

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



SENATE

P. S. RES. NO 397

Introduced by **SENATOR JOEL VILLANUEVA**

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, EMPLOYMENT, AND HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEES, TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ADEQUACY OF PROGRAMS FOR AFFECTED WORKERS IN THE PHILIPPINES IN LIGHT OF THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19) PANDEMIC, THE POTENTIAL MASSIVE EMPLOYMENT DISPLACEMENTS AND THE READINESS OF THE COUNTRY'S RECOVERY PLAN

WHEREAS, On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the coronavirus (COVID-19) or SARS-COV-2 outbreak as a public health emergency of international concern;

WHEREAS, As of May 6, 2020, there are already 3,659,759 confirmed cases of COVID-19, and 256,928 deaths in 187 countries worldwide.¹ In an effort to stem the transmission of the virus, more than 100 countries, including the Philippines, have been implementing lockdown or stay-at-home measures, and consequently restricting the movement of more than a third of the world's population;²

¹ COVID-19 Dashboard by the Center for Systems for Systems Science and Engineering. John Hopkins University. Available at: <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html> (date last accessed: May 6, 2020)

² 2020, April 30. A third of the global population is on coronavirus lockdown. Business Insider. Available at: <https://www.businessinsider.com/countries-on-lockdown-coronavirus-italy-2020-3> (date last accessed: May 4, 2020).

WHEREAS, The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) reported on April 29, 2020 that over 2.3 million formal sector workers were affected or displaced due to the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) imposed by the government to flatten the curve of transmission of COVID-19 or SARS-COV-2 in the country. According to DOLE, some 87,301 establishments reported that over 1.6 million of their workers were affected by temporary closures and 797,729 were with reduced incomes under alternative work arrangements (e.g., less workdays, rotation, forced leave and telecommuting);³

WHEREAS, Emergency subsidy and several mitigating measures were directed and funded under Republic Act No. 11469 or the “Bayanihan Heal as One Act” such as the expansion of 4Ps of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and recently, the Social Amelioration Program (SAP) for 18 million low income families. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) also implemented the Livelihood Seeding Program and Negosyo Serbisyo sa Barangay, while the Department of Agriculture (DA) rolled-out the Rice Farmers Financial Assistance Program;

WHEREAS, The DOLE, to assist all displaced workers, implemented the COVID-19 Adjustment Measures Program (CAMP), Tulong Panghanapbuhay Sa Ating Displaced/Disadvantaged Workers, #Barangayko,Bahayko (TUPAD#BKBK) and DOLE-AKAP for OFWs. The CAMP provides for a one-time Php5,000 financial support to affected formal sector workers in private establishments, while the TUPAD#BKBK provides temporary wage employment for 10 days, based on the regional minimum wage in the area, for displaced informal sector workers, underemployed and self-employed workers. Meanwhile, DOLE-AKAP provides a one-time financial assistance of Php10,000.00 (US\$200) to affected overseas Filipino workers (OFWs);

WHEREAS, The Php3.24 billion total funding for the DOLE CAMP is not enough to cover all affected workers of MSMEs. DOLE reported that its current budget of Php3.24 billion will only cover 650,000 workers leaving behind around 1 million unserved workers whose employers’ request for assistance were already processed.⁴ The processing of CAMP applications was suspended on April 15, 2020 due to lack of funds. As a substitute program, the Department of Finance (DOF), through the Social Security System (SSS) and the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) launched the Small Business Wage Subsidy (SBWS) Program on April 16, 2020 to cover 3.4 million employees in small businesses that were affected by the enhanced community quarantine;

³ 2020, April 26. Over 23k OFWs seek govt cash aid; 2m workers displaced by pandemic. Department of Labor and Employment Press Release. *Available at:* <https://www.dole.gov.ph/news/over-230k-ofws-seek-govt-cash-aid-2m-workers-displaced-by-pandemic/> (date last accessed: May 5, 2020), and 2020, April 29. DOLE realigns budget to aid workers. Department of Labor and Employment Press Release. *Available at:* <https://www.dole.gov.ph> (date last accessed: May 6, 2020).

⁴ 2020, April 29. DOLE realigns budget to aid workers. Department of Labor and Employment Press Release. *Available at:* <https://www.dole.gov.ph> (date last accessed: May 6, 2020).

WHEREAS, There have been calls from business (Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP), Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) and Philippine Exporters Confederation, Inc. (PHILEXPORT)) and labor groups (Trade Union Council of the Philippines (TUCP), Federation of Free Workers (FFW) and SENTRO) to better implement and increase the allocation for CAMP as temporary relief to workers citing it is insufficient to meet the needs of formal sector workers. They also demand that the CAMP subsidy be made into a monthly income subsidy for the duration of the ECQ.⁵ The labor groups also claimed that 14 million wage and salary earners would likely be left behind from the cash aid program;⁶

WHEREAS, Some companies at the export industry that are part of the global productions network have reported to the DOLE, DTI and DOF of massive cancellation of orders to as much as 70%, and forewarned the Government, that starting the 5th week of the ECQ, or on April 13, until around 2nd week of June, there might not be enough work for workers because no orders are coming in and there is no revenue to mobilize operations. Buyers are mostly using *force majeure* to cancel orders as the global supply chain and the markets are disrupted. The exporters are requesting the government to urgently roll out DOLE CAMP and to extend the assistance until June 2020 as the factories will be barely operating during this period due to cancelled orders and costly operations under the “new normal.”⁷ The Philippine BPO industry has also sounded the alarm on the difficulty of complying with the government’s lockdown guidelines, as well shifting some of their operations to work-from-home arrangements. Experts also predict that the pandemic may accelerate the shift to more automated services, such as the use of chat bots, which may in turn, severely affect the existence of the industry;⁸

WHEREAS, Instability in the labor front is a heightened possibility. Workers are coming from a two-month “no work, no pay” community quarantine and into uncertainty of retaining or having jobs under the new normal. The number of displaced workers is expected to rise due to the economic slowdown in the Philippines and around the world;

WHEREAS, The vital and critical role of the concerned Government agencies in ensuring that all Filipino workers are provided immediate financial assistance and shall

⁵ 2020, April 08. Business, labor groups want more aid for workers. PhilStar Global. Available at www.msn.com (date last accessed: May 6, 2020). See also, 2020, April 08. Leaders Forum Statement on the DOLE-CAMP. Available at <https://www.philippinechamber.com> (date last accessed: May 6, 2020); 2020, April 22. 120,000 small businesses qualify for wage subsidy. Philippine Star. Available at https://philstar.com/headlines/2020/04/22_ (date last accessed: May 6, 2020); 2020 April 21. Tulong pinansyal sa empleyadong apektado ng ECQ ituloy-TUCP. Bandera. Available at: <https://bandera.inquirer.net> (date last accessed: May 6, 2020); 2020 April 22. Labor group seeks bigger fund for CAMP. The Manila Times. Available at <https://manilatimes.net> (date last accessed: May 6, 2020); 2020 April 21. TUCP bats for increased CAMP funds. Available at <https://news.mb.com.ph> (date last accessed: May 6, 2020).

⁶ 2020 April 16. 14 million wage, salary earners won't benefit from gov't cash aid program-group. Business Mirror. Available at: <https://businessmirror.com.ph> (date last accessed: May 6, 2020).

⁷ 2020 April 09. CONWEP Letter to DOLE Secretary Silvestre H. Bello, copy furnished the DTI and DOF.

⁸ 2020, April 13. Coronavirus a threat to vital Philippine call centers. Nikkei Asian Review. Available at <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Coronavirus/Coronavirus-a-threat-to-vital-Philippine-call-centers> (date last accessed: May 6, 2020).

not be deprived of basic necessities, such as food, clothing, shelter and medical assistance, cannot be overemphasized;

WHEREAS, On April 27, 2020, the Technical Working Group on the Anticipatory and Forward Planning of the Interagency Task Force (IATF) submitted a COVID-19 recovery plan to the President to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁹ The DOLE, on April 30, 2020, reported that is already deep into the details of the recovery plan post-COVID-19 for the generation of a fresh one million jobs in the provinces for workers in the coming months. This includes a package providing a three-month wage subsidy to workers in micro and small-scale enterprises, including those in the “gig” economy and members of the mass media;¹⁰

WHEREAS, The International Labour Organization (ILO) has recommended that governments should have timely, large-scale and coordinated policy efforts to provide employment and income support, to not only cushion affected enterprises and workers against immediate employment and income losses, but to also prevent a chain of supply shocks that may lead to a prolonged economic recession.¹¹ With these parameters, there is a need to inquire and review, in aid of legislation, the implementation, adequacy and propriety (both in terms of funding and existence of programs) of the Government’s cash assistance or subsidies and policies on the protection of the rights and welfare of our country’s labor force, particularly on:

- 1) The implementation of various programs, projects and services dedicated to assist the Philippine labor force from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as mass displacement, lack or lesser income;
- 2) Duties, responsibilities, and functions of concerned government agencies assigned to promote employment, and protect the rights and welfare of the Philippine labor force;
- 3) The enforcement and full implementation of a recovery plan by the national government to incentivize employers to create more jobs, retain their employees and to assist displaced workers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic;
- 4) The details of the DOLE recovery plan post-COVID-19 for the generation of a fresh one million jobs in the provinces and proposed or contemplated package that includes a three-month wage subsidy to workers in micro and small-scale enterprises including those in the “gig” economy and members of the mass media;

⁹ 2020, April 27. IATF panel submits report on COVID-19 recovery plan. Philippine News Agency. Available at <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1101178> (date last accessed: May 5, 2020).

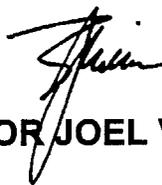
¹⁰ 2020, April 30. Statement of Secretary Silvestre H. Bello III. Department of Labor and Employment Press Release. Available at: <https://www.dole.gov.ph> (date last accessed: May 6, 2020).

¹¹ 2020, March 19. What are the key policies that will mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on the world of work? International Labour Organization. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/impacts-and-responses/WCMS_739048/lang--en/index.htm (date last accessed: May 5, 2020)

- 5) The enforcement and implementation plan of the DOLE-DTI Interim Guidelines on Workplace Prevention and Control of COVID-19 on social distancing and other stringent measures expected to continue under the “new normal”
- 6) The assessment from concerned agencies on the state of the Philippine economy and its impact to the Philippine labor market, disaggregated by sector and by industry, and by skills in each region;

RESOLVE BY THE SENATE, that the Senate Committee on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development and other appropriate Senate Committees, conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the adequacy of programs for affected workers in the Philippines in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the potential massive employment displacements in the country, with a view to addressing the gaps in the current laws and rules and regulations to an effective, well-funded, and comprehensive programs to protect the welfare and rights of Filipino workers.

Adopted,


SENATOR JOEL VILLANUEVA