



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

Senate

Pasay City

*Handwritten signature and date: 6/17/20*

Office of:

*Hon. Maria Lourdes Nancy S. Binay*

SENATOR

June 17, 2020

SENATOR VICENTE "TITO" SOTTO III

*Senate President*

Senate of the Philippines

Pasay City

Dear Senate President Sotto:

I am respectfully submitting the following comments and recommendations in response to the 12<sup>th</sup> weekly report of the President which was submitted to the Joint Congressional Oversight Committee pursuant to Section 5 of Republic Act No 11469 or the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act:

1. *Transparency and accuracy in reporting COVID-19 tests conducted and in reporting COVID-19 cases*

As reported, only a total of 473,281 tests have been conducted as of June 10, 2020 and the daily average number of tests processed from June 4-10, 2020 is only at 10,771. This is far from achieving the government's target of testing at least 2 million Filipinos, or about 2 percent of the population. While the government has increased its testing capacity through the accreditation of more COVID-19 testing laboratories, it appears that the increase in capacity is not fully maximized. How do the Department of Health (DOH) and the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) plan to meet their target and resolve the discrepancy between the actual number of tests conducted per day and the target number of tests per day?

Also, in reporting COVID-19 cases, the DOH classifies confirmed cases into two categories: (1) fresh cases and (2) late cases. It appears that there is a backlog of unreported cases and, as such, the DOH is not reporting COVID-19 cases timely and accurately.

Accurate data is crucial for the country's COVID-19 response measures. It helps policymakers and government institutions to make informed decisions on keeping communities safe from COVID-19 as well as reopening the economy in the right place and at the right time. Thus, it is necessary: (1) that the actual number of COVID-19 tests conducted daily be reported by the DOH and be included in the President's weekly reports; and (2) for the DOH to clear its backlog in reporting COVID-19 cases;

beginning with setting a timeline for clearing its backlog. These will help resolve any discrepancy and inaccuracy in DOH data.

2. *Isolation of COVID-19 patients who are asymptomatic or those with mild symptoms in designated quarantine facilities*

As reported, the occupancy rate nationwide of COVID-19 beds in referral hospitals is 33.90% and the total bed capacity of quarantine facilities is 51,488. Given that there seems to be enough bed capacity for COVID-19 patients, the DOH should consider isolating patients who are asymptomatic or those with mild symptoms in designated quarantine and isolation facilities rather than having them on home quarantine or isolation, particularly in cases where physical distancing is not possible, i.e., there is no separate bedroom where they can recover without sharing an immediate space with others.

3. *Resumption of Jeepney Operations*

While the use of bicycles is allowed in areas under General Community Quarantine (GCQ), such mode of transportation is not feasible for the majority of workers who commute to work, especially those who travel long distances and those who have no access to bicycles. The first day of the GCQ left thousands of workers in the National Capital Region stranded in the streets for hours due to lack of public transportation, some have opted to walk several kilometers to their workplace or to return to their homes.

Also, thousands of jeepney drivers have been out of work since the entire Luzon was placed under Enhanced Community Quarantine in March and there are those who have resorted to begging on the streets for money to buy food and other necessities.


Given the foregoing, the IATF should consider the resumption of jeepney (modern and traditional) operations subject to required public health standards and guidelines.

4. *Reopening of Museums*

As the country prepares to revive and reopen tourism in the country once areas are classified under Modified General Community Quarantine, the IATF should consider the reopening of museums subject to required public health standards and guidelines.

To help museums in the process of reopening, the IATF should provide guidance on the minimum public health standards and guidelines to be observed in order for them to plan accordingly.

Very truly yours,



MARI LOUR VERDES NANCY S. BINAY