


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

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SENATE
P. S. R. No. **606**

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

RESOLUTION
DIRECTING THE PROPER SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY,
IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ALLEGED USE OF VITAMEAL TO AID THE
FEEDING PROGRAMS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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, the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, in its 22 August 2008 issue reported that mothers in two provinces are complaining against vitameal—a combination of legumes, dehydrated vegetables and other grains and which is being served in feeding programs in some public elementary schools in Mt. Province and Abra;

WHEREAS, according to the report, the vitameal subsidy replaced the government's one-kilogram rice subsidy when classes started in June. The women said they were dismayed because the vitameal was pungent and tasted bitter or sour. Carol Bagyan, a member of Binnadang, a women's group based in the Mt. Province allegedly said that the vitameal is not edible, with some children throwing it away or feeding it to the dogs;

WHEREAS, vitameals are packed in transparent plastic bags, which are not labeled. About three cups of vitameal are distributed to students everyday. Some mothers who volunteer to cook the cereal for the mass feeding program would boil the cereal with sugar, milk and chocolate powder to make its taste appealing to students. As a result, the mothers would have to spend more to buy ingredients to make the meal edible;

WHEREAS, however, Dr. Juliet Tontino, head of the health and nutrition unit of the Department of Education in the Cordillera, allegedly said that the distribution of the vitameal was not part of the government's hunger mitigation program in the provinces. According to Tontino, the distribution of vitameal was a project sponsored by a pastor of a local church group that sponsors feeding programs;

WHEREAS, Tontino also allegedly said that the group used the DepEd's program to distribute the cereal. However, not even the DepEd officials know who manufactures the vitameal and where it comes from;

WHEREAS, Dr. Myrna Cabotaje, regional director of the Department of Health, allegedly said she was not aware of the vitameal distribution in the region;

WHEREAS, the schools, together with the DepEd, should ensure the quality of food that is distributed by organizations that sponsor feeding programs to avoid unnecessary spending, wasting of food supply, and to avoid the possibility of food poisoning;

WHEREAS, stricter guidelines should be released by the State governing the distribution of food in public schools and poverty stricken areas;

WHEREAS, despite the good intentions of other organizations to help ease the food shortage in the Philippines, the DepEd should not allow their program's name to be flimsily used by other organizations without overseeing the feeding program sponsored by these organizations;

WHEREFORE, be it hereby resolved by the Philippine Senate, to direct the proper Senate committee to conduct an inquiry in aid of legislation, on the alleged use of vitameal to aid the feeding programs of the Department of Education.

Adopted,


MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO

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