



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 10th WEEKLY REPORT OF THE
PRESIDENT DATED 1 June 2020

DATE: 3 June 2020

I humbly submit my comments on the President's 10th Weekly Report dated 1 June 2020, in compliance with Section 5 of Republic Act No. 11469:

- 1) After two (2) months from the original deadline on 30 April 2020, and 18 days from the last deadline (after two extensions) on 13 May 2020, the first tranche of emergency cash aid failed to reach 359,027 poor households. This is simply unacceptable. Both the DSWD and DILG should be asked to explain the inability to achieve the target (17,938,422) despite the time and other resources expended on the first tranche.
- 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) In relation to a request we made in our previous comments to the 9th Weekly Report of the President, I take note that per the 10th Weekly Report, the DSWD is in the process of finalizing the Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC) for the operationalization of the directive of the Office of the President on the inclusion of additional households as beneficiaries of SAP. May we be given status on this JMC and its implementation in future reports.

- 4) We hope that the Executive Department can 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. We should aim to avoid any incident of duplication of cash aid given by the government in the second tranche that occurred in the distribution of the 1st tranche. Let me note that this is a serious issue that remains unresolved and unaddressed in the weekly reports of the President.
- 5) On SAP for small businesses, we note the success rate of the Small Business Wage (SBWS) program at least in terms of covering almost all of its targeted number of employees at 3.05 million, with 2.87 million being covered in the first tranche, and 114,302 in the 2nd tranche. May we know if there will be a new edition of SBWS? In implementing the current program, as inquired before, may we know how we determine if there are duplication or any other form of leakage in the payout of subsidies?
- 6) In the section on transportation, repatriation and mobility assistance, it is reported that the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) has successfully repatriated 2,230 OFWs consisting of 938 sea-based workers and 1,292 land-based workers from seven countries from 22-28 May 2020. We commend this. We are incidentally interested in finding out however about any plan of the DFA and DOLE to repatriate almost 100,000 who remain stranded abroad, per data from 40 Philippine Overseas Labor Offices (POLOs), as of 29 May 2020. It is reported that these large number of 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.
- 7) In the same section on transportation, repatriation and mobility assistance, both the Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA) and MMDA (with National Task Force for COVID-19 and various agencies) have reported the same figure at 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.

Speaking of “Hatid-Probinsya para sa OFWs”, can we be given 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.

- 8) In the section on protection of consumers and related measures, the 10th weekly report gave updates on what the authorities are doing with the discovery of an illegal 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. It is reported that the Bureau of Immigration (BI) has initiated a case-build up against the arrested Chinese nationals in the underground facility, and that the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) has filed cases of illegal practice of medicine for those involved in the illegal pharmacy. May we be given updates on these two (2) incidents in subsequent reports?

- 9) Under the section of Other Forms of Assistance and Partnership with LGUs, may we reiterate our previous inquiry if there is 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, please provide the details of any fund sourcing and utilization in the next report.
- 10) In the section on other assistance to MSMEs, we again observe the low turn out of beneficiaries in the lending programs of the Department of Agriculture (DA). All this time, after two and a half (2 ½) 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 a straight subsidy projects, just like the SBWS program for small businesses, and the cash aids for poor households and small rice farmers?

Likewise, may the DA or the Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC) be asked to explain how it happened that PhP593.363 million, or more than half of the PhP 1 billion budget, was already utilized but only about one fourth (1/4) of the program's clientele for MSFFs has benefitted?

- 11) On the strengthening of contact-tracing measures, the reports show no significant development in the implementation of an aggressive plan from the DOH on this matter, which is very disappointing despite the call from many Senators and even the WHO to prioritize this. 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. I must say that 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. It must be underscored that contact-tracing is vital in our efforts to contain the viral spread as we have to efficiently identify those infected, and determine, as well as inform, those they have made contact with.

There are good proposals to augment the contract tracers, one of which came from Senator Franklin Drilon, which I support. DOH can easily tap around 400,000 barangay health workers and parent-

leaders from the 4Ps program in their respective networks all around the country.

- 12) 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 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.
- 13) 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.
- 14) The 10th weekly report is silent on any status of the government's efforts in cracking down cybercrime activities. May we be given updates on this important matter.
- 15) In the section on human resources for health (HRH), we are again confronted with the recurring problem of low hiring and poor deployment of HRH by the DOH. 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 chronic problem at the DOH has to be decisively solved as it definitely hampers the operations of our testing centers, laboratories and hospitals.
- 16) Regarding the update on test kits, testing centers and expanded testing, the oft-repeated problems of case backlogs and real-time reporting remain unsolved. Last 29 May 2020, the DOH started identifying the number of "fresh" or new cases, as well as those that came from the testing backlog. This implies that more than two (2) months from the time President Duterte declared a nationwide state of calamity, the DOH still is at the stage of making an attempt to provide real-time data despite the continue backlogs in the testing results previous conducted. Despite the accomplishment cited in the report that we have increased our "capacity" to test, the fact remains that the data provided by the DOH may be inaccurate and might not realistically reveal the real picture of our situation which directly affects the effectivity of the government's management and targeted response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 17) There seems to be a missing part of the report in the section on Assistance to Women, Children and Other Vulnerable Groups. We would like to see concrete actions from the relevant agencies on this matter in the next weekly report of the President, considering the news reports that online child sexual abuse cases in the country

significantly increased by over 260 percent during the lockdown period.

18) News reports last 31 May 2020 revealed that the government had entered into foreign loans and received grants for COVID-19 response amounting to \$4.858 billion or about ₱246 billion from foreign institutions and commercial markets. In the interest of public transparency, the weekly report of the President to Congress must comprehensively provide us with important information on who are these institutions that have granted us these loans and grants and where does the government intend to use these borrowings, on top of the realigned budgets.

19) The report includes a detailed report (Annex C thereof) showing how much allotments and cash allocations have been released to various government agencies. This detailed report of fund releases is good addition to the reports.

However, we note 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.

In compliance with the said provision of the law, the weekly reports should therefore also include a detailed list of unreleased appropriations and unobligated allotments of each department. We shall expect an attachment with this detailed list in succeeding reports.

For your consideration, please.

Thank you very much.



LEILA M. DE LIMA

Chairperson
Committee on Social Justice,
Welfare and Rural Development