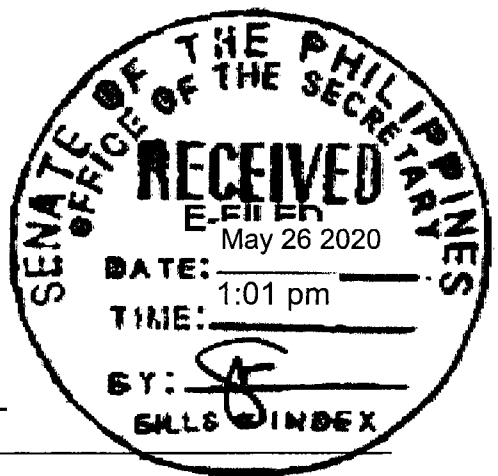


EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)

SENATE
P. S. Res No. _____ 420



Introduced by Senator Maria Lourdes Nancy S. Binay

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY REQUIRING RETURNING OFWs TO UNDERGO MANDATORY QUARANTINE AND TEST FOR COVID-19 WITH THE END IN VIEW OF PROVIDING IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE TO RETURNING OFWs AND ADOPTING STRATEGIES TO COPE WITH THE MASS REPATRIATION OF OFWs

1 WHEREAS, Republic Act No. 11469 or the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act was
2 enacted to ensure the government's swift response to mitigate the adverse effects of
3 the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19), including the immediate mobilization of
4 assistance to sectors affected by the imposition of community quarantine;

5 WHEREAS, pursuant to guidelines issued by the Inter-Agency Task Force for
6 the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) and Department
7 Memorandum No. 2020-0200 issued by the Department of Health (DOH) dated May
8 01, 2020¹, all returning Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) are required to undergo 14-
9 day mandatory quarantine and COVID-19 testing procedures upon arrival in the
10 Philippines;

11 WHEREAS, based on existing guidelines, the cost of quarantine
12 accommodations shall be shouldered by: (1) the Overseas Workers Welfare
13 Administration (OWWA) for land-based OFWs and (2) the local manning agency
14 and/or Maritime Industry Authority for sea-based OFWs²;

15 WHEREAS, at present, the cost of COVID-19 test is covered by the Philippine
16 Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth);

17 WHEREAS, according to a news report, OFWs were being charged P3,000 for a
18 COVID-19 test with the amount deducted from their PhilHealth accounts³;

¹ Omnibus Interim Guidelines for the Quarantine and Testing Procedures for All Arriving Overseas Filipinos (OFs) and Foreign Nationals During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic.

² Civil Aeronautics Board Advisory, In Re: Adherence to the Guidelines on Arriving Passengers, May 11, 2020, <https://www.philembassy.no/sites/default/files/2020-05/CAB%20Advisory%2011%20May%202020.jpg>.

³ Jodee A. Agoncillo, Jovic Yee, Stranded OFWs can't go home without 'required' virus test, Philippine Daily Inquirer (May 07, 2020), <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1271098/stranded-ofws-cant-go-home-without-required-virus-test>.

1 WHEREAS, it was reported that a number of OFWs have gone to social media
2 to complain that they have been stuck in quarantine facilities for months because of
3 the delayed release of tests results and clearances⁴;

4 WHEREAS, according to Presidential Peace Adviser and National Task Force
5 COVID-19 Chief Implementer, Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr., more than 27,000
6 repatriated OFWs are undergoing quarantine in various facilities in Metro Manila and
7 the expected arrival of some 42,000 more returning OFWs could overwhelm the
8 country's quarantine facilities⁵;

9 WHEREAS, the Philippine News Agency has reported that, as of May 14, 2020,
10 there were 32,264 repatriates from 362 vessels, 22,903 or 71 percent of whom have
11 completed their respective quarantine. Of the 8,130 land-based repatriates, 7,446 or
12 92 percent are still in quarantine⁶;

13 WHEREAS, it was reported that the government expects 44,000 OFWs to come
14 home this June, while 150,000 to 500,000 overseas workers are estimated to return
15 to the Philippines for the rest of the year⁷;

16 WHEREAS, in a study conducted on the possible economic impact of the COVID-
17 19 Pandemic to OFWs, about 300,000 to 400,000 OFWs will be affected by lay-offs
18 and salary cuts worldwide⁸;

19 WHEREAS, there is a need for the government to review its existing policy on
20 mandatory quarantine and testing of returning OFWs for COVID-19 to: (1) expedite
21 the processing and release of COVID-19 test results of returning OFWs so they can go
22 home to their families as soon as possible, (2) free up quarantine facilities for the next
23 batch of OFWs expected to arrive in the coming months and (3) adopt strategies to
24 cope with the mass repatriation of OFWs including the determination of necessary
25 costs to cover quarantine and COVID-19 tests of returning OFWs;

26 WHEREAS, it is necessary for the Senate to look into this matter to ensure the
27 swift delivery of aid and services to OFWs in times of global crisis, such as the current
28 COVID-19 pandemic;

⁴ MJ Blancaflor, Hyper-extended OFW quarantine irks Rody, Daily Tribune (May 19, 2020),
https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/05/19/hyper-extended-ofw-quarantine-irks-rody/?amp_markup=1.

⁵ Azer Parrocha, Gov't to expedite processing, release of OFWs' Covid test results, Philippine News Agency (May 20, 2020),
<https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1103382>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ CNN Philippines Staff, Duterte gives ultimatum to gov't agencies to send home returning OFWs awaiting COVID-19 test results, CNN Philippines (May 25, 2020), <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/5/25/OFW-COVID-19-test-results-Duterte-order0.html>.

⁸ Alvin P. Ang, Jeremaiah M. Opiniano, Ateneo De Manila University (April 15, 2020),
http://ateneo.edu/sites/default/files/downloadable-files/ADMU-WP-2020-05_0.pdf.

1 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Senate directs the appropriate
2 Senate committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the government's
3 policy requiring returning OFWs to undergo mandatory quarantine and test for COVID-
4 19 with the end in view of providing immediate assistance to returning OFWs and
5 adopting strategies to cope with the mass repatriation of OFWs.

Adopted,



MARIA LOURDES NANCY S. BINAY