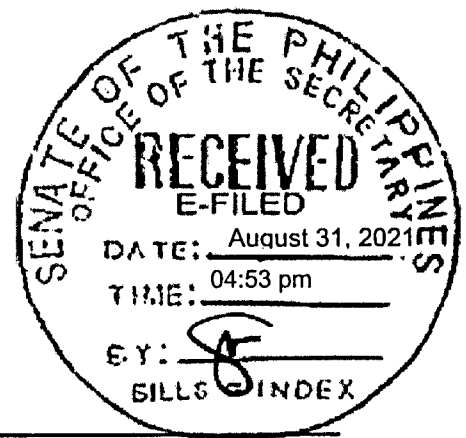


EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Third Regular Session)

SENATE

P.S. Res. No. 883



Introduced by **SENATOR LEILA M. DE LIMA**

RESOLUTION
DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT
AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE STATUS OF
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PHILIPPINE IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM
AMID THE CHALLENGES AND SETBACKS BROUGHT UPON BY THE
RESTRICTIONS TO MOBILITY RESULTING FROM THE RECENT SURGE
IN COVID-19 CASES NATIONWIDE

1 WHEREAS, Section 2 of Republic Act No. 11055, otherwise known as the
2 “Philippine Identification System Act”, declares, in part, that it is the policy of the
3 State to “establish a single national identification system referred to as the
4 ‘Philippine Identification System’ or the ‘PhilSys’ for all citizens and resident aliens
5 of the Republic of the Philippines to promote seamless delivery of service, to improve
6 the efficiency, transparency, and targeted delivery of public and social services, to
7 enhance administrative governance, to reduce corruption and curtail bureaucratic
8 red tape to avert fraudulent transactions and misrepresentations to strengthen
9 financial inclusion, and to promote ease of doing business”;

10 WHEREAS, according to Section 3 of the same, the PhilSys “shall be primarily
11 established to provide a valid proof of identity for all citizens and resident aliens as a
12 means of simplifying public and private transactions”. The PhilSys also “aims to
13 eliminate the need to present other forms of identification when transacting with the
14 government and the private sector”. Furthermore, the PhilSys was envisioned to be
15 “a social and economic platform through which all transactions including public and
16 private services can be availed of and shall serve as the link in the promotion of
17 seamless service delivery, enhancing administrative governance, reducing
18 corruption, strengthening financial inclusion, and promoting ease of doing
19 business”;

1 WHEREAS, a centralized system of identification (ID) has been recognized by
2 governments worldwide as an essential component in making social services and
3 programs more accessible to the population. Having a uniform system of registration
4 can eliminate redundancies and hasten the delivery of critical social protection
5 programs;¹

6 WHEREAS, it has, however, been observed that these systems, by virtue of
7 their design, “inevitably exclude certain population groups from obtaining an ID and
8 hence from accessing essential resources to which they are entitled”. National ID
9 systems are often riddled with systemic discrimination, logistical failures or technical
10 loopholes, inevitably leaving some unable to obtain any form of ID;²

11 WHEREAS, in the Philippines, the implementation of the national ID system
12 has been a hotly debated topic as it raises concerns regarding data privacy and even
13 political abuse.³ Nevertheless, the process was expedited by the government back in
14 April of 2020 as one of its responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing
15 lockdowns that were imposed;⁴

16 WHEREAS, in early April 2021, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Karl Chua
17 outlined three immediate-term uses of the PhilSys, namely, ensuring efficient and
18 effective distribution of emergency subsidies; strengthening financial inclusion; and
19 facilitating efficient vaccine distribution for the general population;⁵

20 WHEREAS, the registration for PhilSys officially began on 30 April 2021 but
21 was almost immediately plagued by technical difficulties.⁶ Despite these early
22 complications and the logistical challenges brought upon by the COVID-19
23 pandemic, it was reported that a total of 20.7 million Filipinos had managed to finish

¹ Privacy International. (29 March 2021). *Exclusion by design: how national ID systems make social protection inaccessible to vulnerable populations*. Retrieved 17 August 2021, from <https://privacyinternational.org/long-read/4472/exclusion-design-how-national-id-systems-make-social-protection-inaccessible>

² *Ibid.*

³ Shewakramani, J. (29 July 2020). *Can a national ID database ease the burden of Covid-19 in the Philippines?* Retrieved 17 August 2021, from <https://us.boell.org/en/2020/07/29/can-national-id-database-ease-burden-covid-19-philippines>

⁴ Rivas, R. (21 April 2020). *Gov't to fast-track national ID system for coronavirus response*. Retrieved 17 August 2021, from <https://www.rappler.com/nation/government-fast-track-national-id-system-coronavirus-response>

⁵ Quiros, J. (7 May 2021). *NEDA chief cites 3 major uses of national ID*. Retrieved 17 August 2021, from <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1139390>

⁶ Rivas, R. (30 April 2021). *'Technical difficulties' mar first day of national ID online registration*. Retrieved 17 August 2021, from <https://www.rappler.com/business/national-id-online-registration-philippines-starts-april-30-2021>

1 2 out of the 3 required steps for PhilSys registration by 23 July 2021 and that the
2 government remains primed to achieve its target to sign up 50 to 70 million
3 individuals by year-end;⁷

4 WHEREAS, while registration is one challenge, actual rollout and
5 maintenance of the system is another. This is the very reason why an inquiry must be
6 made to ascertain whether facilities and equipment necessary to do just that have
7 already been made ready and available. In addition, there must be an assurance of
8 financial capacity not only to print the ID cards but to adequately respond to the
9 demand;

10 WHEREAS, the government must closely monitor the situation and
11 preemptively recognize and address failures in the system to cater for those who do
12 not squarely fit within technological systems of identification and registration,
13 ensuring that those individuals are not disproportionately prejudiced by
14 prerequisites to social protection. For a large segment of the Philippine population,
15 access to social protection is the only way to feed themselves and their families, to
16 have a roof over their heads and live with dignity, and to access care when they are
17 sick;

18 WHEREAS, it was also reported that banks are not recognizing the National
19 ID because it does not contain a specimen signature of the bearer. National
20 Statistician Assistant Sec. Rose Bautista was quoted saying, “[t]he complaints we
21 received is that because it does not have a signature, so it’s the reason why the users
22 or the agencies to whom it is presented do not recognize it because of the lack of
23 signature;”⁸

24 WHEREAS, as our population progressively realizes economic, social and
25 cultural rights, governments must ensure smooth and easy access and delivery of
26 social protection, and avoid any requirement that hampers access to associated
27 services;

⁷ Kabagani, L. G. (30 July 2021). *20.7M Filipinos done with PhilID registration*. Retrieved 17 August 2021, from <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1148843>

⁸ Philnews.ph (23 August 2021) *National ID Holders Complain Banks Rejecting Card Because No Signature Contained*. Retrieved from: <https://philnews.ph/2021/08/13/banks-rejecting-national-id-due-to-lack-of-signature/>

1 WHEREAS, assurance must be made that once PhilSys is in full swing, social
2 protection programs would remain accessible to all without discrimination,
3 otherwise the goals and universal aims of PhilSys would be defeated such as
4 unlocking access to these programs;

5 WHEREAS, there is a need to ensure that the existing system of national ID
6 registration does not unduly discriminate against marginalized and vulnerable
7 groups to ensure equitable access for all Filipinos;

8 WHEREAS, it must be ensured that individuals without legal identity such as
9 indigenous peoples, foundlings and others similarly situated are not excluded from
10 readily availing the benefits under the ID systems;

11 WHEREAS, the proper utility of the National ID requires that all the essential
12 elements of identification are present in the ID card, which includes a specimen
13 signature being used by the banking system;

14 WHEREAS, it is also imperative that the nationwide system will not be
15 vulnerable to data leaks and attacks that would unduly compromise the right to
16 privacy of Filipinos. We must learn from other jurisdictions where data breach
17 occurs regularly which prejudice personal information of citizens. India's biometric
18 ID program Aadhaar, a biometric identification card with over a billion users, for
19 instance, has been subjected to many such attacks, allowing access to private
20 information.⁹ The Philippines must be ready not only to have at its disposal solutions
21 to such breaches and misuse, but more importantly, programs that would combat
22 threats and decrease such risks. It is vital that concerned agencies first prove that
23 vulnerabilities are not diligently foreseen but that we are adequately prepared to
24 resist the same;

25 WHEREAS, it is also essential that we first determine whether the unified ID
26 system will be all it claims to be so as to outweigh the potential risks against the civil
27 liberties of the Filipinos;

28 WHEREAS, while the goals of the program are laudable, the government must
29 not be too complacent in its rollout to the detriment of the rights and civil liberties of
30 the Filipinos. Railroading the program in the guise of being the immediate solution

⁹ Menon, M. (24 March 2018). *New data leak hits India's national ID card database Aadhaar –ZDNet*. Retrieved 18 August 2021, from <https://www.reuters.com/article/india-biometric-idUSL3N1R608M>

1 to current problems, without any substantial proof that it would indeed aid in relief
2 and subsidy distribution, may only serve to engender and even reinforce prevailing
3 socioeconomic inequalities in Philippine society;

4 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE, to direct the
5 appropriate Senate Committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the
6 status of implementation of the Philippine Identification System amid the challenges
7 and setbacks brought upon by the restrictions to mobility resulting from the recent
8 surge in COVID-19 cases nationwide.

Adopted,


LEILA M. DE LIMA