

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



SENATE

P.S. Res. No. 534

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

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE REPORTED RECORD HUNGER INCIDENCE RATE DURING THE HEIGHT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, WITH THE END VIEW OF PROVIDING IMMEDIATE FOOD RELIEF TO MILLIONS OF HUNGRY FILIPINOS NATIONWIDE AND REVIEWING AND RE-EVALUATING THE INTERMEDIATE AND LONG-TERM POLICY AND PROGRAM INTERVENTIONS OF THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT SURROUNDING HUNGER AND FOOD INSECURITY

1 WHEREAS, the State is duty-bound to promote and protect the overall well-
2 being of its citizens, which includes their right to good health and improved nutrition.
3 The State shall endeavor to achieve food security and uphold its citizens right to be
4 free from hunger, especially during times of crisis and emergency;

5 WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has gravely affected the overall health and
6 well-being of Filipinos nationwide with the total case count breaching 300,000 and
7 the number of fatalities exceeding 5,000 individuals as of 30 September 2020;

8 WHEREAS, in an effort to stem the transmission of the virus, the national
9 government has been imposing a series of lockdowns and quarantine measures of
10 varying severity in order to control and monitor the movement of people in critically
11 affected areas;

12 WHEREAS, the massive losses of livelihood and employment of millions of
13 Filipinos resulting from these lockdowns have effectively ground the economy to a halt.
14 Consequently, more and more households are also experiencing poverty and hunger
15 in recent months. In a survey conducted from September 17 to 20 by the Social

1 Weather Stations (SWS), an estimated 7.6 million Filipino households went hungry
2 due to lack of food at least once during the height of the coronavirus pandemic;¹

3 WHEREAS, results of the survey showed a hunger incidence of 30.7% which is
4 the highest rate since March 2012 when it reached a then-record of 23.8% hunger
5 incidence;²

6 WHEREAS, the latest figure is nearly ten percentage points higher than July
7 2020's 20.9% and almost 22 points higher than December 2019's 8.8%, or before the
8 health crisis reached the Philippines. According to the SWS, the jump in hunger
9 incidence from July to September is attributable to recorded increases in all areas,
10 particularly the new record highs in the Visayas, Mindanao, and Metro Manila;³

11 WHEREAS, this increase indicates a clear correlation between the
12 government's fledgling pandemic response and the level of hunger experienced by
13 Filipinos over time;

14 WHEREAS, these findings coincide with Filipinos' declining quality of life and
15 record levels of joblessness reported by separate surveys of the SWS which were
16 conducted earlier in May⁴ and July⁵, respectively, at the height of the lockdowns;

17 WHEREAS, despite the increasing number of COVID-19 cases, the national
18 government had no choice but to ease up on lockdowns and restrictions in order to
19 jumpstart the already contracting economy and facilitate the return to work for many
20 millions of Filipinos who had lost their primary sources of income;⁶

21 WHEREAS, in a tone-deaf response to the record-high hunger incidence rate,
22 Malacañang, in a statement by Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque, reiterated

¹ Rappler.com. (27 September 2020). *Record-high 7.6 million families experienced hunger in past 3 months* – SWS. Retrieved September 29, 2020, from <https://www.rappler.com/nation/hunger-philippines-sws-survey-september-2020>

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Rappler.com. (18 June 2020). *'Worst trend' in decades: Most Filipinos say quality of life got worse in past year*. Retrieved September 29, 2020, from <https://www.rappler.com/nation/sws-survey-filipinos-quality-life-may-2020>

⁵ Rappler.com (16 August 2020). *Adult joblessness hits record-high 45.5% in July 2020 – SWS poll*. Retrieved September 29, 2020, from <https://www.rappler.com/business/philippines-adult-joblessness-july-2020-sws-survey>

⁶ Salaverria, L. (9 July 2020). *Duterte: a 'gamble' to rush reopening of economy*. Retrieved September 29, 2020, from <https://business.inquirer.net/302072/duterte-a-gamble-to-rush-reopening-of-economy>

1 that putting Filipinos to work is the only assurance that they would not go hungry as
2 cash-aid under the Social Amelioration Program (SAP) was only temporary;⁷

3 WHEREAS, opening up the economy will help but Filipinos are hungry now.
4 The government needs to simultaneously address these immediate needs of hunger
5 and food security along with the need for the restoration of jobs and livelihoods as well
6 as the revival of our economy;

7 WHEREAS, controversies and delays surrounding the distribution of cash aid
8 have plagued the implementation of the Social Amelioration Program (SAP). However,
9 these inefficiencies are not a new phenomenon as the Philippines has already been
10 dealing with issues of chronic poverty and food insecurity among a significant portion
11 of its population even before the COVID-19 pandemic arrived;

12 WHEREAS, these conditions were only further exacerbated as the virus spread
13 among our poorest and most vulnerable sectors and were compounded by the
14 government's own misguided and misinformed policy decisions;

15 WHEREAS, it is evident that the government is still operating under the false
16 impression that Filipinos need only to work hard in order to raise themselves out of
17 chronic poverty and hunger while conveniently ignoring the fact that systemic issues
18 such as these require a comprehensive understanding of its root causes and not
19 sweeping generalizations;

20 WHEREAS, there is clear need for the government to speed up and make more
21 effective its disbursement and distribution mechanisms in order to make financial and
22 food aid immediately accessible to the millions of hungry and impoverished Filipinos
23 who are desperately trying to survive amidst this pandemic;

24 WHEREAS, there is also need for the government to conduct a systemic review
25 of its intermediate and long-term policy and program interventions surrounding
26 chronic poverty and food insecurity that has affected generations of Filipinos;

27 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE, to direct the
28 appropriate Senate Committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the
29 reported record hunger incidence rate during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic,

⁷ Coconuts Manila. (28 September 2020). *Record-high hunger rate? Reopening PH economy will fix it, claims Malacañang*. Retrieved September 29, 2020, from <https://coconuts.co/manila/news/record-high-hunger-rate-reopening-ph-economy-will-fix-it-claims-malacanang/>

1 with the end view of providing immediate food relief to millions of hungry Filipinos
2 nationwide and reviewing and re-evaluating the intermediate and long-term policy
3 and program interventions of the national government surrounding hunger and food
4 insecurity.

Adopted,


LEILA M. DE LIMA