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Introduced by Reps. BERNADETTE C. HERRERA, KRISTINE SINGSON-MEEHAN,
SHARON GARIN, STELLA LUZ QUIMBO AND JESUS “BONG” SUNTAY

RESOLUTION
URGING THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOOD GOVERNMENT TO CONDUCT AN
INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE QUALIFICATIONS, RESEARCH
METHODOLOGIES, PARTNERSHIPS, AND COMPOSITION OF OCTA RESEARCH
PHILIPPINES

WHEREAS, Section 24, Article II of the 1987 Constitution stated that the “State recognizes the vital role of communication and information in nation building”;

WHEREAS, Section 15, Article II of the aforesaid Constitution also stated that the “State shall protect and promote the right to health consciousness among them”;

WHEREAS, Section 23, Article II also provides that the “State shall encourage non-governmental, community-based, or sectoral organizations that promote the welfare of the nation”;

WHEREAS, from the beginning of the pandemic, numerous media outlets have cited warnings published by independent COVID-19 research group OCTA, with the latest one pushing for a “circuit breaker” or hard lockdown in August 2021;

WHEREAS, previous infographics and press releases across press outlets and social media platforms refer to the “University of the Philippines-OCTA” group (UP-OCTA) or the “UP-OCTA Research Team” in predicting surges of COVID-19 cases;

WHEREAS, in another article, Assistant Prof. Ranjit Rye was quoted as referring to the group as the “UP-OCTA Research Team”¹;

WHEREAS, in one news report, however, Associate Professor Peter Cayton of the University of the Philippines – Diliman emphasized that there is no office within campus named OCTA, and that “they do not exist in UP’s organizational structure.”²;

¹ The Philippine Star, *UP-OCTA-Research Team: Tracing COVID’s curves*,
[<https://star34.philstarlife.com/article/391401-up-octa-research-team-tracing-covid-s-curves>]

² Jeline Malasig, *Are you confused between UP-OCTA, OCTA Research? Here’s the deal with UP and research team*, March 9, 2021, [<https://interaksyon.philstar.com/trends-spotlights/2021/03/09/187157/are-you-confused-between-up-octa-octa-research-heres-the-deal-with-up-and-research-team/>]

WHEREAS, in one forecast report it indicated that the “UP-OCTA team is an independent and interdisciplinary research group composed primarily of UP faculty members and alumni. This independent research team also includes contributors from the University of Santo Tomas and Providence College, USA”³;

WHEREAS, the OCTA-published forecast reports indicate the members of OCTA research include Prof. Guido David, Ph.D. of the UP Institute of Mathematics, Assistant Prof. Ranjit Singh Rye of the UP Department of Political Science, Rev. Fr. Nicanor Austriaco of the Department of Biology of the Pontifical University of Santo Tomas, and Ms. Ma. Patricia Agbulos⁴ ;

WHEREAS, based on the website octaresearch.com, the organizations describes itself as a “polling, research and consultation firm” that provides “comprehensive, holistic, accurate, rigorous, and insightful data analysis to help our clients in government, the private sector and the NGO community.”;

WHEREAS, it further indicates that OCTA specializes in public opinion research, qualitative and quantitative research, policy research and advocacy, and training and capacity building;

WHEREAS, in a more recent published report, the OCTA research group indicated that the country could face a resurgence in COVID-19 infections once the Delta variant spreads, one that “could be comparable to the March surge.”⁵;

WHEREAS, renowned infectious disease expert Dr. Edsel Salvana noted that OCTA’s modeling for its projections is problematic and based on incomplete and erroneous data as the latter is calculating COVID-19 reproduction numbers based on cases reported in the last two weeks;⁶

WHEREAS, Dr. Salvana stated that “even a student of clinical epidemiology will tell you that that is not valid because cases that happened within the last two weeks are subject to error because some get tested later or earlier. There are backlogs, so if you are making projections based on data that is incomplete or erroneous, you are going to come out with erroneous projections”⁷;

WHEREAS, OCTA Research stated that Metro Manila is “officially in a surge” when it pushed government to impose circuit-breaker lockdowns in July 2021. Both the Department of Health and Dr. Salvana urged independent experts to apply circumspection in making such statements in order to avoid public panic;⁸

WHEREAS, there is a public health and public policy need to ensure the safety and security of the population during this pandemic, and that information being distributed is correct and are not irresponsibly and erroneously published;

³ UP Media and Public Relations Office, *COVID-19 FORECASTS IN THE PHILIPPINES: NCR, CEBU AND COVID-19 HOTSPOTS as of July 10, 2020*, July 23, 2020, [<https://up.edu.ph/covid-19-forecasts-in-the-philippines-ncr-cebu-and-covid-19-hotspots-as-of-july-10-2020/>]

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Lois Calderon, *OCTA warns of COVID-19 resurgence if Delta variant spreads in NCR*, CNN Philippines, July 18, 2021, [<https://www.cnn.ph/news/2021/7/18/OCTA-resurgence-COVID-19-cases-Delta-variant-.html>]

⁶ Catherine Gonzales, *OCTA projection on COVID-19 problematic, using incomplete data, says medical expert*, Inquirer.Net, August 2, 2021, [<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1467583/doh-hits-octa-projection-on-covid-19-its-problematic-using-incomplete-data>]

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

WHEREAS, there is also a need to validate the connection between OCTA Research and the University of the Philippines System as the former publicized a partnership which the latter seemingly denied;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, THAT THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOOD GOVERNMENT TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE QUALIFICATIONS, RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES, PARTNERSHIPS AND COMPOSITION OF OCTA RESEARCH PHILIPPINES

Adopted,



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