



Republic of the Philippines

## Senate

### **OFFICE OF SENATOR RAMON BONG REVILLA, JR.**

I have the honor to present comments and recommendations to the Tenth Report of the President to the Joint Congressional Oversight Committee pursuant to Section 5 of Republic Act 11469, otherwise known as the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act.

Allow me to recognize the collective efforts of the Executive Department and all of its agencies and instrumentalities in responding to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and in addressing the pressing needs of our countrymen in these extraordinary times.

May these inputs be of help to the concerned agencies in pursuing a more effective and efficient implementation of RA 11469 in relation to the Covid-19 crisis.

Thank you and more power.

#### **COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

##### **On public transportation**

- As the government declared the implementation of General Community Quarantine (GCQ) over the National Capital Region (NCR) beginning June 1, 2020, it allowed more industries and businesses to reopen. Consequently, more people were allowed to go out and return to work. However, the resumption of economic activity was not complemented by the resumption of public transportation.
- In fact, as per the Guidelines for the Road Sector issued by the Department of Transportation (DOTr) ahead of the implementation of the GCQ in NCR, only operations of trains and bus augmentation, bicycles, taxis, TNVS, shuttle services, point-to-point buses with reduced passenger capacity are allowed from June 1-21. Railway systems (LRT1, LRT2, MRT, and PNR) were operating at only 10%-20% of its regular capacity. Jeepneys and public buses are not allowed to operate yet.
- With select public transportation modes operating at limited capacities, workers were forced to walk kilometers to report for work under sweltering heat of the sun, walk the same distance after a day's work to come home, or wait for hours by the road along with other stranded commuters just to get a ride, thereby exposing them to various health risks and possible infection to Covid-19. Many workers were also forced to avail of the

more expensive services of metered taxis, while some have to spend more money due to frequent vehicle transfers and limited route schemes.

- Many businesses have also relayed their concerns about not being to provide shuttle services for their employees, as this would be another financial burden to their already struggling operations coming from a two-month lockdown.
- I hope that the Inter-Agency Task Force and the DOTr would re-examine its decision about the existing limitations on public transportation, to which many of our workers rely on. Clearly, limited public transportation causes great physical and financial difficulties to our workforce.
- I highly encourage the IATF and the DOTr to also augment the transportation support to our commuters, either through contracting more utility buses and jeepneys or relaxing restrictions on public transport to allow more operators and transport units compliant with minimum health standards to ply the streets.
- I also appeal to the IATF and the DOTr to reconsider the resumption of operations of jeepneys given the need for more public utility vehicles to support the movement of workers and the 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 in other PUVs and establishments.

### **On Special Amelioration Program (SAP)**

- Based on the latest report, there is no movement in the number of beneficiaries served in the TNVS-PUV sector in NCR since the 8<sup>th</sup> Bayanihan Report. To wit, 62,028 beneficiaries have been served (out of 90,000 estimated beneficiaries). Only 70% of the allotted budget was disbursed and received by the beneficiaries. May we know an update about the emergency assistance being extended to this sector? What are the challenges which prevent the speedy distribution of such assistance to TNVS-PUV?
- Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) identified 435,619 drivers of public utility vehicles (PUVs) who will receive financial support under the SAP.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> What is the update on this?

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1099164>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/737753/distribution-of-aid-to-400-000-puv-drivers-across-country-slow-ltfrb-chair/story/>

- DILG directed all Punong Barangays to post the masterlist of beneficiaries of the Social Amelioration Program<sup>3</sup> in their barangay hall or in conspicuous places in their community in the spirit of transparency. What is the compliance rate of LGUs in ensuring transparency in the implementation of the SAP?

### **On referral laboratories**

- While the government achieved the target of 32,000 daily testing capacity for our laboratories, actual tests conducted (around 11,000 tests daily) is way below the capacity. The Bayanihan report is silent about the issues being encountered by the concerned agencies as to why the full capacity is not maximized and the steps being undertaken to address these issues.
- Media reports say that 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 agency 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.
- Is there a plan to beef up manpower of our laboratories to hasten the release of results of the Covid-19 tests? 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?

### **On information dissemination**

- As the NCR shifts to GCQ and more people are out in the streets, it is 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. Apart from strengthening our defenses through more testing and more laboratories, it is equally important to gain public support at this crucial time through proper education and information.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.dilg.gov.ph/news/DILG-to-Punong-Barangays-Post-list-of-SAP-beneficiaries-in-barangay-hall-for-transparency/NC-2020-1100>