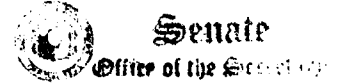


NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
Second Regular Session



23 DEC -4 A9:32

SENATE
P.S. Res. No. 874

RECEIVED BY: _____

Introduced by Senator JOEL VILLANUEVA

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE PREPAREDNESS OF THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT TO DETECT, PREVENT, MINIMIZE, TREAT, AND CONTAIN THE REPORTED GLOBAL RISE OF RESPIRATORY ILLNESSES, AND THE CAPACITY OF THE COUNTRY'S HEALTHCARE SYSTEM TO HANDLE A SURGE OR OUTBREAK OF CASES

WHEREAS, it is the policy of the State to protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them;¹

WHEREAS, the State is mandated under the 1987 Philippine Constitution to establish and maintain an effective food and drug regulatory system and undertake appropriate health, manpower development and research, responsive to the country's health needs and problems;

WHEREAS, at a press conference on 13 November 2023, Chinese authorities from the National Health Commission reported an increase in incidence of respiratory diseases in China. Accordingly, this is due to the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions in the country and the circulation of known pathogens such as influenza, *mycoplasma pneumoniae* (a common bacterial infection which typically affects younger children), respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19);²

WHEREAS, in the United States, Fox 5 news DC reported that hospitals, emergency rooms, urgent care locations and clinics in Washington, D.C. are seeing an uptick in sick visits;³

¹ Sec. 15, Art. II, 1987 Philippine Constitution.

² World Health Organization. *WHO Statement on reported clusters of respiratory illness in children in Northern China*. 22 November 2023. Available at <https://www.who.int/news/item/22-11-2023-who-statement-on-reported-clusters-of-respiratory-illness-in-children-in-northern-china>. Date last accessed: 29 November 2023

³ Fox News. *DC area hospitals report uptick in sick visits as global concern for respiratory illnesses grows*. 27 November 2023. Available at <https://www.foxnews.com/us/dc-area-hospitals-report-uptick-sick-visits-global-concern-respiratory-illnesses-grows>. Date last accessed: 29 November 2023

WHEREAS, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control in its November 23, 2023 report noted that rates of respiratory illness, influenza-like illnesses and/or acute respiratory infection in the community were increasing in many European Union and European Economic Area countries;⁴

WHEREAS, the Philippine General Hospital (PGH) in Manila noted that there has been an increase in cases of pneumonia in the hospital. According to the DOH, they have also observed an increase in influenza-like illnesses entering the last trimester of the year. They also observed that the recorded cases from January to October of 2023 is 45% higher compared to those recorded in the same period in 2022;⁵

WHEREAS, the emergence of new flu strains or other viruses capable of triggering pandemics typically starts with undiagnosed clusters of respiratory illness. In fact, both SARS and COVID-19 were first reported as unusual types of pneumonia;⁶

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic sent global shock waves and triggered the largest worldwide economic crisis in more than a century. The economic impacts of the pandemic were especially severe in emerging economies where income losses caused by the pandemic revealed and worsened some pre-existing economic fragilities,⁷ with more than half a billion people pushed or pushed further into extreme poverty due to health care costs;⁸

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has made significant disruptions in health service delivery particularly in resource-limited countries. The disruptions were due not only to the direct effects of the COVID-19 pandemic but also on the pressure it put on our healthcare systems;⁹

WHEREAS, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Philippines entered its deepest recession in post-war history, with output declining by 9.6 percent.¹⁰ As of November 2021, the country has recorded 2.8 million confirmed cases and 45,000 COVID-19-related deaths. However, this number does not capture the complete situation, and experts estimate that the total infections in the country are about 4 to 5 times higher than the official tally;¹¹

⁴ ECDC. *European Respiratory Virus Surveillance Summary, Week 46*. 23 November 2023. Available at <https://enriviss.org/>. Date last accessed: 30 November 2023

⁵ GMA Integrated News. Increase in pneumonia cases noted in PGH. 29 November 2023. Available at <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/889844/increase-in-pneumonia-cases-noted-in-pgh/story/>. Date last accessed: 30 November 2023

⁶ Associated Press. *China says a surge in respiratory illnesses is caused by flu and other known pathogens*. 27 November 2023. Available at <https://apnews.com/article/china-respiratory-illnesses-who-ff6da613bf15d6848f12095b8e0d8fd1>. Date last accessed: 29 November 2023

⁷ World Bank. *World Development Report 2022*. 2022 Available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2022/brief/chapter-1-introduction-the-economic-impacts-of-the-covid-19-crisis>. Date last accessed: 30 November 2023

⁸ WHO. More than half a billion people pushed or pushed further into extreme poverty due to health care costs. 12 December 2021. Available at <https://www.who.int/news/item/12-12-2021-more-than-half-a-billion-people-pushed-or-pushed-further-into-extreme-poverty-due-to-health-care-costs>. Date last accessed: 30 November 2023

⁹ National Library of Medicine. *The Impact of Covid-19 on health and health systems*. November 2021. Available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8968362/>. Date last accessed: 30 November 2023

¹⁰ PIDS. *Navigating the COVID-19 Storm: Impact of the Pandemic on the Philippine Economy and Macro Responses of Government*. December 2021. Available at <https://pidswebs.pids.gov.ph/CDN/PUBLICATIONS/pidsdps2139.pdf>. Date last accessed: 30 November 2023

¹¹ PIDS. *The Multifaceted Health Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic*. November 2021. Available at <https://pidswebs.pids.gov.ph/CDN/PUBLICATIONS/pidsdps2123.pdf>. Date last accessed: 30 November 2023

WHEREAS, in 2021, during the surge in cases, data from the Philippine College of Emergency Medicine showed that emergency department operations were at 110-150% rate. In contrast, DOH estimates that facilities operating at 85% of their capacity are already considered under “critical” level of operation;¹²

WHEREAS, based on disaggregated data on human resources for health (HRH) density, less than 25 percent of cities and municipalities have HRH density above the 41 physicians, nurses and midwives per 10,000 population recommended by the World health Organization. This means that as much as three-quarters of cities and municipalities in the country have insufficient number of HRH to provide healthcare services;¹³

WHEREAS, there is a need for DOH and other concerned authorities to enforce minimum public health standards and safety protocols to stem the rising number of cases and arrest any possibility of an outbreak. There is also a need to ensure that there are adequate supplies of medicines and personal protective equipment (PPEs), as well as intensified health information, education, and communication programs on the prevention of communicable respiratory diseases, including vaccination drives against influenza, COVID-19, pneumonia and other vaccine-preventable respiratory diseases;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, as it is hereby resolved, to direct the appropriate Senate Committee/s to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the preparedness of the Philippine government to detect, prevent, minimize, treat, and contain the reported global rise of respiratory illnesses, and the capacity of the country’s healthcare system to handle a surge or outbreak of cases.

Adopted,


JOEL VILLANUEVA *MF*

¹² Rappler. *Over 300 COVID-19 patients wait days for admission in Metro Manila hospitals*. 12 April 2021. Available at <https://www.rappler.com/nation/patients-wait-days-admission-metro-manila-hospitals-april-2021/>. Date last accessed: 30 November 2023

¹³ PIDS. *Maldistribution of healthcare workers*. 13 August 2022. Available at <https://www.pids.gov.ph/details/news/in-the-news/maldistribution-of-healthcare-workers> . Date last accessed: 30 November 2023.