



Republic of the Philippines
Senate

OFFICE OF SENATOR LEILA M. DE LIMA

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MEMORANDUM

FOR: CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

THRU: SENATE PRESIDENT VICENTE C. SOTTO III
SEN. FRANKLIN M. DRILON
SEN. PANFILO "PING" M. LACSON
SEN. CHRISTOPHER LAWRENCE T. GO
SEN. PIA S. CAYETANO

FROM: SEN. LEILA M. DE LIMA

RE: COMMENTS ON THE 11th WEEKLY REPORT OF THE
PRESIDENT DATED 8 June 2020

DATE: 10 June 2020

I humbly submit my comments on the President's 11th Weekly Report dated 8 June 2020, in compliance with Section 5 of Republic Act No. 11469:

- 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 three (3) months from effectivity of the "Bayanihan Heal as One Act", and having spent much resources, including personnel and logistics, on the distribution of the financial aid in the first tranche.
- 2) The blunder is so palpable that the DSWD could not even offer any statement as to how was it possible that despite the much-ballyhooed distribution system for 4Ps, which is supposedly well established even decades ago, it could not reach 52,387 poorest of the poor (which are purportedly already in the DSWD database from way, way back)? Who and where are these families? What is the DSWD's plan for them and their aid allotment?
- 3) The DSWD reported to the media, despite being asked to officially include the data in the Weekly Report of the President to Congress, that 3,723 beneficiaries have returned cash aid amounting to P344.7 million due to duplication. However, the figures seems 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. May we request for an official and comprehensive report on this matter?

- 4) Since 22 May 2020, when Malacañang issued a Memorandum signed by the Executive Secretary allowing the distribution of the second tranche of cash assistance under the national government's Social Amelioration Program (SAP), the DSWD is yet to commence the distribution of the said tranche. May we know why this is taking so long? I note with grave concern the slow progress – nay, almost inaction -- of the agency on the distribution of the second tranche of cash aid, considering that no corresponding Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC) has been released all this time, with full account about the final number of target beneficiaries for the second tranche, factoring in the additional 5 million households that were left out from the first tranche.

Incidentally, may we likewise know the results of the validation and cross checking process of the DSWD and other concerned agencies conducted on the 1st tranche?

- 5) Again, if only to underscore the importance of the cash aid to our poor families, we wish to call out the sluggish attitude -- if not outright passivity -- of the DSWD regarding the financial aid aspect of SAP. Even if most areas are now under the General Community Quarantine since June 1, the poor and low-income households are still suffering from the impact of the prolonged lockdown and, therefore, they are in dire need of the subsidy from the government just to regain their foothold on survival and be spared from further despair and desolation.
- 6) We commend the Social Security System (SSS) and its partner agencies for having served under its Small Business Wage Subsidy (SBWS) a total of 2.99 million employees in the first tranche, and 1.01 million employees in the second tranche. We hope though that the program can reach all of the 3.4 million targeted employees of small businesses.

Incidentally, may we be clarified as to that portion of the report (page 3) on SBWS accomplishments wherein it was stated that the DOF Secretary has allowed the extension of payout period beyond the approved schedules “to allow already eligible employees already eligible 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?

- 7) Considering the latest admission of the Executive Department that it failed to provide families of health workers who died of COVID-19 with P1 million in compensation, and those health workers who were infected but survived the virus with P100,000.000, pursuant to Sec 4 (f) of Republic Act No. 11469, otherwise known as the “Bayanihan to Heal as One Act”, may we request for a sub-section dedicated in the Weekly Report of the President to provide us updates on this matter?

We wish to accordingly call out the utter neglect of the DOH on this very serious business. It should be pointed out that **as early as 7 April 2020, in this representation’s comments to the 2nd Weekly Report of the President dated 6 April 2020, we raised that grave concern**, thus:

“On the issue of economic assistance to the health workers, the report failed to mention if the DOH is already rolling out the system of indemnifying health workers who have contracted COVID-19 while on duty (at PhP100,000.00), and those who have passed away (at PhP1,000,000.00), as mandated under RA 11469, Section 4 (f).”

- 8) In the section on transportation, repatriation and mobility assistance, it is reported that the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) has successfully facilitated the repatriation of 3,335 OFWs consisting of 811 sea-based workers and 2,524 land-based workers from 10 countries from 29 May 2020 to 4 June 2020. This is commendable.

Incidentally, as pointed out in our comments on the 10th weekly report, we are very interested in finding out about any plan of the DFA and DOLE to repatriate almost 100,000 OFWs who are stranded abroad, per data from 40 Philippine Overseas Labor Offices (POLOs), as of 29 May 2020. It is claimed that this big number of OFWs are either affected by lockdowns in their host countries or their work contracts have expired, but they cannot go back to the Philippines due to absence of commercial flights.

- 9) In the same section on transportation, repatriation and mobility assistance, there are no updates on the “Hatid-Probinsya para sa OFWs” project. Can we please be given any developments on this? In particular, as in the previous weekly report, we are very interested in finding out what has happened to the more than 2,000 OFWs who have been stranded in the various 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.

- 10) Still on the subject of transportation and mobility assistance, the 11th weekly report says that, as of 2 June 2020, 6,442 of the total 14,629 locally stranded individuals (LSIs) that have been endorsed to the DILG regional offices have been successfully returned following the proper coordination with their respective local government units (LGUs). We commend this, and we hope that the remaining number will be able to return to their homes very soon. We are thus interested in getting updates on this matter, while hoping that a similar initiative be taken regarding other LSIs who may not have been covered by the 2 June 2020 referral to the DILG field offices.
- 11) There are no updates regarding the NBI's earlier report last week about the discovery of an underground medical facility in Fontana Leisure Park in Pampanga, and the arrest of two (2) Chinese nationals reportedly operating an illegal pharmacy in Angeles City, Pampanga. May we be given progress reports on these two (2) 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. These seem to be not isolated incidents but they already form part of a growing pernicious trend that has to be checked and stopped immediately.

- 12) Under the section of Other Forms of Assistance and Partnership with LGUs, we take note the response of the Executive Branch that funding of the "Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pagasa' Program is being charged to the existing P/A/Ps of the concerned agencies implementing the program. Considering that the program pools the funds from the existing budget of the member-agencies of the Balik Probinsya Bagong Pag-asa Council, as authorized by Section 4 of Bayanihan Law, may we know how much budget was spent already spent and how many beneficiaries were assisted in the next weekly report?
- 13) In the section on other assistance to MSMEs, we again observe – as if a broken record now -- the dismally low turn out of beneficiaries in the lending programs of the Department of Agriculture (DA). All this time, after almost three (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? Doesn't the DA realize that it is high time to re-evaluate these lending programs, as consistently pointed out in our comments on previous reports, and maybe convert them into simple subsidy projects, just like the SBWS program for small businesses, and the cash aids for poor households and small rice farmers?

Likewise, and this should now be a cause of very grave concern for everyone, may the DA or the Agricultural Credit Policy Council

(ACPC) be asked to 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 (1/3) of the program's clientele for MSFFs has benefitted, as of this time?

- 14) On the strengthening of contact-tracing measures, the 11th weekly 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 World Health Organization (WHO).

May we then be updated about any plan, if any, of achieving the target of hiring around 94,000 contact tracers. May we likewise know about the position of the DOH and IATF about the proposal from Senator Franklin Drilon, which I support? We have been recommending that the DOH and other concerned agencies to rap around 400,000 barangay health workers and parent-leaders from the 4Ps program who are spread all around the country.

- 15) In the section on assistance to persons deprived of liberty (PDLs), 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 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.

- 16) 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.

- 17) The 11th weekly report, just like the previous one, is silent on any status of the government's efforts in cracking down cybercrime activities. May we be given updates on this important concern, especially those that adversely affect women, children and other vulnerable groups? In particular, may the next report 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.

- 18) In the section on human resources for health (HRH), we are again and again faced with the recurring problem of low hiring and poor deployment of HRH by the 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 at the DOH has to

be urgently addressed as it certainly derails the operations of our testing centers, laboratories and hospitals.

- 19) We commend the NBI in the filing of cases against those responsible for the murder of Cpl. Winston Rago, which occurred on 21 April 2020 at a quarantine checkpoint in Quezon City. We would like to get updates on this case.
- 20) Regarding the updates on test kits, testing centers and expanded testing, in spite of accrediting 11 more testing laboratories, as reflected in the 11th weekly report, 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 some 10,000 to 11,300 tests in the past week. There are likewise reports that the overall testing capacity of our system has been greatly impaired by the lack of basic supplies to do the test, highlighted by the reported shortage of testing kits in some facilities. May the DOH and IATF, including the office of Mr. Vince Dizon, be put to urgent task and address these glaring issues so we can finally move to mass testing.
- 21) The report includes a reconfigured summary table showing fund sources of all releases made pursuant to Section 4 (v), (x) and (y) of RA No. 11469 per recipient-unit and mother-agency (Annex A). This is a very good addition to the weekly report.

However, as in the previous weeks, 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 reported in any of the previous reports submitted to Congress.

Pursuant to the said provision of the law, the weekly reports should therefore 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.

- 22) In the 11th weekly report, the DOF stated that the government has signed a US\$500 million loan with the World Bank on 3 June 2020, and another loan amounting to US\$400 million from the Asian Development Bank on 4 June 2020.

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?

For your consideration, please.

Thank you very much.



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