



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

# Senate

Pasay City

Office of:

*Hon. Maria Lourdes Nancy S. Binay*

SENATOR

April 28, 2020

## **SENATOR VICENTE “TITO” SOTTO III**

*Senate President*

Senate of the Philippines

Pasay City

Dear **Senate President Sotto**:

I am respectfully submitting my comments and recommendations in response to the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Weekly Reports of the President which were submitted to the Joint Congressional Oversight Committee pursuant to Section 5 of Republic Act No 11469 or the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act.

As stated in the President’s reports, a whole-of-government approach has been adopted in implementing measures as well as in outlining plans and strategies to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic. As the nation move toward transitioning to the new normal, I urge the Executive Branch to submit, without undue delay, a consolidated and cohesive national plan, incorporating the three (3) phases of government’s response against the threat of COVID-19, namely: (1) response, (2) mitigation, and (3) transition to the new normal.

To further strengthen the government’s fight against COVID-19 during and beyond the enhanced community quarantine period, the Inter-agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Disease (IATF) must launch an aggressive multi-sectoral information campaign so that the exit plan is coordinated and the people are fully informed, engaged and accountable to live under the new normal.

Also, as the mandatory wearing of face mask becomes part of the government’s policy to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and the Filipino lifestyle under the new normal, the IATF should consider increasing the country’s capacity to produce face masks and the rationing of face masks to address any shortages.

Lastly, it was also reported that the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) continues to provide burial assistance under its Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation (AICS) Program and the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority was able to negotiate



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with crematorium providers a fixed cremation rate of Php25,000 for indigent Patients Under Investigation/COVID-19 fatalities. However, we have yet to receive updates on the following recommendations relating to the management of COVID-19 fatalities, among others: (1) preparation of an inventory of privately-owned funeral homes/crematoriums to handle the remains of suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases, (2) preparation of alternative storage for cadavers in case hospital morgues are filled to capacity, and (3) rehabilitation of non-operational crematoriums in Manila to be environmentally compliant.

Very truly yours,

**MARIA LOURDES NANCY S. BINAY**