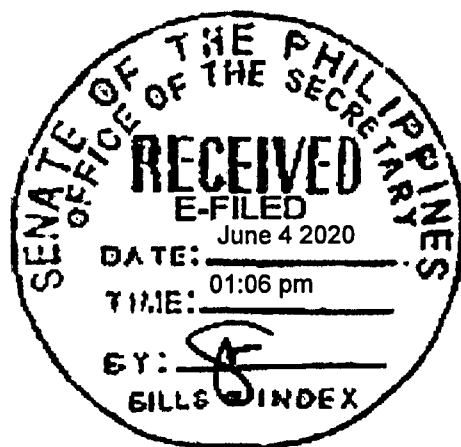


EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)

SENATE

P.S. Res. No. 439



Introduced by SENATOR LEILA M. DE LIMA

RESOLUTION

TO DIRECT THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE REPORTED INCREASE OF MENTAL HEALTH INCIDENTS DURING THIS PANDEMIC, WITH THE END IN VIEW OF REVIEWING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11036, OR THE MENTAL HEALTH ACT, FOR THE PURPOSE OF CRAFTING AND INTEGRATING A COMPREHENSIVE MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY IN RELATION TO COVID-19

1 WHEREAS, Section 15, Article II of the 1987 Constitution states that “[t]he State
2 shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health
3 consciousness among them”;

4 WHEREAS, Section 2 of Republic Act No. 11036, otherwise known as the “Mental
5 Health Act”, provides that “[t]he State commits itself to promoting the well-being of
6 people by ensuring that: mental health is valued, promoted and protected; mental
7 health conditions are treated and prevented; timely, affordable, high-quality, and
8 culturally-appropriate mental health care is made available to the public.”;

9 WHEREAS, the Philippines is a signatory of the United Nations General
10 Assembly Resolution 46/119, or “The Principles for the Protection of Persons with
11 Mental Illness and for the Improvement of Mental Health Care.” Principle 1(1) of the

1 Resolution provides that “[a]ll persons have the right to the best available mental health
2 care, which shall be part of the health and social care system.”¹;

3 WHEREAS, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), “[m]ore than
4 100 million people suffer from mental disorders in the Western Pacific region, including
5 the Philippines, with depressive disorders accounting for 5.73% of mental disorders in
6 the region”². This is backed up with the data reporting our country as having one of the
7 highest cases of depression in Southeast Asia, woefully affecting more than three million
8 Filipinos³;

9 WHEREAS, a new study in the United States predicts 75,000 “deaths of despair”
10 due to the isolation and anxiety caused by COVID-19 which according to the study is the
11 perfect recipe for substance abuse and mental illness⁴;

12 WHEREAS, the same study observed that this is a “paradox”, in that “[s]ocial
13 isolation protects us from a contagious, and life-threatening virus, but at the same time
14 it puts people at risk for things that are biggest killers...suicide, overdoses and diseases
15 related to alcohol abuses⁵;

16 WHEREAS, the National Center for Mental Health (NCMH) reported that the
17 hospital’s 24/7 helpline has been flooded with individuals seeking mental health

¹ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Principles for the Protection of Persons with Mental Illness and the Improvement of Mental Health Care. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/mental_health/policy/en/UN_Resolution_on_protection_of_persons_with_mental_illness.pdf

² Francisco, Katerina. Rappler. *How does the PH fare in mental health care?*. 9 October 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/iq/184754-philippines-mental-health-care>

³ Punay, Edu. PhilStar. *3.3 million Pinoys suffer from depression*. 29 August 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2019/08/29/1947360/33-million-pinoys-suffer-depression>

⁴ Koons, Cynthia, Griffin, Riley and Court, Emma. Bloomberg. *The Next Covid Crisis Could Be a Wave of Suicides*. 8 May 2020. Retrieved from https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-05-08/mental-health-care-braces-for-coronavirus-anxiety-and-suicides?fbclid=IwAR3_eZADUibG7Tn3qICn8W3oDq88b4QW5j3lBy6b3Si31qn1RFDpprp-pKk

⁵ *Ibid*

1 interventions with roughly around 300 to 400 calls per month after strict quarantine
2 measures were imposed and continuously being imposed to date⁶;

3 WHEREAS, Dr. Roland Cortez, Chief of the NCMH, said that many people are
4 prone to “feel sad and slowly lose interest in life because of the Enhanced Community
5 Quarantine (ECQ) caused by COVID-19 pandemic.”⁷;

6 WHEREAS, Dr. Cortez further explained that, “[d]epression is on the rise
7 because of the feeling of uncertainty”. The common questions of those affected are:
8 When will I go back to work? Do I still have work after the ECQ? How do I feed my
9 family? When will we stop depending on government aid? When will COVID-19 be
10 totally eradicated?”⁸;

11 WHEREAS, due to pandemic, the NCMH can only admit and accept patients who
12 are “suicidal or who have the capacity to hurt others.”⁹ those who are showing signs of
13 anxiety and depression;

14 WHEREAS, while there are multiple efforts to provide essential support through
15 online means, Dr. Melissa Paulita Mariano, a Psychiatry consultant at the East Ramon
16 Magsaysay Memorial Medical Center, believes that “...this type of set-up doesn’t really
17 work for middle to lower class citizens who are arguably most affected during times of
18 crisis; physical structures are what’s needed for them, and that’s where the gap is.”¹⁰;

19 WHEREAS, in a study published in JAMA Network Open, healthcare workers
20 who are in direct contact and care of patients positive with the virus have symptoms of
21 depression, anxiety, sleep problems, and distress¹¹;

⁶ Terrazola, Vanne. Manila Bulletin. *More Pinoys experiencing mental health issues as a result of lockdowns, says NCMH*. 28 May 2020. Retrieved from https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/05/28/more-pinoys-experiencing-mental-health-issues-as-a-result-of-lockdowns-says-ncmh/?fbclid=IwAR3DJTOFDEJ7aUheF2GWNlAK2nhSCTbDmHeXoHpbWMFI9M_fh1TcV4rMS3U

⁷ Tenorio, Bum D. PhilStar. *Depression on the rise due to ECQ*. 29 April 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/04/29/2010543/depression-rise-due-ecq?fbclid=IwAR1N9jvmb-zl-fYE7lrpegtNSdM7JhhoNzKAUhvQsPot8lh-eiNTBrIN7vg>

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ *Supra Ibid 14*

¹⁰ *Supra Ibid 18*

¹¹ Del Castillo, Ronald. Rappler. *[OPINION] The mental health ticking time bomb*. 2 May 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.rappler.com/move-ph/ispeak/259482-opinion-mental-health-ticking-time-bomb-coronavirus>

1 WHEREAS, despite the enactment of the Mental Health Law, Dr. Angelo Jesus
2 Arias, the Director of the Philippine Psychiatric Association, said that the number and
3 distribution of mental health workers in our country remains a problem during this time
4 and situation¹². It must be highlighted that our country has only one psychiatrist for
5 every 250,000 population which is very far from the ideal ratio of one psychiatrist to
6 50,000 population¹³;

7 WHEREAS, a 2019 study concluded that “[m]ental healthcare remains an under-
8 resourced and neglected aspect of healthcare in the Philippines”¹⁴;

9 WHEREAS, a 2015 survey of high school students ages 13 to 17 reported that
10 almost 17% had attempted to commit suicide, 11.3% had “seriously considered
11 attempting suicide” while 10.6% already made plans on how they would attempt suicide.
12 This puts the post millennials, or the generation of Filipinos born after the year 1994, as
13 the most vulnerable to mental health disorder¹⁵;

14 WHEREAS, Dr. Cornelio Banaag Jr., professor emeritus at the University of the
15 Philippines College of Medicine and widely acknowledged as the “Father of Child
16 Psychiatry in the Philippines”, said that with over a half century in practice he has seen
17 depression and anxiety “but not to the degree that we have now”¹⁶;

18 WHEREAS, according to Dr. Banaag Jr., it worries him that “[t]here’s not a week
19 that goes by when you don’t hear about people cutting themselves, people so depressed
20 that they threaten to kill themselves, attempt to kill themselves or actually dying.”¹⁷;

¹² Haynes, Oliver. Rappler. *Can PH cope? Mental illness cases tipped to surge during pandemic*. 20 May 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.rappler.com/nation/257094-can-ph-cope-mental-illness-cases-tipped-surge-coronavirus-pandemic>

¹³ *Supra Ibid 2*

¹⁴ Samaniego, Rene M., Tully, John. *Mental health legislation in the Philippines: Philippine Mental Health Act*. January 2019, Retrieved from

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330237000_Mental_health_legislation_in_the_Philippines_Philippine_Mental_Health_Act

¹⁵ 2019 Global School-based Student Health Survey results. 2015. Retrieved from

https://www.doh.gov.ph/sites/default/files/publications/2015GSHS_PHL_FinalCountryReport_0.pdf

¹⁶ Caruncho, Eric S. Lifestyle Inquirer. *Young Filipinos are in the midst of a mental health crisis*. 5 November 2019. Retrieved from <https://lifestyle.inquirer.net/349884/young-filipinos-are-in-the-midst-of-a-mental-health-crisis/>

¹⁷ *Ibid*

1 WHEREAS, Dr. Constantine Chua, Chief Resident of Philippine General Hospital
2 Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine observed the same stating that
3 “[w]ith all the social media, there’s just too many things to do; too many things to
4 prove...Young people today tend to be very pressured, very stressed, live very
5 complicated lives, and tend to be socially disconnected”¹⁸;

6 WHEREAS, this pandemic does not only take a toll on the labor and youth sector
7 but likewise affects our elderly who “...silently absorb the feelings of their children or
8 grandchildren who lose their jobs.”¹⁹;

9 WHEREAS, in a message for healthcare workers, the WHO underscored that
10 “[m]anaging your mental health and psychological well-being during this time is as is
11 important as managing your physical health”²⁰;

12 WHEREAS, issues on mental health is far deeper than we think and imagine, and
13 reek more intensely in our society as everyone is mandated to be confined at home.
14 Everyone has all the time to be alone with their minds during a pandemic when nothing
15 is certain, and the future is still a blur;

16 WHEREAS, COVID-19 affected millions of people worldwide. It is one big
17 invisible enemy that malevolently attacks every aspect of our health. It causes turmoil of
18 emotions and storms of anxiety which is greatly affecting our mental health;

19 WHEREAS, the State must not neglect the mental well-being of its nation during
20 these difficult times. Everyone right now, from our healthcare frontliners, members of
21 the labor sector, up to those who are staying at home, are all experiencing different
22 levels of grief, stress, confusion and anxiety and it is ultimately our duty to ensure that
23 their mental health are not compromised during a pandemic;

¹⁸ Tomacruz, Sofia. Rappler. *Mental illness, suicide cases rising among youth*. 11 September 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/in-depth/211671-suicide-cases-mental-health-illness-youth-rising-philippines>

¹⁹ *Supra* Ibid 14

²⁰ Rola, Alyssa. CNN Philippines. *Coronavirus pandemic also taking a toll on Filipino frontliners’ mental, emotional health*. 8 April 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.ph/lifestyle/2020/4/8/coronavirus-covid-pandemic-health-workers-frontliners-mental-health.html>

1 WHEREAS, our much vaunted resilience is a direct result of our capacity to
2 properly process the challenges that meet our country. Thus, there is need to ensure that
3 the mental health of our country is not being ignored;

4 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE, to direct the
5 appropriate Senate Committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, into the
6 reported increase of mental health incidents during this pandemic, with the end in view
7 of reviewing the implementation of Republic Act No. 11036, or the Mental Health Act,
8 for the purpose of crafting and integrating a comprehensive mental health strategy in
9 relation to COVID-19.

Adopted,


LEILA M. DE LIMA