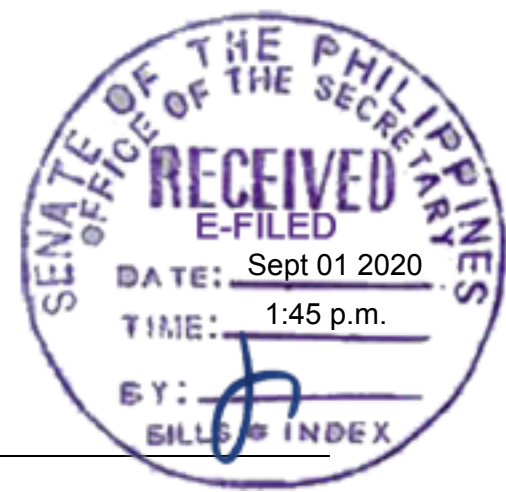


EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Second Regular Session)



SENATE
P.S. Resolution No. **511**

Introduced by **SENATOR IMEE R. MARCOS**

RESOLUTION
DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN
INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE POOR
TELECOMMUNICATION AND INTERNET SERVICES PROVIDED BY
TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPANIES AMIDST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

WHEREAS, Article XII, Section 1 of the 1987 Constitution states that, "*The goals of the national economy are a more equitable distribution of opportunities, income, and wealth; a sustained increase in the amount of goods and services produced by the nation for the benefit of the people, and an expanding productivity as the key to raising the quality of life for all*";

WHEREAS, Republic Act No. 7925 otherwise known as the, "*Public Telecommunications Policy Act of the Philippines*" provides that, "*Telecommunications is essential to the economic development, integrity and security of the Philippines, and as such shall be developed and administered as to safeguard, enrich and strength the economic, cultural, social and political fabric of the Philippines*";

WHEREAS, most Filipinos own mobile phones and computers and have been demanding for better services; thus, telecommunications infrastructure is crucial, not to mention, indispensable during a health crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic;

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has created a huge demand for online services most especially in education, businesses and social interaction; and has consequently highlighted the weakness of the country's digital infrastructure and its failure to cover the so-called 'last mile';

WHEREAS, the community quarantine clearly shows that with the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) solutions, physical or face-to-face contact is not necessary in many transactions and businesses;

WHEREAS, the survival of the Philippine economy and many business processes during the pandemic will be largely affected by the presence of a reliable digital infrastructure;

WHEREAS, vast areas of the country remain without access to reliable and affordable internet and the country continues to lag behind the global average;

WHEREAS, the telecommunications companies should shape up the services provided because digital services and infrastructure are essential for economic recovery and, most importantly, since distance learning and work-from-home arrangements are now the new norm;

WHEREAS, in the most recent global index by internet speed monitor Ookla published in March 2020, the Philippines came in 104th out of 176 countries in the fixed broadband speed with an average download speed of 23.80 and ranked 116th out of 141 in mobile broadband speed with an average download speed of 14.24 compared to the global average of 34.67 mbps;

WHEREAS, the Philippines ranked 66th out of 85 countries in the 2020 Digital Quality of Life Index and is saddled with issues like expensive, low-quality internet and the need to upgrade its electronic infrastructure;

WHEREAS, in terms of internet affordability and internet quality, the Philippines ranked 79th and 84th, respectively in the same 2020 digital Quality of Life Index out of 85 countries; and 67th in electronic infrastructure, which was measured according to the adoption of information and communications technology and the number of individual internet users per 100 inhabitants;

WHEREAS, during the 01 July 2020 Senate hearing of the Committee on Public Services, the telecommunications companies lamented that constructing a single cell tower takes six (6) to nine (9) months due to the tedious process of securing permits from local government units and concerned agencies;

WHEREAS, to address the issue, the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) said it supports the President's call to "*accelerate the improvement of services throughout the country*" and DICT recently passed rules to allow independent tower companies to build cell sites by signing a Joint Agreement with other government bodies to cut permit processing times to sixteen (16) days from two hundred (200) days;

WHEREAS, on 27 July 2020, during President Rodrigo Duterte’s State of the Nation Address, the President expressed dismay to the two companies, PLDT and Globe, for the lousy services provided stating, “*If you are not ready to improve and ... I might just as well close all of you and we revert back to the line telephone at kukunin ko yan, i-expropriate ko sa gobyerno (I will expropriate those for the government)*”;

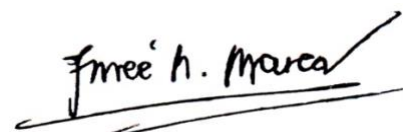
WHEREAS, instead of glooming over the threat to close down telecommunications companies, Smart Communications and PLDT chief Manny Pangilinan said that the President has given a mission to improve the services by year-end and Pangilinan said that the group was eyeing 96% coverage for their 4G network by the end of the year, higher than the current 95%. Meanwhile, upload speed was targeted to increase to over 30 mbps from the average 22 mbps by the end of the year to achieve a speed comparable to Thailand and Vietnam;

WHEREAS, given the enormous challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and the important role of a much-improved digital infrastructure to the economic recovery, the government cannot simply rely on the undertakings of the telecommunication companies to introduce improvements on their infrastructure. There is a need to look into the details of their plan of action and identify aspects that require government intervention to ensure the development of reliable telecommunication and internet services in the country;

WHEREAS, without the reliable communication and internet services of the companies, our country will surely miss the opportunities of the 21st century since such is truly an essential platform for progress. And, without communication and internet services, progress towards the millennium development goals will be seriously hampered;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, directing the appropriate Senate Committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, into the poor telecommunication and internet services provided by the telecommunications companies amidst the COVID-19 pandemic

Adopted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Imee R. Marcos". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

IMEE R. MARCOS