A RESOLUTION
URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO DISCOURAGE THE USE OF RAPID TESTING IN SCREENING PEOPLE FOR COVID-19

WHEREAS, at present, the two main types of testing for COVID-19 being done in the Philippines are the reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) test and the rapid antibody test;

WHEREAS, the RT-PCR test is still considered the gold standard for COVID-19 testing;

WHEREAS, however, there are still many who use rapid test kits to screen for COVID-19 including business who test their workers who are returning to work as the country is slowly starting to re-open;

WHEREAS, the RT-PCR test kits use actual swabs from patients taken from the nose or throat and determines the actual presence of the coronavirus and if a person is currently infected;

WHEREAS, a rapid antibody test requires the patient’s blood sample and can only detect antibodies which the body produces in response to an infectious agent such as a virus;

WHEREAS, according to Professor Marilen Balolong, a microbiologist and scientist at the University of the Philippines Manila, this test can read two kinds of antibodies: the immunoglobulin M (IgM), which is an early immune response of the human body, and the immunoglobulin G (IgG), which is the delayed immune response;

WHEREAS, Professor Balolong also said that RT-PCR are 97% accurate or higher while the reliability of rapid antibody tests is between 30% to 80% which is "very low";

WHEREAS, there have been plenty of reports of these rapid tests producing false positives and false negatives;

WHEREAS, Pulmonary and Critical Care Specialist and former congresswoman Dr. Anna York Bondoc has called on the government to stop the use of Antibody Serology or rapid tests because they are highly inaccurate and produce many false positive and negative results;

WHEREAS, as a result, many people are put in quarantine because of false positives, while some who have the coronavirus infection but were cleared by the rapid tests are spreading the disease;

WHEREAS, she also stated that she "believes that wrong clinical decisions made with inaccurate results from rapid tests have been fueling the rise of COVID cases in Metro Manila" and that rapid tests have been banned in many countries, including Australia, Dubai, and India for inaccurate and unreliable results;
WHEREAS, many other specialists have stated their opposition to rapid tests including Infectious Diseases specialist Edsel Maurice Salvaña who said that antibody testing is not useful in sick patients because it usually gives a negative result in the early stages of the disease;

WHEREAS, obstetrician and gynecologist Dr. Je-Anne Combate agreed that rapid testing is not 100% accurate and called on pregnant women to undergo RT-PCR tests instead;

WHEREAS, the Philippine College of Physicians also stated that the use of antibody rapid tests is inappropriate;

WHEREAS, the Philippine General Hospital (PGH) is also opposed to the use of rapid antibody tests (RAT) because it could not detect 80 percent of infected individuals;

WHEREAS, PGH director Gerardo Legaspi said the “most glaring lesson” they learned from attending to coronavirus patients is that RAT “predicts only 20 percent of positive” cases and that it “means you are missing out on 80 percent who are positive and who are walking around, thinking they are negative”;

WHEREAS, Director Legaspi however clarified that RAT still has its use for “convalescent screening” of COVID-19 patients who already recovered but want to join in convalescent plasma therapy;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the House of Representatives to urge the Department of Health to immediately discourage the use rapid testing in screening people for COVID-19

Adopted,

RUFUS B. RODRIGUEZ