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SENATE
P.S.R. No. **1056**

SECRETARY



Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

RESOLUTION
DIRECTING THE PROPER SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID
OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ALERTNESS AND RESPONSIVENESS OF THE
GOVERNMENT TO THE INTERNATIONAL OUTBREAK OF SWINE FLU TO PREVENT
THE SPREAD OF THE DEADLY VIRUS IN THE COUNTRY

WHEREAS, the Constitution, Article II, Section 5, provides that “The maintenance of peace and order, the protection of life, liberty, and property, and promotion of the general welfare are essential for the enjoyment by all the people of the blessings of democracy”;

WHEREAS, the Constitution, Article II, Section 15, provides that “The State shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them”;

WHEREAS, recent international and local media reports show that the outbreak of swine influenza across different countries is growing rapidly;

WHEREAS, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), swine flu is a contagious respiratory disease that usually affects pigs; it is caused by a type-A influenza virus; the current strain is a new variation of an H1N1 virus, which is a mix of human and animal versions;

WHEREAS, the symptoms of the swine flu, which are similar to the common flu, include fever, lethargy, lack of appetite, coughing, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea;

WHEREAS, the virus spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes around another person; people can also become infected by touching something with the flu virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes;

WHEREAS, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that as of 18:00 GMT, 4 May 2009, 21 countries have officially reported 1,085 cases of H1N1 influenza infection;

WHEREAS, according to WHO, Mexico has reported 590 laboratory confirmed human cases of infection, including 25 deaths; the United States, on the other hand, has reported 286 laboratory confirmed human cases, including one death;

WHEREAS, WHO said that the following countries have reported laboratory confirmed cases with no deaths – Austria (1), Canada (101), China, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (1), Costa Rica (1), Colombia (1), Denmark (1), El Salvador (2), France (4), Germany (8), Ireland (1), Israel (4), Italy (2), Netherlands (1), New Zealand (6), Portugal (1), Republic of Korea (1), Spain (54), Switzerland (1) and the United Kingdom (18);

WHEREAS, the WHO has raised the level of swine influenza pandemic alert from Phase 4 to Phase 5; according to WHO director-general Margaret Chan, the “change to a higher phase of alert is a signal to governments, to ministries of health and other ministries, to the pharmaceutical industry and the business community that certain actions should now be undertaken with increased urgency, and at an accelerated pace”;

WHEREAS, under the WHO Global Influenza Preparedness Plan, Phase 4 is characterized by verified human-to-human transmission of an animal or human-animal influenza reassortant virus able to cause community-level outbreaks; Phase 4 indicates a significant increase in risk of a pandemic but does not necessarily mean that a pandemic is a foregone conclusion;

WHEREAS, Phase 5 is characterized by human-to-human spread of the virus into at least two countries in one WHO region; while most countries will not be affected at this stage, the declaration of Phase 5 is a strong signal that a pandemic is imminent and that the time to finalize the organization, communication, and implementation of the planned mitigation measures is short;

WHEREAS, according to Dr. Keiji Fukuda, assistant director-general of the WHO, “in this age of global travel, where people move around in airplanes so quickly, there is no region to which this virus could not spread”;

WHEREAS, history shows that a flu pandemic has devastating consequences; in 1968, the “Hong Kong” flu killed about one million people worldwide; in 1918, a “Spanish” flu pandemic killed as many as 100 million people;

WHEREAS, according to the WHO, current epidemiological models project that a pandemic could result in 2 to 7.4 million deaths globally;

WHEREAS, the WHO said that if an influenza pandemic were to occur today, we could expect: (1) the pandemic virus to spread rapidly due to the high level of global traffic; (2) vaccines, antiviral agents, and antibiotics for secondary infections to be in short supply, with a period of several months before any vaccine becomes available; (3) medical facilities to be overwhelmed with demands to care for both influenza and non-influenza patients; and (4) widespread illness to result in sudden and potentially significant shortages of personnel to provide essential community services;

WHEREAS, the WHO exhorted countries to immediately activate their pandemic preparedness plans; countries should accordingly remain on high alert for unusual outbreaks of influenza-like illness and severe pneumonia;

WHEREAS, the WHO advised that at this stage of the swine flu pandemic, effective and essential measures include heightened surveillance, early detection and treatment of cases, and infection control in all health facilities;

WHEREAS, Japan and Indonesia are using thermographic devices to test the temperature of passengers arriving from Mexico; Argentina has announced a five-day ban on flights from Mexico; the US has urged travelers to avoid “non-essential travel” to Mexico; around 35,000 public venues such as bars, pubs, movie theaters, pool halls, theaters, gyms, sports centers, and convention halls have been shut down in Mexico City;

WHEREAS, our government must ensure that it has an adequate and responsive pandemic preparedness plan to prevent the spread of the swine flu virus in the country;

WHEREAS, the government must provide information to help health care providers, public health officials, and the general public address the challenges posed by the swine flu virus; the government must ensure that it has sufficient antiviral drugs, personal protective

equipment, and respiratory protection devices to help them respond to the outbreak, should this virus enter the country;

WHEREFORE, be it resolved, as it is hereby resolved by the Philippine Senate, to direct the proper Senate committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the alertness and responsiveness of the government to the international outbreak of swine flu to prevent the spread of the deadly virus in the country;

Adopted,

Miriam Defensor Santiago
MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO

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