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Senate
Office of the Secretary

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SENATE
P.S.R. No. 27

RECEIVED BY: *Jui*

Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE PROPER SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY,
IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ALERTNESS AND RESPONSIVENESS OF
THE GOVERNMENT TO THE INTERNATIONAL DISEASE OUTBREAKS

WHEREAS, the Constitution, Article 2, Section 5, provides: The maintenance of peace and order, the protection of life, liberty, and property, and promotion of the general welfare are essential for the enjoyment by all the people of the blessings of democracy;

WHEREAS, the Constitution, Article 2, Section 15, provides: The State shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them”;

WHEREAS, outbreak of swine influenza across different countries has been one of the most alarming incidents of the spread of highly contagious diseases in recent years;

WHEREAS, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), swine flu is a contagious respiratory disease that usually affects pigs; it is caused by a type-A influenza virus; the current strain is a new variation of an H1N1 virus, which is a mix of human and animal versions;

WHEREAS, the symptoms of the swine flu are reportedly similar to the common flu; the symptoms of swine flu include fever, lethargy, lack of appetite, coughing, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea;

WHEREAS, the virus allegedly spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes around another person; people can also become infected by touching something with the flu virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes;

WHEREAS, according to various media reports, the swine flu outbreak has caused more than 159 deaths and an estimated 2,500 illnesses in Mexico;

WHEREAS, the World Health Organization (WHO), on the other hand, stated that at least 112 cases have been confirmed worldwide – 64 in the United States; 26 in Mexico (including seven deaths); six in Canada; three in New Zealand; and two each in Spain, the United Kingdom, and Israel;

WHEREAS, the WHO list does not include 11 additional cases reported by New Zealand health officials, three by German officials, and one confirmed by Costa Rica’s health ministry;

WHEREAS, at one point, the WHO has raised the level of swine influenza pandemic alert from Phase 3 to Phase 4; according to the WHO website, the change to a higher phase of pandemic alert indicates that “the likelihood of a pandemic has increased but not that a pandemic is inevitable”;

WHEREAS, under the WHO Global Influenza Preparedness Plan, Phase 3 indicates that an animal or human-animal influenza reassortant virus has caused sporadic cases or small clusters of disease in people, but has not resulted in human-to-human transmission sufficient to sustain community-level outbreaks;

WHEREAS, Phase 4 is reportedly characterized by verified human-to-human transmission of an animal or human-animal influenza reassortant virus able to cause "community-level outbreaks; Phase 4 indicates a significant increase in risk of a pandemic but does not necessarily mean that a pandemic is a foregone conclusion;

WHEREAS, according to WHO officials, "in this age of global travel, where people move around in airplanes so quickly, there is no region to which this virus could not spread";

WHEREAS, history shows that a flu pandemic has devastating consequences; in 1968, the "Hong Kong" flu killed about one million people worldwide; in 1918, a "Spanish" flu pandemic killed as many as 100 million people;

WHEREAS, governments around the world moved quickly to prevent further outbreak; the WHO stated that given the widespread presence of the virus, the containment of the outbreak is "not feasible"; countries should focus on mitigation measures;

WHEREAS, during the outbreak, China and Russia have reportedly banned pork imports from the U.S. and Mexico; Japan and Indonesia used thermographic devices to test the temperature of passengers arriving from Mexico; Argentina announced a five-day ban on flights from Mexico; the US has urged travelers to avoid "non-essential travel" to Mexico; around 35,000 public venues such as bars, pubs, movie theaters, pool halls, theaters, gyms, sports centers, and convention halls have been shut down in Mexico City;

WHEREAS, our government must institute emergency measures to prevent the spread of the swine flu virus in the country, as well as other contagious diseases that could be transmitted across countries;

WHEREAS, the government must provide information to help health care providers, public health officials, and the general public address the challenges posed by the swine flu virus and other contagious diseases; the government must ensure that it has sufficient antiviral drugs, personal protective equipment, and respiratory protection devices to help them respond to the outbreak, should contagions enter the country;

WHEREFORE, be it resolved, as it is hereby resolved by the Philippine Senate to direct the proper Senate committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the alertness and responsiveness of the government to international disease outbreaks.

Adopted,

acc.

MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO

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