

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

Office of the Secretary

22 AUG -9 P5 :45

SENATE
S. No. 1119

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by Senator Loren B. Legarda

**AN ACT
ESTABLISHING PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL
STANDARDS AND SAFEGUARDS FOR THE BETTER NORMAL IN
THE WORKPLACE, PUBLIC PLACES AND COMMUNITIES
TOWARD A SUSTAINABLE RECOVERY FROM THE
CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19) PANDEMIC AND OTHER
SIMILAR INFECTIOUS DISEASES**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020, has quickly become the most urgent crisis of our time. It has rapidly affected the daily routines of citizens and their businesses and has caused immense disruptions in the way we interact with one another.

Among COVID-19's long-term effects, how it has changed the way we use and interact in public spaces may be the most enduring. Malls, offices, schools, restaurants, and other public spaces pose a greater risk of the spread of the virus. Indeed, COVID-19 has pushed communities to adapt to a new normal that has completely changed the way we use public spaces and connect with one another.

As we reopen public spaces and return to "normal" operations, advances that will ensure the safety of the people engaging within these spaces need to be made. In

this new normal, it is the government's primary role to educate the Filipino public and assist them in adapting to life after the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions.

This bill, therefore, seeks to institutionalize universal and mandatory health and environmental standards in public spaces. This includes monitoring the implementation of these standards, and the management and regulation of government- and privately-managed public spaces, public transportation, schools, and learning institutions, and private commercial and industrial workplaces. By utilizing a whole-of-society approach, this bill aims to protect the most vulnerable, and ensure the health and safety of every Filipino, while guaranteeing the economic well-being of all sectors and industries. It is hoped that this proposed measure will usher in an inclusive, holistic, and well-planned path toward a "better normal".

In view of the foregoing, the immediate approval of this bill is earnestly sought.



LOREN LEGARDA

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*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Republic of the Philippines in
Congress assembled:*

1 Section. 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Better Normal for the
2 Workplace, Communities and Public Spaces Act of 2022”.

3 Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to protect and promote
4 the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them. The
5 State shall also protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful
6 ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature.

7 Towards this end, the State, in order to help save lives as well as jumpstart the
8 economy, shall:

9 (a) Adopt an integrated and comprehensive approach to public health and
10 environmental policies and regulations during a pandemic, thus,
11 ensuring the overall well-being of individuals, communities, industrial
12 and natural ecosystems. Consideration shall be paid to valuing the
13 services provided by ecosystems and biodiversity in generating the
14 direction and prescriptions for a better normal and in assessing their
15 success;

- (b) Institute appropriate public health, safety, and security measures to stem the transmission of the coronavirus disease-19 (COVID-19) or similar diseases that may result in any kind of pandemic;
 - (c) Regulate, institute, and establish standards and protocols that would simultaneously protect the vulnerable from COVID-19 and prevent its transmission;
 - (d) Pursue the restoration of livelihood opportunities and sources of income for all, especially the poor, in the event of widespread disease outbreak and the resulting slowdown of economic activity, and building adaptive capacity and resilience for future shocks;
 - (e) Pursue universal broadband access for all to ensure a better normal in recognition of the crucial role of a strong information and communications technology (ICT) system to close the digital divide and that the need for modern and innovative UCT cuts across all sectors of society;
 - (f) Ensure that pandemic recovery will lead to a greener, resilient, inclusive, and sustainable future, hence, recovery needs should be addressed with long-term sustainability goals; and
 - (g) Give importance to other aspects of well-being of the people based on the Gross National Happiness indicators, namely, equitable and sustainable socio-economic development, the preservation and promotion of cultural values, the conservation of the natural environment, and the establishment of good governance.

In adopting the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach and prioritizing the need for innovation and more forward-thinking systems and policies, the State shall give priority to the needs of the underprivileged, sick, elderly, persons with disability, indigenous peoples, women, and children.

Sec. 3. Objectives. – This Act shall have the following objectives:

- (a) Define and allocate roles, responsibilities, and obligations across key sectors of the society that shall be heavily involved in the implementation of specific and applicable measures, namely, the

1 national government and its instrumentalities, local government,
2 private sector, and individual Filipino citizens;

- 3 (b) Identify standards and protocols in the management of physical spaces,
4 both publicly-owned and -managed, or privately-owned but are
5 designated communal spaces, and prescribe the allowed and prohibited
6 activities therein as well as behaviors expected and required of the
7 citizens while utilizing such physical spaces;
- 8 (c) Facilitate the development of the necessary systems and infrastructure
9 and the enhancement of existing ones so as to ensure that the ICT needs
10 of the better normal are accessible to all, making it possible for people
11 and organizations to practice appropriate behavior and decisions as well
12 as for relevant government agencies to implement relevant, effective,
13 and timely information dissemination;
- 14 (d) Establish systems of accountability for failure to comply with the
15 obligations and expectations prescribed under this Act;
- 16 (e) Provide inclusive operational parameters, guidelines, and
17 recommendations for a better way of life until such time that the threat
18 of COVID-19 virus and other similar diseases that caused the occurrence
19 of a pandemic is effectively contained;
- 20 (f) Mitigate, if not contain, the transmission of the virus and undertake
21 measures to prevent the overburdening of the public healthcare system;
- 22 (g) Continue health promotion and behavior-enhancing measures in all
23 levels of government and the private sector; and
- 24 (h) Accelerate transformational change to restore the balance among
25 human, socio-economic and natural ecosystems, and reduce risk and
26 vulnerability to future crises caused by climate change, natural hazards
27 and man-made disasters.

28 Sec. 4. *Scope of the Act.* – This Act shall provide the strategies and measures that
29 shall be implemented so that economic and social activities can proceed in a manner
30 that ensures public health, safety, and security during an epidemic or pandemic, and
31 until such time that the same and its immediate impacts are declared eradicated by
32 the authorized National Government agency or agencies of the government.

1 The organization, operation, and activities in workplaces, communities, and
2 public spaces shall be governed by the provisions of this Act.

3 Sec. 5. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act:

- 4 (a) *Agro-ecology* refers to the application of ecological and social principles
5 in the formulation and implementation of policies and programs on
6 food and agricultural systems, to maximize the benefits from the
7 synergy between plants, animals, humans and the environment to
8 achieve a resilient and sustainable food supply system;
- 9 (b) *Better normal* in the context of recovery from an epidemic or pandemic
10 refers to transformative behaviors and interventions informed by
11 science, that address the underlying vulnerabilities of people and
12 communities that the epidemic or pandemic has highlighted and fosters
13 a just and equitable transition to a climate-resilient, inclusive and
14 sustainable future;
- 15 (c) *Better Normal Workforce and Workplace Management Plan* (hereinafter
16 referred to as the “Management Plan”) refers to the management plan
17 of all public and private sector entities that conforms to the prescribed
18 measures and protocols under this Act to mitigate the spread of the
19 COVID-19 virus and other kinds of viruses that may be transmitted
20 through contact in the workplace;
- 21 (d) *Circular Economy Measures* refer to measures that place value on
22 products and materials, maintaining their use for as long as possible,
23 thus minimizing wastage and resource use, and keeping resources
24 within the economy when a product has reached the end of its life, to be
25 used again and again to create further value;
- 26 (e) *Culture Mapping* refers to the approach used to identify, record, and use
27 natural and cultural resources and activities for building communities.
28 It is a set of activities and processes for exploring, discovering,
29 documenting, examining, analyzing, interpreting, presenting, and
30 sharing of information related to people, communities, societies, places,
31 built and natural heritage, material products and practices associated
32 with them;

1 services and other recreational or leisure places, such as cinema halls,
2 theaters, cockpits, and spas;

- 3 (l) *Workplace* refers to a place where work is carried out for a business
4 undertaking and includes any place where a worker goes, or is likely to
5 be, while carrying out a work-related task; and
6 (m) *Zoonotic Disease* refers to a disease that can be transmitted from animals
7 to people.

8 Sec. 6. *Standards for a Better Normal.* – In order to stem the transmission of
9 COVID-19 and other infectious diseases, and protect the people from such diseases,
10 the following standards for the better normal shall be observed:

11 (A) Universal and Mandatory Health and Safety Measures –

- 12 (1) Basic personal hygiene shall be strictly observed by the general
13 public. Massive health information drive shall be conducted by the
14 Department of Health (DOH) and LGUs up to the community level,
15 in cooperation with the private sector, on COVID-19 to instill public
16 awareness on the risks of infection and possible reinfection of the
17 disease;
- 18 (2) The general public shall wear face masks, earloop masks,
19 indigenous, reusable or do-it-yourself masks, face shields,
20 handkerchiefs, or such other protective material or equipment that
21 effectively lessen the transmission of the COVID-19 virus whenever
22 they are in the workplace, public places, and communities: *Provided,*
23 That the government shall implement the free distribution of masks
24 to the general public to guarantee the full cooperation of every
25 citizen: *Provided, further,* That the government shall allocate funds to
26 ensure the free provision of personal protective equipment and other
27 medical commodities to COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 patients in
28 both public and private hospitals: *Provided, furthermore,* That the
29 government shall integrate circular economy strategies in the
30 procurement of materials or the development of mechanisms for
31 hygiene and sanitation;

- (3) Hand washing facilities or sanitizing stations shall be established and maintained by the owners, managers, or administrators of public spaces, workplaces, and other places frequented by the public;
 - (4) Physical distancing measured at least one (1) meter between individuals shall be strictly observed whenever in public spaces and in the workplace;
 - (5) Temperature reading of persons shall be conducted by the owners, managers, or administrators of workplaces and in all enclosed, semi-enclosed, and open areas where two (2) or more people shall gather;
 - (6) The DOH, in coordination with other government agencies and the private sector, shall conduct an information and educational campaign utilizing traditional and online media to disseminate relevant medical and health information, provide updates on local cases and initiatives of the government: *Provided*, That all government agencies are directed to create a communication plan for the better normal to articulate the policies and interventions to be adopted by the agencies for the information and compliance of their employees, including the placement of relevant on-site signages and online information materials which will serve as reminders to observe physical distancing, practice regular handwashing, and to frequently clean and sanitize surroundings;
 - (7) Local chief executives of LGUs which are considered as containment zones or critical zones for the transmission of COVID-19 shall establish testing centers and procure COVID-19 testing kits, personal protective equipment, and such other necessary equipment and supplies to be used for the conduct of mass-testing of the population in their respective jurisdictions, including the establishment of drive-through testing centers, and other contactless modes of testing for the detection of the COVID-19 or other infectious diseases;
 - (8) There shall be nationwide testing drive to prepare for future waves of infection surges or other epidemic. The minimum rate of testing

shall be one percent (1%) of the population of the province or city, in the case of independent cities, and shall target to finish testing residents within ten (10) days;

(9) The DOH, with assistance from LGUs and Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), shall conduct tracing of individuals who have had contact with or have been exposed to a person who has been confirmed positive for the COVID-19 or similar infectious diseases. The DOH shall also conduct contact tracing for individuals suspected of or probably afflicted with the disease to ensure prompt containment of the disease;

(10) The DOH shall establish and manage government-operated and - maintained quarantine facilities for individuals who are suspected of being infected or have tested positive for COVID-19 or other infectious diseases and who, pursuant to the guidelines formulated by the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases and/or as prescribed under DOH regulations, should undergo mandatory quarantine, including those who are not able to observe quarantine protocols in their respective places of residences;

(11) Local chief executives of LGUs shall continuously implement existing measures, including quarantine measures, in dealing with residents or other individuals in the locality manifesting COVID-19 symptoms, or who has been classified as a suspect, probable, or a confirmed case of COVID-19 infection by authorized testing or medical facilities;

(12) The National Government shall establish and implement infection prevention and control protocol, biosafety and waste management measures;

(13) Local chief executives of LGUs shall continuously monitor the level of transmission among residents in their jurisdiction; *Provided*, That the standards provided in Republic Act No. 10173, otherwise known as the “*Data Privacy Act of 2012*”, as well as legal and ethical

1 standards, and existing DOH guidelines are observed and complied
2 with;

3 (14) The National Government shall recognize the vulnerabilities of
4 certain sectors of the population such as the elderly, pregnant,
5 children and persons deprived of liberty, and shall provide
6 safeguards and assistance to them, including access to mental and
7 psychological health services; and

8 (15) Government offices and the owners, managers, or administrators of
9 workplaces and other places frequented by the public shall
10 implement regular cleaning and disinfection of transport
11 conveyances, terminals and similar facilities including elevators and
12 escalators, particularly frequently touched surfaces thereat;

13 (B) Management of Spaces -

14 (1) Public gatherings are prohibited subject to the exceptions as may be
15 provided under the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of this
16 Act;

17 (2) LGUs shall regulate public gatherings as well as the flow of people
18 in government-managed public spaces, subject to the guidelines set
19 in the IRR of this Act that will provide the limitations on such public
20 gathering in order to prevent disease transmission: *Provided*, That
21 activities of agencies of the National Government or their provincial
22 or regional offices involved in the delivery of services or distribution
23 of all forms of public assistance or the facilitation thereof shall in no
24 way be impeded nor be required a permit from any government
25 authority: *Provided, further*, That gatherings under this category shall
26 observe the Universal and Mandatory Safety Measures enumerated
27 in paragraph (A) of this Section: *Provided, furthermore*, That LGUs, in
28 consultation with the private sector stakeholders, shall provide the
29 national, regional, and provincial agencies and their attached offices
30 the necessary assistance to carry out their activities requiring the
31 presence or participation of a significant number of the population:

1 *Provided, finally,* That exceptions to these prohibitions, intended for
2 public purpose or interest, shall be provided by the IRR of this Act;

3 (3) Privately-organized gatherings in privately-managed spaces shall
4 comply with the Universal and Mandatory Safety Measures
5 prescribed under this Act, the guidelines set forth in the IRR of this
6 Act, as well as minimum health standards, safety protocols and best
7 practices prepared by the private sector as approved or accredited
8 by the appropriate implementing agencies: *Provided,* That such
9 guidelines shall consider the nature of the gathering, number of
10 expected attendees, size of the venue, and other reasonable
11 parameters that will ensure compliance with physical distancing and
12 other measures to prevent transmission of the virus;

13 (4) Land use planning and zoning shall be strictly observed in the
14 implementation of this Act; and

15 (5) Management of spaces shall likewise include the establishment of
16 urban gardens, and green spaces not only for people to enjoy a clean
17 and healthy environment, but also to enable them to grow their own
18 sources of food and nutrition.

19 (C) Management of Public Transportation -

- 20 (1) The appropriate government agencies shall monitor the
21 implementation of the Universal and Mandatory Safety Measures in
22 the management of public transportation terminals and facilities,
23 including queuing or ticketing lines, ticketing offices, as well as the
24 interiors of public utility vehicles, mass transportsations, and private
25 vehicles covered by application-based transportation network
26 services, and by their respective drivers, conductors and passengers;
27 *Provided,* That the government shall shoulder the costs of mandatory
28 COVID-19 testing in the public transportation sector;
- 29 (2) The operation of motorcycle taxis shall remain suspended to prevent
30 the spread of the virus through shared helmets and close physical
31 contact between passengers and drivers;

- (3) Passengers in all types of public transportation vehicles shall be required to sanitize their hands prior to boarding the vehicle, shall be seated a seat apart and wear face masks while inside the vehicle;
- (4) Contactless payment mechanisms shall be promoted such as the use of money trays and automatic fare collection systems to minimize the risk of transmission of the COVID-19 virus;
- (5) Agencies and authorities tasked to manage transport hubs such as airports, ports, harbors, and similar facilities shall coordinate with the concerned LGUs in the implementation of the Universal and Mandatory Safety Measures herein provided and shall consider the following special measures:
- Establishment of public health corridors in airports and ports;
 - Mandatory body temperature reading for all arriving and departing passengers;
 - Mandatory quarantine at home or in an authorized government facility for all arriving passengers;
 - Mandatory collection of data for the maintenance of a database of information for contact-tracing purposes only;
 - Thorough sanitizing and disinfection of all arriving and departing vessels;
 - Mandatory regular testing of all employees, personnel, staff, and crew attached to vessels and those who have assisted passengers; and
 - Mandatory conduct of rapid testing for arriving and departing passengers.

(6) The Department of Transportation (DOTr) shall craft and implement programs that will help modes of public transport, such as jeepneys and public buses, to transition to better normal in consideration of the health and safety protocols without requiring them to commit to the government's public utility vehicle modernization program. The

1 agency shall also ensure the smooth operation of different modes of
2 public and mass transport while upholding existing health and
3 safety protocols;

4 (7) National Government authorities in coordination with the
5 stakeholders of the transport sector shall establish dedicated lanes
6 along roads, avenues, highways, and other transport infrastructure
7 networks to give priority to healthcare, emergency, peace and order,
8 and supply-chain vehicles transporting individuals, goods,
9 equipment, or those used in the pursuit of services deemed essential
10 and critical: *Provided*, That pursuant to the provisions of Section
11 21(d) of Republic Act No. 8749, otherwise known as the "*Clean Air*
12 *Act*", the DOTr shall ensure that vehicles strictly comply with current
13 emission standards; and

14 (8) To promote safe physical distancing and sustainable mobility, LGUs
15 and appropriate government development authorities having
16 jurisdiction over roadways or highways, in coordination with the
17 Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), and the Metro
18 Manila Development Authority (MMDA) in the case of the National
19 Capital Region (NCR), shall immediately create green lanes which
20 are dedicated, protected and interconnected lanes for personal
21 mobility devices such as bicycles, e-bicycles, scooters, and similar
22 micromobile devices: *Provided*, That personal mobility users shall
23 observe safe physical distancing and speeds prescribed by the LGUs
24 or relevant regional development agencies. Bicycle racks and secure
25 bicycle parking sheds and spaces shall be established in government
26 offices, hospitals, public schools and higher education institutions,
27 and other facilities. Changing and shower rooms shall be promoted
28 as well by public facility managers to encourage more bicycle and
29 micromobile commuting: *Provided, further*, That the DOTr, DPWH
30 and LGUs shall ensure that these dedicated and interconnected lanes
31 for bicycles and micromobility devices are included in current and
32 future road projects.

1

2 (D) Better Normal for Schools and Education Institutions -

- 3 (1) To give priority to the health, well-being and safety of the education
4 sector, the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission
5 on Higher Education (CHED) are authorized to determine the start
6 of the academic year 2022 to 2023 for all public and private schools,
7 state universities and colleges (SUCs), local universities and colleges
8 (LUCs), private colleges and universities, and other learning
9 institutions;
- 10 (2) All public and private education institutions including private and
11 public universities and colleges shall formulate, develop and adopt
12 a flexible learning approach which is designed to meet students'
13 needs, capabilities of faculty members and conditions on the ground,
14 ensuring accessibility and inclusivity and without prejudice to the
15 adoption of measures for online learning;
- 16 (3) The DepEd shall develop, implement and promote a flexible
17 learning program for K-12 students in all public and private schools,
18 taking into consideration the capability of the school and its teachers
19 in delivering such program, and the accessibility of learning
20 materials, either physical or electronic, to the students. The flexible
21 learning program shall be geared towards limiting physical contact
22 among the school population and minimizing the impact on the
23 potential for learning and instruction between learners and teachers
24 and upgrading or improving the quality of electronic and digital
25 content to be made available in cases where online or distance
26 learning modalities are pursued: *Provided*, That students shall not be
27 penalized for their inability to access and participate in electronic or
28 digital means of learning due to limitations in connectivity,
29 unavailability of equipment or other circumstances caused by the
30 COVID-19 pandemic: *Provided, further*, That, television (TV) and
31 radio programs done in partnership between DepEd, National
32 Council for Children Television, National Commission for Culture

1 and the Arts and its attached agencies, Film Development Council of
2 the Philippines, Philippine Sports Commission, Early Childhood
3 Community Development Center, higher education institutions
4 (HEIs) and pertinent cooperatives and organizations, and with the
5 assistance of licensed TV and radio broadcast stations shall serve as
6 alternative platforms for learning;

- 7 (4) The CHED shall monitor the implementation of flexible learning
8 programs for all HEIs, SUCs and LCUs. HEIs shall continue to
9 exercise academic freedom and levels of autonomy in the
10 governance of their own academic affairs: *Provided*, That students
11 shall not be penalized for their inability to access or participate in
12 electronic or digital means of learning due to limitations in
13 connectivity or unavailability of equipment;
- 14 (5) The National Government shall allocate funding for the research,
15 training of faculty, curriculum development, monitoring and
16 evaluating, benchmarking, and the development of systems for
17 learning continuity during times of crisis, such as the occurrence of
18 a pandemic. Such funding shall be made available by the National
19 Government, from the existing budgetary allocation for the K-12 and
20 other similar programs, and made available to HEIs, including those
21 organized as stock corporations, local research institutes, academic
22 organizations, LGUs, school boards, and individual researchers
23 through an application process to be prescribed by the DepEd and
24 the CHED: *Provided*, That for the benefit of learners who have
25 hearing impairment, the full participation of deaf linguistics
26 organizations and deaf cooperatives shall be required in the
27 development of learning materials;
- 28 (6) Subject to consultation with the DepEd, CHED, and the Technical
29 Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), all face-to-
30 face classes and group school activities, including sports, athletics,
31 cultural, and academic meets, exhibitions, competitions as well as
32 extra-curricular field or exposure trips and student exchanges shall

remain suspended unless otherwise officially declared permissible by competent authorities without prejudice to the academic freedom and levels of autonomy enjoyed by HEIs in the management and conduct of their academic affairs;

- (7) Digital learning shall be promoted by the National Government in coordination with telecommunications companies, private sector content providers and stakeholders, and internet service providers;
- (8) Public and private education institutions including private colleges and universities and other accredited learning and training institutions shall prioritize the establishment of online platforms for the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and Mandatory Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) programs; and
- (9) Subject to existing rules and regulations, meaningful inclusion and effective participation of students and the learning community must be ensured in all aspects of pandemic response and recovery plan in education: *Provided*, That mechanisms to uphold autonomy of student councils or governments, and support for uninterrupted operations of campus press shall be in place.

(E) Management of Cultural and Heritage Spaces -

Digital platforms shall be used to consolidate resources and cultural forms in public spaces, whether generated by the private or the public sector, to create an archive of oral histories, visual ethnographies, philosophical discourse, and technical and creative capacity-building programs geared towards bolstering various creative industries, that shall be made available to the public for virtual appreciation and learning, most especially in the K-12 system. Online promotion or streaming of cultural programs, performances, exhibitions and enhancement of existing public arts and monuments shall be highly encouraged and geared towards sustainability.

(F) Better Normal for Private Commercial and Industrial Workplaces -

- (1) The National Government, in coordination with the LGUs, and in partnership with accredited or duly recognized organizations that

pertain to each sector, shall maintain databases on all private commercial, industrial, and other businesses operating in their areas of jurisdiction. The database shall include information such as the number of employees, working hours, workspace conditions, office floor areas, and other information necessary to ensure compliance with physical distancing and other protocols prescribed by this Act to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 virus;

- (2) All private commercial, industrial, and other forms of businesses shall be required to submit a Management Plan to the concerned LGU which shall determine the said business's compliance with the necessary safeguards and the Universal Safety Measures provided under this Act, as well as industrial safeguards and safety measures provided for by the implementing agencies: *Provided*, That the review of all Management Plans shall be conducted promptly upon submission to allow establishments to resume operations as soon as possible: *Provided further*, That the Management Plan shall integrate circular economy strategies in the procurement of materials or the development of mechanisms for hygiene and sanitation: *Provided, furthermore*, That LGUs are authorized to conduct periodic inspection of private commercial, industrial and other businesses operating within their territorial jurisdiction to ensure compliance of these businesses with the Universal and Mandatory Safety Measures and other standards and protocols prescribed under this Act and its IRR;
- (3) All private commercial, industrial and other businesses shall implement their Management Plan and shall incorporate alternative work arrangements such as work-from-home schemes, including rotational work or shifting in schedules, in applicable industries to lessen by at least fifty percent (50%) the number of employees required to report to their workplaces physically. For the private sector, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), in consultation with the private sector, shall standardize the template

for and the required contents of the said Management Plan. The LGUs shall be in charge of monitoring the implementation of this provision;

- (4) All private commercial, industrial and other businesses shall shoulder all expenditures in complying with the mandates of this Act, and such expenditures shall not in any way be charged to employees. There shall be no diminution of salaries, wages, benefits and other remunerations guaranteed by the Labor Code and other relevant laws to employees by reason of employer's compliance with this Act;
- (5) The relevant provisions of the Labor Code notwithstanding, being late or being absent for work due to heavy traffic, unavailability of public transport or of shuttle or transportation service due to reasons related to the implementation of this Act shall not be a cause for disciplinary action against, or termination of, the employees. Private commercial and industrial businesses are hereby mandated to adopt a flexible working schedule in keeping with the policy of maintaining a minimum of eight (8) hour work per day, or forty-eight (48) hour work per week, which shall be incorporated in their Management Plans; and
- (6) The DOLE shall ensure the conduct of health and safety audits of all workplaces, including special economic zones, in line with Republic Act No. 11058, otherwise known as "*An Act Strengthening Compliance with Occupational Safety and Health Standards and providing penalties for violations thereof*".

(G) Better Normal Governance Measures –

- (1) Various forms of electronic governance or e-governance mechanisms shall be established to facilitate continuous and efficient transactions between and among government agencies, and the private sector, as well as in the delivery of socio-economic services including the utilization of online payment system, appointment-based transactions, the Philippine national public key infrastructure,

1 electronic business permits and licensing systems, electronic
2 procurement system, electronic management systems for human
3 resources, records, accounting, as well as other ICT-enabled systems
4 and solutions for effective and efficient e-governance.

5 Internet-based electronic payment facilities and gateways,
6 such as e-money and similar platforms, shall be utilized in collecting
7 taxes, fees, tolls, imposts, and other revenues and in paying for
8 goods, services, and other disbursements. Government offices and
9 government-owned and -controlled corporations (GOCCs) that are
10 already partially applying this kind of digitized payment
11 mechanism must improve the current system used in order to
12 accommodate the increase in the number of transactions. The
13 government shall establish online payment systems and may
14 partner with payment solutions providers;

- 15 (2) Government agencies involved in business registration, such as the
16 Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Securities and Exchange
17 Commission (SEC), Cooperative Development Authority (CDA),
18 Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), Social Security System (SSS),
19 Home Development Mutual Fund (Pag-IBIG), Philippine Health
20 Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth), LGUs, and other permit and
21 license issuing agencies shall be integrated to facilitate the efficient
22 delivery of business registration-related services;
- 23 (3) The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) shall accelerate the adoption
24 by all payment service providers of the National Quick Response
25 (QR) Code standard to hasten the interoperability of QR-driven
26 payment services and eliminate the need for merchants and clients
27 to maintain several accounts;
- 28 (4) A government online procurement system that encompasses all
29 procurement processes involving bidding, contract agreements, and
30 payment for services or supplies, and which shall contain a tracking
31 and customer service mechanism shall also be developed; and

(5) Where applicable, the relevant provisions of Republic Act No. 11032, otherwise known as the "*Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018*", shall supplement the provisions of this Act.

(H)Other Aspects of Better Normal -

- (1) The government shall provide important information related to health emergencies to persons with disabilities (PWDs) and institutionalize assistive mechanisms for them such as requiring sign interpretation in TV news broadcasts and live streamed public information programs and content. In relation thereto, a system of standards for assistive mechanisms for PWDs shall be planned, financed, implemented, and monitored. For purposes of this Act, individuals who assist PWDs such as sign language interpreters shall be recognized as front liners providing essential services;
 - (2) The government must likewise provide sufficient support for culture bearers and masters, and those engaged in crafts making, such as weaving and carving;
 - (3) Emergency cash subsidies shall be given to artists, cultural workers, freelancers and the self-employed, such as those working in the audiovisual, entertainment, and live events sector, and other creative industries, such as architecture and allied arts, dance, dramatic arts, literary arts, music, visual arts, contemporary arts or expressions, audiovisual and multimedia, and scholars, critics, curators, and cultural workers;
 - (4) The local chief executives of LGUs, in coordination with the private sector, shall implement, monitor and maintain a planned schedule for people traveling to and from their respective workplaces or residences located in the LGU and if possible or applicable, the charter of various means of transportation for the use of residents and workers to and from their respective destinations;
 - (5) There shall be a continuous implementation of alternative work arrangements in the public and private sectors based on the nature

1 of work of an employee, the workplace and its location or place, and
2 its distance to and from the residences of employees;

- 3 (6) The implementation of Republic Act No. 9003, also known as the
4 "Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000", in relation to the
5 proper disposal and management of wastes resulting from activities
6 related to the implementation of this Act shall be strictly monitored:
7 *Provided*, That the National Government shall implement regulations
8 on the manufacture and importation, use, recycling of all single-use
9 plastics used in trade or commerce in business enterprises, as well as
10 by retailers and consumers: *Provided, further*, That the government
11 shall conduct research and develop single-use plastic packaging
12 alternatives, and provide incentives to plastic industries that will
13 shift to other manufacturing activities;
- 14 (7) Adaptation measures such as the establishment of multi-hazard
15 early warning systems that reach out the last mile, capacity building
16 of national experts, construction of rainwater harvesters in
17 government-owned and -managed buildings and spaces, and the
18 establishment of seedbanks and vegetable gardens in available open
19 spaces in local communities, rooftops of government-owned and -
20 managed buildings shall be implemented;
- 21 (8) To prevent the transmission and spread of zoonotic diseases among
22 humans, all government agencies and offices and LGUs shall ensure
23 that the protection of biological diversity is integrated and
24 mainstreamed into programs and projects;
- 25 (9) The National Government, through relevant government agencies,
26 such as the DICT, DTI, DILG, in accordance with their respective
27 mandates, and with the support of the private sector, shall plan for
28 and undertake universal digitalization as well as promote and
29 implement programs and innovations to accelerate public access and
30 connectivity including the progressive roll-out of the National
31 Broadband Program and the Free Public Internet Access Program
32 down to the barangay level;

- (10) The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), DILG through the Persons with Disabilities Affairs Offices (PDAOs), and DOH shall gather, compile, update, and publish online, disaggregated demographic and mapping data on deaf and all other persons with disabilities nationwide in the context of the pandemic;
- (11) The PSA, DTI, NDRRMC, DOLE, DOH, National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) and other relevant agencies shall gather, compile and update disaggregated demographic and mapping data on critically impacted businesses, sectors, and industries in the context of the pandemic in order to get a better census of the needs of the various sectors and industries; and
- (12) In compliance with Section 10 of Republic Act No. 11106, otherwise known as the "Filipino Sign Language Act", ensure the continued placement of TV insets in news and public affairs programs through video remote interpreting on TV as well as online streaming platforms, and promote as well deaf-produced and/or -signed pandemic and quarantine related public information.

Sec. 7. Role of LGUs. – LGUs shall, in their respective territorial jurisdictions, be primarily responsible for instituting localized policies and legislation in accordance with the better normal measures prescribed under Section 6 hereof and other related directives and issuances of the National Government. Local governments must ensure that their policy-making process shall involve the participation of all stakeholders. Consultations with the communities shall be pursued as a matter of course to ensure that such policies respond properly to the needs of the people. In this regard, the LGUs shall have the following responsibilities:

- (a) Ensure the proper implementation of the provisions of this Act within their respective territorial jurisdiction;
 - (b) Enact the necessary and appropriate ordinance for the local implementation of the provisions of this Act, including the promotion of low-contact payment mechanisms such as the use of electronic money (e-money) as a medium of exchange in collecting taxes, fees, tolls,

imposts, and other revenues and in paying for goods, services, and other disbursements: *Provided*, That the LGU shall make the necessary arrangements with the relevant government agencies and government-recognized regulating entities to acquire e-money payment capability;

- (c) Require, by ordinance, merchants or business entities in their localities to obtain and maintain e-money payment system capability that is accessible by phone or other access devices, as a prerequisite for the approval of application for or renewal of business permits;
- (d) Create a Better Normal Task Force to monitor the compliance of the private businesses and offices with the provisions of this Act;
- (e) Orient the applicant thereof of the guidelines on the management of spaces as provided in Section 6(B) of this Act, which shall be observed throughout the entire gathering;
- (f) In cooperation or with the assistance of the Land Transportation Office (LTO), initiate information campaigns on public transportation schemes in their localities in accordance with Section 6(C) of this Act;
- (g) Establish the Inter-Local Government Unit Task Force as authorized by and in accordance with the appropriate guidelines of the DILG;
- (h) In coordination with the DICT, foster, support and facilitate the effective roll-out of free wi-fi access points and other infrastructure needed for the National Broadband Program. The LGUs shall likewise foster, support, and facilitate the construction of common towers and other passive telecommunication infrastructure in strategic locations for the use of telecommunications service providers to propagate connectivity and provide quality telecommunications services to their constituents in accordance with existing laws, and the policies and standards set by the DICT;
- (i) In coordination with DOH, provide immediate assistance to all reported COVID-confirmed residents and patients;
- (j) In coordination with the DOH, establish and maintain a functional local epidemiology and surveillance unit pursuant to Republic Act No. 11332, also known as the “*Mandatory Reporting of Notifiable Diseases and Health*

Events of Public Health Concern Act". In accordance with Section 6(A) of this Act, the LGU shall specify the conduct of contact tracing systems for suspect, probable, and confirmed COVID-19 cases, or other similar diseases, to avoid delay in contact tracing and to ensure the prompt management and containment of the disease. In all cases, the LGU shall ensure that disease surveillance and contact tracing procedures are in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012;

- (k) In coordination with the Department of Agriculture (DA), plan and implement a resilient agro-ecology and local food supply system that:
 - (1) involves a shorter, more diversified food supply chain that is resilient to future shocks; (2) ensures food access shall remain at, or swiftly returns to, pre- pandemic levels; (3) mitigates the impact on vulnerable food systems actors, including small-holder producers, informal traders, and low-income and marginalized groups; (4) encourages a shift towards good agricultural and climate-resilient practices; and, (5) builds capacity towards family-farming model to encourage food security. The plan shall promote permaculture and the establishment of community food gardens, family farms, local food production and shorter supply chains, the strengthening of urban-rural linkages, and the promotion of diversity in the food supply chain and channels of distribution as well as ensuring the integrity of sufficient wild spaces nearby to preserve genetic stocks, revitalize monoculture areas and ensure water security;
 - (l) Establish and manage the use of cultural spaces to serve as venues and facilities for keeping the creativity of the people alive, affording people to exercise their freedom of expression, enhancing psycho-spiritual health, and providing them opportunities for meaningful participation in community life, even while observing the universal mandatory standards and protocols during the time of a pandemic: *Provided*, That such cultural space must meet the minimum criteria of facilities or landscapes that are open to the public: *Provided further*, That cultural spaces are adaptable, do not compromise on quality, able to enhance a sense of community, and are inclusive, accessible and welcoming; and

(m) The LGUs, in coordination with the cultural agencies, such as the NCCA, National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP) and the National Museum, DepEd, CHED and SUCs, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Tourism, DPWH, and the DOH, shall conduct a comprehensive cultural heritage mapping of their areas, including natural resources, built heritage structures, and tangible and intangible heritage, including indigenous knowledge and resources, with the end in view that the resulting database and documentation shall aid LGUs in formulating localized policies and programs that will help prevent the transmission of zoonotic diseases among the people and help protect their health and well-being.

An application shall be developed as repository of the data retrieved from cultural mapping activities.

Sec. 8. Role of the Private Sector. -

(a) All private businesses, offices and establishments shall submit a Management Plan, to the concerned LGU where the entity conducts operations or holds office not later than fifteen (15) days upon resumption of their operations: *Provided*, That priority approval shall be granted by LGUs to Management Plans that strictly comply with industry best practices, minimum health standards, and safety protocols as accredited by DOH, DTI, DOLE and other implementing agencies. Such Management Plan shall contain, among others, the following information:

- (1) Total number of employees in the specific workplace, office, or branch covered by the plan;
 - (2) Overall strategy for the reporting of the workforce which may be on rotational, staggered, tele-commuting, remote or on work-from-home basis, including the relevant time specifications and periods as well as the number of workers who shall be allowed ingress and egress;

- (3) Total number of workers at any given time in the workplace or office on a daily basis;
 - (4) Number of workers per area of space and the spacing mechanisms to be implemented in compliance with physical distancing protocols, if applicable;
 - (5) Mechanisms for maintaining personal hygiene and cleanliness among the employees and in workstations or areas including the availability of handwashing or hand sanitizing implements;
 - (6) Physical changes in space management introduced or to be introduced in the workplaces to protect employees and to implement physical distancing such as plastic barriers between customers and personnel or between and among customers or other individuals within the workplace;
 - (7) Signages, reminders, and other information, in accessible formats, including Filipino sign language and/or easy-to-understand text in the appropriate written language, installed or posted in key areas of the workplace to serve as constant reminders for workers to practice the mandatory health, safety and sanitation practices;
 - (8) Mechanisms for maintaining physical distancing in communally shared areas in the workplace, such as cafeterias, restrooms, conference rooms, prayer rooms, breastfeeding stations, including safeguards against sharing of tools, implements, utensils, equipment, and supplies;
 - (9) Physical and personal protective equipment provided or to be provided by businesses to their respective employees in order to inclusively implement the practices mandated in this Act;
 - (10) Mechanisms for managing employees exhibiting symptoms or confirmed to have tested positive for COVID-19 infection, including the company or business unit's system for contact tracing;

- (11) The Workers' Compensation Plan which provides how workers are required to work and will be compensated while on quarantine;
 - (12) Mechanisms to implement a circular economy in the workplace, such as the: (i) reduction on the consumption of non-renewable resources; (ii) development or design of products that minimize waste; (iii) re-use of materials and expansion of the useful life of products; (iv) prevention of harmful emissions to soil, air and water; and (v) the installation of segregation and recycling facilities;
 - (13) Mechanisms for a healthier working environment, such as, but not limited to, the use of natural, non-toxic and low global warming potential materials and equipment, improved indoor air quality and ventilation with sustainable cooling technologies, and the more efficient use of space; and
 - (14) Measures to implement a "zero to landfill" policy such as setting targets for reducing waste production; implementing sorting and recycling for all office waste; ensuring that recycled waste is composted or recycled; or observing sharing economy practices such as reusing and recycling.

(b) All private businesses, offices and establishments shall require all employees to subject themselves to a thermal or temperature scan prior to being allowed entry. Employees whose recorded body temperature render them suspect for symptoms of COVID-19 shall be asked to undergo the necessary quarantine protocols and given the appropriate medical advice, or subjected to the appropriate health care in coordination with authorized medical facilities;

(c) Private entities resuming their operations and requiring the physical presence of their employee subject to their Management Plan shall provide shuttle or transportation services under the conditions applicable to public transportation operators: *Provided*, That private entities and owners of buildings and establishments shall support

employees and building occupants who have opted to commute through bicycles and other micromobility devices by installing bicycle racks, storage, and bicycle parking spaces: *Provided, further,* That the installation of changing and shower rooms to support green transport and promote safe and proper hygiene shall likewise be promoted by business establishments;

- (d) There shall be an employee case management protocol to be observed on the treatment of patients or of persons suspected to be afflicted with the disease in accordance with prevailing DOH guidelines: *Provided,* That patient-doctor confidentiality shall be suspended in order to aid contact tracing and in the identification of possible COVID-19 patients;
- (e) Employers who opt to conduct testing may do so in a representative sample: *Provided,* That the cost of testing is borne by the employer and not charged to the PhilHealth; and
- (f) In the provision of assistance and financing schemes, the lack of capacity of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the implementation of their respective Management Plan shall be taken into consideration.

The implementation of mandatory public health standards and other health-promoting practices committed by business owners in their respective Management Plans shall be the joint responsibility of the owners or management of establishments and their respective LGUs.

Sec. 9. Specific Responsibilities of Particular National Government Offices, their respective Attached Agencies, and GOCCs. – In addition to the duties and mandates of National Government agencies already prescribed in the other sections of this Act, the following agencies and offices are mandated to carry out the following responsibilities, to wit:

(A) Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) –

The PSA shall fast-track the implementation of the provisions of Republic Act No. 11055, otherwise known as the “*Philippine Identification System Act*”, and Republic Act No. 11315, otherwise known as the “*Community-Based Monitoring System Act*”, to facilitate the profiling,

1 contact-tracing, and distribution of forms of assistance under the better
2 normal period after the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions.

3 The PSA shall coordinate with the DILG, Department of Social
4 Welfare and Development (DSWD) and LGUs to cull information from the
5 Community-Based Monitoring System (CBMS) that may be utilized in fast-
6 tracking efforts geared towards the full implementation of the Philippine
7 Identification System Act.

8 The PSA may likewise cull information contained in the existing
9 databases of the government on birth certificates, passports, voter's
10 registration, GSIS, SSS, Pag-IBIG, PhilHealth through data-sharing
11 arrangements, subject to the rules and procedures that shall be established
12 by the National Privacy Commission (NPC) for purposes of facilitating the
13 implementation of the Philippine Identification System Act.

14 To facilitate the integration of environmental concerns in national
15 development planning and policy-making, the PSA, in coordination with
16 the DENR, DA, NEDA, Department of Energy (DOE), and the Climate
17 Change Commission, shall enhance the Philippine Economic-
18 Environmental Natural Resources Accounting (PEENRA) System as part
19 of the national income accounting system. The DENR and the DA shall
20 generate baseline information and build a database to support ecosystem-
21 based assessment and monitoring, continuing research and development,
22 technology development and transfer, and capacity building, for the
23 conservation and sustainable use of natural resources and ecosystems,
24 especially the coastal, marine, and forestry sectors.

25 The PEENRA shall be considered a scientific planning tool to avert
26 ecosystems and biodiversity loss with a view to preventing the
27 transmission of zoonotic diseases and pursuing anticipatory adaptation
28 measures amid the impacts of climate change. It shall include the provision
29 for strategic climate financing for localized climate adaptation investments
30 supporting risk-based local planning, energy transition to renewable and
31 indigenous sources, resilient infrastructure, agro-ecology, water and food

1 security, technological innovation for critical sectors like agriculture and
2 fisheries, and capacity building for green enterprises.

3 The PEENRA system shall be based on a framework that includes the
4 accounting of environmental conditions and quality, environmental
5 resources and their utilization, depreciation of natural capital,
6 environmental damages, and loss and damage associated with climate
7 change impacts.

8 (B) Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) -

9 The DICT shall fast track the progressive and full implementation of
10 the National Broadband Program (NBP) by immediately establishing and
11 implementing a nationwide and comprehensive information and
12 communications technology (ICT) action plan that shall involve all
13 stakeholders, including the major TELCOs, small TELCOs, internet service
14 providers (ISPs), and developers of technology and digital applications,
15 with the end in view of -widening and improving connectivity not only for
16 the fight against COVID-19 but also for the long-term development needs
17 of the country. The NBP shall serve to enable the widespread accessibility
18 to and utilization of the internet for essential and significant public and
19 private transactions, including learning and instruction: *Provided*, That the
20 NBP must be reliable and sufficiently able to support a high volume of
21 video streaming, in compliance with the Filipino Sign Language Act.

22 Further, the DICT shall immediately formulate and implement an
23 industry-wide policy for the TELCOS, both major and small, ISPs, and
24 technology applications that aims to widen connectivity in all sectors of
25 society, particularly the poor, the unconnected, the underserved
26 households in poor urban communities, geographically isolated and
27 disadvantaged areas (GIDAs), and the MSMEs: *Provided*, That in relation to
28 the widening of connectivity to all sectors of society, the principle behind
29 the NBP shall be adhered to. To achieve the goal of providing connectivity
30 to all sectors of the economy, incentives shall be provided to new market
31 that shall invest in unserved areas: *Provided, further*, That such incentives

shall result in affordable prices for internet usage: Provided finally, That the following key policies shall be implemented:

- (1) Provision of incentives to TELCOs which serve the poor and underserved MSMEs nationwide via wireless network technology (WiFi) by implementing a reduced Spectrum User Fee for WiFi, such that a fair and reasonable scheme is achieved consistent with existing rules and regulations governing the use of WiFi;
- (2) Implement its departmental policies and initiatives for the propagation of Common Tower and the sharing of Passive Telecommunication Infrastructure in the telecommunications industry;
- (3) Implementation of the provision for fiber optic transmission rental from the National Grid Corporation to new telecommunications industry players to accelerate development therein;
- (4) Implementation of the spectrum sharing arrangement among and between TELCOs, at intra-industry fee agreements regulated by NTC, to fully and optimally utilize the usage of licensed frequencies that are presently assigned to existing major TELCOs;
- (5) Full use of the internet bandwidth supply made available by the Luzon Bypass infrastructure to provide connectivity to all government offices and to the unserved and underserved areas of the country. For this purpose, the DICT shall formulate a policy to implement effective measures to make the internet bandwidth supply available at a fair pricing scheme, to other TELCO stakeholders, giving priority to new incoming players, particularly those that serve the poor and underserved communities and GIDAs;
- (6) Undertake contracts and other arrangements with private sector, including the middle and last mile providers, the GOCCs or LGUs for the provision of internet bandwidth sourced separately from, or in conjunction with, the Luzon Bypass infrastructure, should it

1 become necessary, to provide connectivity to end-users through
2 multi-year obligations;

3 (7) Promulgate joint policies with the DII.G that mandate a simplified
4 and streamlined permitting process for telecommunication and
5 broadband infrastructure; and

6 (8) Promulgate and implement policies for effective cross-sector
7 infrastructure sharing, such as, but not limited to, coordinated or
8 joint infrastructure development, dark fiber leasing, and joint
9 venture.

10 In pursuit of the above policy directives, the DICT shall undertake the
11 following:

12 (i) Implement programs that shall facilitate the setting-up of online,
13 internet-based systems and platforms in offices of the public sector,
14 including schools, universities and even barangay halls, across all
15 levels;

16 (ii) Assist public sector offices and agencies in the upgrading of their
17 existing internet and other ICT infrastructure;

18 (iii) Establish, in coordination with other government agencies,
19 learning modules and relevant ICT solutions and systems to assist
20 public sector employees, freelancers and self-employed
21 individuals, and MSMEs in the use of relevant technological and
22 digital platforms that can assist in the various cycles of their
23 business model; and

24 (iv) Direct the NTC to implement all relevant policy directives under
25 this Act, including, but not limited to, those pertaining to the
26 enhancement of connectivity, improvement of internet speed and
27 quality of service, and development of the digital infrastructure of
28 the country.

29 The DICT in coordination with the DOH shall also promote research
30 towards the development and establishment of an online data tracking
31 system or the creation of a digital/phone-based application which is
32 downloadable by the public for case monitoring, mapping, and contact-

1 tracing that shall be integrated with global positioning system (GPS)
2 activated by real-time technologies to monitor and track individuals, alert
3 the user of location-based risks and provide the user with updated and
4 constant reminders and information for their health and safety. Any
5 technology created for case monitoring, mapping and contact tracing shall
6 be consistent with the Data Privacy Act. The DICT shall leverage the
7 existing systems used for case monitoring, mapping and contact tracing.
8 All systems, initiated by the public or private sector, shall be
9 interconnected to each other and shall be subject to the policies and
10 standards issued by the DICT.

11 The DICT shall take the lead in the establishment of e-government
12 systems and shall fast track its plans to build the necessary infrastructure
13 to promote and facilitate digitization of the government and
14 interoperability of government services and systems, especially those
15 located in the provinces and rural areas. Under this Act, government offices
16 and agencies shall develop, introduce, and implement solutions and
17 systems to effectively facilitate government transactions through various
18 online channels or contact-less mechanisms. This includes the uploading of
19 pertinent government forms and their completion and/or submission thru
20 websites or online portals in order to minimize the need for face-to-face
21 transactions or physical travels or visits to government offices.
22 Government agencies shall utilize creative adaptive technology that allows
23 full access of PWDs to government services and are compliant with
24 relevant existing laws and practices. This includes the establishment of a
25 system of standards for Filipino sign language interpreting.

26 (C) Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) -

27 The DTI in coordination with the DICT shall establish a digital
28 application for MSMEs to further enhance the conduct of e-commerce
29 activities. The following measures shall be undertaken to assist MSMEs:

- 30 (1) Regulatory bodies and other concerned government agencies and
31 instrumentalities shall allow the immediate use of online platforms
32 for application, processing, approval and release of loans;

(2) The use of video or teleconferencing, emails, and other online platforms shall be allowed and shall be considered as compliance with government rules and regulations, and the requirements of meetings such as service of meeting notices, quorum and attendance requirements, and the registration of votes, on matters before the body conducting the meeting;

(3) The DTI shall provide special support programs that will assist MSMEs and startups in achieving business recovery and resiliency, including the following:

- (i) Capacity-building in digital skills;
 - (ii) Support for digitalizing operations;
 - (iii) Knowledge transfer and information-sharing with MSMEs; and
 - (iv) Startup and MSMEs innovation aid.

The DTI, in coordination with the DICT and the DOH, shall also promote the shifting, prioritization, or increase in government support or funding for the manufacturing sector, including MSMEs engaged in the production of healthcare, hygiene, and safety related goods, and the establishment of real-time online information exchange between private hospitals and medical facilities in the supply, demand, and procurement of the same: *Provided*, That concerned government agencies shall promote and integrate circular economy strategies in the procurement of materials or the development of mechanisms for hygiene and sanitation in the implementation of this Act.

The provision of government support could come in the form of: (1) integrated and uninterrupted supply chain networks; (2) reliable online market platforms; (3) stable universal broadband; (4) digital IDs or digital signature infrastructure; and (5) secured mobile payment channels, among others.

The DTI, NEDA, Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO), cultural government agencies such as the NCCA and the FDCP, in partnership with the private sector, shall formulate and implement a

1 strategic marketing communications plan that will renew public interest in
2 and restore confidence in industries classified as non-essential but heavily
3 affected due to the implementation of quarantine and other health
4 measures to prevent the transmission of COVID-19.

5 (D) Department of Health (DOH) -

6 The DOH shall institutionalize and regulate telemedicine and e-
7 prescription activities, in accordance with relevant rules and regulations. It
8 shall likewise explore technological innovations for certain health services
9 that might be compromised in the new normal setting. It shall promote and
10 support local research on COVID-19 testing and treatment, and the
11 development, manufacture and distribution of a vaccine.

12 To improve on public sanitation, the DOH shall execute all plans
13 geared at achieving zero open defecation and require all LGUs to report on
14 their achievements of this goal.

15 (E) Local Water Districts and Water Utilities -

16 Considering that water is a basic need in containing the transmission
17 of COVID-19 and similar diseases, the local water districts shall ensure the
18 availability of sufficient water supply in their areas of coverage. In the case
19 of private water utilities, such service providers shall review and
20 recommend the appropriate extension of concession agreements necessary
21 to ensure sufficient water supply in their service areas as well as to fast-
22 track sewerage systems as required under Republic Act No. 9275,
23 otherwise known as the "*Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004*". Such service
24 providers shall also be required to submit new master plans to reflect a
25 speedier full sewerage, septage and wastewater treatment coverage of the
26 metropolis.

27 (F) Department of Public Works and Highways -

28 The DPWH shall take full responsibility for the implementation of the
29 National Sewerage and Septage Management Plan and shall provide
30 sufficient funds for it. All highly urbanized cities shall, in coordination with
31 DENR, identify remaining hotspots of fecal transmission and construct the

1 necessary wastewater infrastructure using funds made available by the
2 DPWH.

3 (G) Department of Budget and Management (DBM) -

4 The DBM shall undertake the formulation of the annual national
5 budget in a way that ensures the appropriate prioritization and allocation
6 of funds to support programs and projects to implement this Act for green,
7 resilient, and sustainable communities.

8 (H) Department of Finance (DOF) -

9 The DOF shall streamline and rationalize the process for accessing
10 international green and climate finance for programs and interventions
11 identified under this Act to accelerate the implementation of technical
12 cooperation projects and grants supportive of the resilient and sustainable
13 recovery objectives of this Act.

14 Sec. 10. *Gender and Social Equity.* - In the implementation of this Act and its IRR,
15 special care and consideration shall be given to integrating gender issues and
16 eliminating all forms of discrimination in the following:

- 17 (a) Implementation of alternative work arrangements in the public and
18 private sectors ensuring that DSWD and LGUs attend to possible
19 heightened cases of gender-based and domestic violence during
20 intermittent mandatory lockdowns or quarantines;
- 21 (b) Social protection measures to be instituted for low-income and informal
22 female and male workers and daily wage earners that ensure restoration
23 of livelihoods and such other ameliorative measures that shall
24 compensate for temporary loss of incomes;
- 25 (c) Sufficient and equal support for both women and men with disabilities,
26 cognizant that women with disabilities are most disadvantaged and
27 excluded from access to vital pandemic-related information and
28 assistive acts;
- 29 (d) Sufficient and equal provision of protective personal equipment to male
30 and female frontline health workers and employees in both health
31 centers and public and private firms and workplaces; and

(e) Public reproductive health care services and the capacity of maternal health clinics and midwives to address needs of child-bearers in terms of isolation from infected patients, lactation and re-lactation assistance, and sufficient staffing and facilities for life-saving procedures.

The needs of women in the health care and medical frontline professions shall be considered in the procurement of personal protective equipment and such other assistive measures such as access to clean restrooms, reasonable work shifts and equity in wages.

Any sector that may be affected adversely by measures under this Act that would lead to unemployment or industry collapse shall be assisted by the LGUs and interlocal units in alleviating their economic status.

Sec. 11. Prohibited Acts. - The following acts and omissions are prohibited under

this Act:

- (a) Failure to wear a mask while in public spaces or in the workplace;
 - (b) Failure to comply with the provisions on the management of spaces required in Section 6(B) of this Act, except in subsections (1) and (3). In such cases, the subject gathering shall either be ordered ceased, with the maximum tolerance possible under existing laws, if such gathering does not comply with Section 6(A) of this Act;
 - (c) Failure to implement and monitor the proper implementation of Management of Public Transportation provided for under Section 6(C) of this Act;
 - (d) Failure to comply with Section 6(D)(2) of this Act and other issuances, circulars, memorandum and directives of DepEd and CHED in relation to the holding of classes during COVID-19 pandemic: *Provided*, That no penalty or discrimination in whatever form shall be imposed on any student, teacher, or member of the faculty for his or her inability to attend or hold online classes or comply with the flexible learning approaches;
 - (e) Failure to submit the Management Plan within the period required in Section 8(a) of this Act; and

(f) Failure of the employer, supervisor, manager or any person in charge to abide by the Case Management Protocols as provided for in Section 8 of this Act.

Sec. 12. Penalties. – Any person, natural or juridical, who violates the provisions under Section 11 of this Act shall, upon conviction, suffer the following penalties:

- (a) For violation of Section 11(a) of this Act, a stern warning shall be issued for the first offense, and for succeeding offenses, a mandatory rendition of community service or performance of productive tasks, such as assisting in information campaign to combat the COVID-19 pandemic;
- (b) Imprisonment of one (1) month and one day to two (2) months or a fine ranging from One Thousand Pesos (Php 1,000.00) to Fifty Thousand Pesos (Php 50,000.00), or both, at the discretion of the court for violation Section 11 (b) to (g) of this Act.

In case the violation is committed by a partnership, corporation, association or any juridical person, the partner, president, director or manager who consents to or knowingly tolerates such violation shall be directly liable and responsible;

(c) Suspension of the entity's permit to operate for any violation of Section 11(e): *Provided*, That the place owner, administrator or manager of the entity shall be given a period of fifteen (15) days to submit the required Management Plan: *Provided, further*, That failure to comply within the 15-day period shall be meted a fine of Twenty Thousand Pesos (Pph 20,000.00); and

(d) Imprisonment of not less than two (2) months but not more than six (6) months, or a fine of not less than Five Thousand Pesos (Php 5,000.00) but not more than One Hundred Thousand Pesos (Php 100,000.00), or both imprisonment and fine, at the discretion of the court, in case the offender is a government official or employee.

29 Sec. 13. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary to effectively carry out the
30 provisions of this Act shall be charged against the current appropriations of the
31 concerned government agencies. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the

1 continued implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General
2 Appropriations Act.

3 *Sec. 14. Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within fifteen (15) days from the
4 effectivity of this Act, a technical working group (TWG) shall be constituted
5 composed of the respective heads or the duly authorized representatives of the
6 following agencies:

- 7 (a) Department of the Interior and Local Government;
- 8 (b) Department of Finance;
- 9 (c) Department of Trade and Industry;
- 10 (d) National Economic Development Authority;
- 11 (e) Department of Labor and Employment;
- 12 (f) Department of Information and Communications Technology;
- 13 (g) Department of Budget and Management;
- 14 (h) Department of Transportation;
- 15 (i) Department of Education;
- 16 (j) Department of Health;
- 17 (k) Civil Service Commission;
- 18 (l) Commission on Higher Education; and
- 19 (m) The Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious
20 Diseases.

21 Within fifteen (15) days after the TWG is constituted, it shall promulgate the
22 necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

23 *Sec. 15. Joint Congressional Oversight Committee.* – A Joint Congressional
24 Oversight Committee composed of four (4) members of each House to be appointed
25 by the Senate President and the House Speaker, respectively, shall exercise an
26 oversight function over the implementation of this Act.

27 *Sec. 16. Sunset Clause.* – This Act shall expire after three (3) years from the date
28 of its effectivity, or sooner upon official declaration of the President of the Philippines
29 issued upon recommendation of the IATF for the Management of Emerging and
30 Infectious Diseases that the prevailing pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus, or
31 other similar infectious diseases, has already been eradicated: *Provided*, That
32 standards, protocols, and other measures prescribed by this Act which are not

1 rendered useless or impractical by the eradication of COVID-19 may continue to be
2 implemented.

3 *Sec. 17. Separability Clause.* – If any part or provision of this Act shall be declared
4 unconstitutional or invalid, the other parts or provisions hereof, which are not
5 affected thereby, shall continue to be in full force and effect.

6 *Sec. 18. Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and
7 regulations, issuances or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are
8 hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

9 *Sec. 19. Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
10 complete publication either in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of
11 general circulation.

Approved,