.¹⁰¹

Food Security

- What are foreseen trends and changes in the production of the agriculture sector and the food industry? How will this affect food security in the country?¹⁰²
- Moving forward, what are the plans of the DA in reshaping the agriculture industry in light of the new normal?¹⁰³

⁹⁸ Sen. De Lima (Annex D, p. 4) and Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 9)

⁹⁹ Sen. De Lima (Annex D, p. 4)

¹⁰⁰ Sen. Angara (Annex C, p. 9) and Sen. Cayetano

¹⁰¹ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 6)

¹⁰² Sen. Cayetano

¹⁰³ Sen. Cayetano

Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals, Investment in Research and Development, and Futures Thinking

- To reiterate, NEDA should ensure that government agencies align their budgets and programs, activities and projects towards achieving the SDGs, adjusting targets as necessary, to adapt to the New Normal while maintaining our commitments to achieve the SDGs by 2030.¹⁰⁴
- 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.¹⁰⁵
- 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.¹⁰⁶
- We have repeatedly raised the issue of miniscule budgetary allocation for research and development in the national budget year in, year out - an average of 0.4% of the annual budget from 2016-2020, including 0.39% for 2020. For the same 5-year period, the DOST's average budget is only Php 20B or 0.56% against the trillions of pesos that we pass every year as our national budget. Clearly, we should invest more in research and development.¹⁰⁷

V. OTHER COMMENTS / CONCERNS

Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine

- Assuming that public transport will be partly incapacitated due to the social distancing measures implemented by the DoTR and other factors, the government should take initiative in supplementing the needs of the commuting public, the transport sector, employees, and employers, perhaps through provision of shuttle or P2P services or PUV subsidy.¹⁰⁸
- 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

¹⁰⁴ Sen. Cayetano

¹⁰⁵ Sen. Cayetano

¹⁰⁶ Sen. Cayetano

¹⁰⁷ Sen. Lacson (Annex B, p. 10)

¹⁰⁸ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 7)

that are still for validation, which as of May 25 account for 1,498 cases in 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.”¹⁰⁹

- Another key finding of the UP-OCTA study is that during the first week of MECQ, the number of new COVID-19 cases in Makati, Las Pinas and Pasay increased substantially, by 170%, 60% and 58% respectively. There were also increases in the number of new COVID-19 cases in other areas in NCR. While such increases cannot be attributed to MECQ at this time, there remains the possibility that a transition from MECQ to GCQ could exacerbate the increase in new COVID-19 cases in these LGUs further undermining the government’s efforts to control the transmission of COVID-19.¹¹⁰
- With the increase in the number of COVID-19 positive cases in the NCR and in other areas during the first week of MECQ, 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.¹¹¹

Fake Quarantine Passes

- The printing and production of fake quarantine passes seems to have become a lucrative business, with forgers selling these passes at P350.00 a piece. While we commend the IATF for arresting 7 of these forgers in Recto, it may also be good to consider bolstering the technology behind the issuance and verification of such passes, since they will still be used under General Community Quarantine.¹¹²

Testing of Employees

- 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.¹¹³
- 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

¹⁰⁹ Sen. Lacson (Annex B, p. 7)

¹¹⁰ Sen. Cayetano and Sen. Lacson (Annex B, p. 7)

¹¹¹ Sen. Cayetano

¹¹² Sen. Dela Rosa (Annex A, p. 3)

¹¹³ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 9)

“[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.”¹¹⁴

Digital Infrastructure and Governance

- We reiterate that DICT should determine the needed ICT infrastructures and the corresponding plan for its establishment in order to improve the speed of internet connectivity and use of ICT in the country. Priority areas should be identified in developing ICT infrastructures. ICT will also play a vital role in the area of education during the New Normal, as online teaching is a key component of effective blended learning. Connectivity is likewise important for people to be able to stay home and work from home. Also, reliable ICT infrastructure is essential for government transactions, public services, video conferencing, remote work applications, online learning, and telemedicine.¹¹⁵

Immunization Program

- We would like to reiterate our recommendation to the DOH to conduct a nationwide Influenza Program since the flu will complicate the management of any respiratory infection such as COVID-19.¹¹⁶

Face Masks for the Public

- 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, should ensure the availability of masks suitable to prevent transmission and infection.¹¹⁷

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.¹¹⁸
- 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.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 9)

¹¹⁵ Sen. Cayetano

¹¹⁶ Sen. Lacson (Annex B, p. 12)

¹¹⁷ Sen. Lacson (Annex B, p. 12)

¹¹⁸ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 11)

¹¹⁹ Sen. Villanueva (Annex E, p. 11)