

Republic of the Philippines
Congress of the Philippines
Senate
Pasay City

Eighteenth Congress

Second Regular Session



RESOLUTION No. 79

RESOLUTION CALLING FOR THE CONSTITUTION
OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF
LEGISLATION, ON THE NATIONAL COVID-19
VACCINATION PROGRAM WITH THE END IN
VIEW OF DETERMINING THE MEASURES
NECESSARY TO FULLY PREPARE FOR ITS
NATIONWIDE IMPLEMENTATION

WHEREAS, on 08 March 2020, Proclamation No. 922 was issued by the President, declaring the Philippines under a state of public health emergency due to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), and capacitating government agencies and local government units (LGUs) to immediately act to prevent loss of life, utilize appropriate resources to

implement urgent and critical measures to contain or prevent the spread of COVID-19, mitigate its effects and impact to the community, and prevent serious disruption of the functioning of government and the community;

WHEREAS, the President likewise issued Proclamation No. 929 on 16 March 2020, declaring a state of calamity throughout the Philippines to afford national government agencies and LGUs ample latitude to utilize appropriate funds in their disaster preparedness and response efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19 and to continue to provide basic services to the affected population. The declared state of calamity was extended until 12 September 2021 by virtue of Proclamation No. 1021 s. 2020;

WHEREAS, as of 13 December 2020, the Department of Health (DOH) has recorded a total of 449,400 cases of COVID-19 nationwide, of which, 21,980 cases are active. Globally, the Philippines currently ranks 28th in terms of confirmed COVID-19 cases;

WHEREAS, while significant progress was achieved by the Filipino people and government in enhancing and improving the country's response measures against COVID-19, several measures are still necessary to better equip our healthcare system and prevent its collapse. Testing, tracing, isolation, and treatment efforts need to be sustained and given ample resources in order to finally and successfully contain the spread of COVID-19;

WHEREAS, adding to the current global progress in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic is the swift development of vaccines. As of 10 December 2020, two vaccines have been approved in a number of countries – Pfizer and BioNTech's BNT162b2, which, according to scientists and researchers, has an efficacy rate of 95 percent, and Sinopharm's BBIBP-CorV developed by the Beijing Institute of Biological Products, which was given full approval by the United Arab Emirates on 09 December 2020, announcing it has an efficacy rate of 86 percent. Researchers are currently testing 58 vaccines in clinical trials on humans, and at least 85 preclinical vaccines are under active investigation in animals;

WHEREAS, with the impressive results of Pfizer and BioNTech's clinical trials, several countries have begun granting emergency authorization or full approval to the BNT162b2 vaccine. Injections started in the United Kingdom on 08 December 2020, while Canada gave full approval to the vaccine on 09 December 2020 and is set to administer shots within days. The United States, Japan, and the European Union have also arranged to purchase hundred of millions of doses of the BNT162b2 vaccine;

WHEREAS, in the Philippines, Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr., who was designated as the country's vaccine czar, presented the national COVID-19 vaccine roadmap on 03 November 2020. The key considerations for the roadmap include safety, efficacy, sensitivity, costs and supply chain requirements, access to clinical trials, local production and distribution, and complexity of the implementation;

WHEREAS, the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases issued Resolution No. 83 on 05 November 2020, approving (1) the creation of the COVID-19 Vaccine Cluster, (2) the duties of the vaccine czar, and (3) the Philippine National COVID-19 Vaccination Roadmap and Implementation Plan;

WHEREAS, on 01 December 2020, the President signed Executive Order No. 121, granting authority to the Director General of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to issue Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for COVID-19 drugs and vaccines, which can shorten the processing time for the approval of COVID-19 vaccines from six (6) months to 21 days;

WHEREAS, the total budget for the COVID-19 vaccination program currently stands at P82.5 billion – P2.5 billion under the programmed funds of the DOH for 2021, P70 billion under the 2021 unprogrammed funds, while the remaining P10 billion is allocated under Republic Act No. 11494 or the "Bayanihan to Recover as One Act". It is expected that additional funds would be required for other logistical requirements, including PPE and other medical supplies, as well as transportation and storage facilities for the vaccines;

WHEREAS, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that at least 60 to 70 percent of a country's population need to acquire immunity to COVID-19 to break the chain of transmission and achieve herd immunity. This means at least 65 million Filipinos, or 60 percent of the country's current population, need to be vaccinated;

WHEREAS, on 10 December 2020, Secretary Galvez announced that the government will prioritize frontline health workers, senior citizens, indigent population, and uniformed personnel in the distribution and administration of vaccines. This accounts for about 24.67 million Filipinos or 22.8 percent of the population;

WHEREAS, the vaccine czar also disclosed that the Philippines will most likely get its first COVID-19 vaccines from China's Sinovac Biotech, which may arrive as early as the first quarter of 2021;

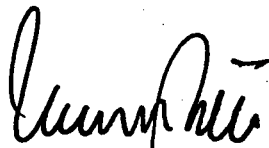
WHEREAS, there remains a number of considerations that need to be addressed in order to ensure the complete preparedness to implement the national COVID-19 vaccination program, including the safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines to be selected, logistical and supply chain requirements, training of vaccinators, information dissemination to foster vaccine confidence, and additional budget, among others;

WHEREAS, Congress, having the power to appropriate public funds and being the repository of legislative and emergency powers, plays a crucial role in the whole-of-government response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2020, Republic Act No. 11469 or the "Bayanihan to Heal as One Act" was passed which gave the President extraordinary powers and functions to fight the ongoing health crisis. In May and August 2020, the Senate conducted Committee of the Whole hearings to determine the status of the country's COVID-19 response measures and investigate the alleged rampant corruption and inefficiencies in the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) amidst the pandemic;

WHEREAS, to enable Congress to determine and formulate the necessary measures and policies to support the national COVID-19 vaccination program, the Executive Branch, through the IATF and the COVID-19 Vaccine Cluster, should provide information on the status and progress of plans and the required resources for the preparations involved: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, as it is hereby resolved, To call as it hereby calls for the constitution of the Senate Committee of the Whole to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the national COVID-19 vaccination program with the end in view of determining the measures necessary to fully prepare for its nationwide implementation.

Adopted,



VICENTE C. SOTTO III

President of the Senate

This Resolution was adopted by the Senate on December 14, 2020.



MYRA MARIE D. VILLARICA

Secretary of the Senate