

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Eighteenth Congress
Third Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION No. 2209



Introduced by Representative STELLA LUZ A. QUIMBO and SHARON S. GARIN

RESOLUTION

**URGING THE INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCE FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF
EMERGING INFECTIOUS DISEASES TO PROTECT PEOPLE'S HEALTH WHILE
SAFELY REOPENING THE ECONOMY THROUGH THE IMPOSITION OF
GRANULAR LOCKDOWNS, AND BAKUNA AND BUSINESS BUBBLES**

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6 WHEREAS, on March 8, 2020, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte issued Proclamation No.
7 992 declaring a State of Public Health Emergency throughout the Philippines due to the
8 spread of COVID-19;

9 WHEREAS, since the declaration of the State of Public Health Emergency, the National
10 Capital Region has been placed under the strictest lockdown or the enhanced
11 community quarantine (ECQ) in three different occasions - once in 2020 and twice in
12 2021;

13 WHEREAS, there was a general consensus amongst experts, government leaders, and
14 the public on the necessity of imposing a hard lockdown at the onset of the pandemic -
15 a move which the rest of the world likewise took - due to the fact that the nature of
16 COVID-19 was largely unknown, and no vaccine was immediately available;

17 WHEREAS, since March 2020, no area in the Philippines has been allowed to
18 completely open up as different jurisdictions have been routinely placed under varying
19 levels of community quarantine ranging from ECQ as the hardest to modified general
20 community quarantine (MGCQ), thus making the country's lockdown as one of the
21 longest lockdowns in the world;

1 WHEREAS, stricter lockdown measures would mean the closure, temporary or
2 permanent, or the reduction of workforce of businesses deemed non-essential, which
3 translates to decrease in workers' wages or worse, retrenchment of employees;

4 WHEREAS, as a result of the protracted lockdown, the economy experienced the worst
5 contraction on record at 9.5 percent in 2020 while the same year also saw the
6 unemployment rate peak at 17.7 percent in April;

7 WHEREAS, the devastating effects of strict lockdowns on the economy directly
8 translate to the loss of jobs, shutdown of livelihoods, and hunger for vulnerable workers
9 and their families;

10 WHEREAS, on February 28, 2021, the Philippines received its first batch of COVID-19
11 vaccine doses which jump-started the inoculation of vulnerable sectors of the country,
12 beginning with the health workers, senior citizens, and persons with disability, while as
13 of September 7, 2021, 20,907,411 Filipinos have been inoculated with their first dose of
14 vaccines and 15,283,572 with the second dose;

15 WHEREAS, tourism bubbles have likewise proven to be effective as travel for leisure
16 has been generally safely practiced, thus showing that business bubbles could likewise
17 be successful to attain desired economic outcomes while ensuring protection against
18 any threat to public health by enforcing minimum health standards and ramping up the
19 COVID-19 vaccination program;

20 WHEREAS, despite the presence of alternatives, the government continues to rely on
21 widespread and strict lockdowns which continue to inflict debilitating effects on the
22 economy and the people;

23
24 WHEREAS, according to NEDA the imposition of one week of ECQ on NCR+ alone
25 leads to a loss of 144 billion or 1.6 percent of 2020 nominal GDP, an additional 161,000
26 to 242,000 poor individuals, and the displacement of about 607,000 workers;

27 WHEREAS, multilateral institutions such as the International Monetary Fund have
28 warned the Philippines that factors such as major downturn of investment, skill losses
29 from high unemployment and underemployment, and increased poverty may induce a
30 scarring effect in the country which would mean that the economy will take a longer
31 time to recover, thus prolonging the plight of the people;

32 WHEREAS, in a hearing of the Committee on Good Government and Public
33 Accountability, Director Alethea De Guzman of the Department of Health -

1 Epidemiology Bureau remarked that the country does not have to “purely depend on
2 very wide scale, restrictive CQs [community quarantines]” since efficient contact tracing
3 and isolation, and improved vaccination coverage is akin, in terms of desired effects, to
4 imposing hard lockdowns;

5 WHEREAS, Dr. John Wong, an epidemiologist and a member of the IATF Technical
6 Working Group on Data Analytics seconded Director De Guzman’s recommendations
7 in the same hearing as he said, “We don’t always have to resort to ECQ”;

8 WHEREAS, despite the implementation of ECQ and modified ECQ (MECQ) in the
9 National Capital Region and in its surrounding provinces, daily COVID-19 cases
10 remain to be skyrocketing with 22,820 new COVID-19 cases on September 9, 2021, the
11 highest single-day tally since the onset of the pandemic;

12 WHEREAS, on September 6, 2021, Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque announced
13 that the National Capital Region shall revert to general CQ (GCQ) and shall undergo
14 pilot testing of localized lockdowns although no details of such lockdowns have been
15 released;

16 WHEREAS, Spokesperson Roque announced the following day that Metro Manila will
17 remain under MECQ after the IATF-MEID decided to defer the pilot implementation of
18 granular lockdowns;¹

19 WHEREAS, there is an urgent necessity to lift the IATF-MEID’s current policy on
20 quarantine classifications and in lieu thereof, impose granular lockdowns on high-risk
21 areas on the basis of, and automatically triggered by, epidemiologically determined
22 thresholds on number of active COVID-19 cases and COVID-19 infection growth rates;

23 WHEREAS, granular lockdowns are necessary to arrest the rapid rise of COVID-19
24 cases, and must be implemented through government-led efforts in tracing, isolating,
25 and treating infected individuals;

26 WHEREAS, in the implementation of granular lockdowns, the Department of Health, as
27 the lead agency for our pandemic response must accomplish two things, to wit: (1) to
28 put in place an effective referral system at the barangay level so that hospital
29 admissions are rationalized, hospital beds are utilized effectively, so as to not
30 overwhelm our healthcare system; and (2) to ensure that reasonable allowances be paid

¹ Philippine News Agency. September 2021.

1 to healthcare workers, including particularly members of the Barangay Health
2 Emergency Response Teams (BHERTs) because of the risks they face as frontliners;

3 WHEREAS, in order to effectively carry-out granular lockdowns in specific localities,
4 the Department of Social Welfare and Development should coordinate with the
5 appropriate LGUs in providing all affected households or individuals with “ayuda” or
6 cash and in-kind assistance;

7 WHEREAS, the surgical approach of implementing granular lockdowns may also very
8 well result in efficiently utilizing the limited and dwindling resources of the
9 government as it seeks to lead the country out of the pandemic;

10 WHEREAS, to bolster economic productivity, granular lockdowns must be coupled
11 with “bakuna bubbles” by “allowing fully vaccinated individuals to engage in
12 businesses and other activities which are otherwise prohibited or restricted” across the
13 various quarantine classifications, as stipulated in MMDA Resolution No. 21-19, series
14 of 2021;

15 WHEREAS, while “bakuna bubbles” will effectively allow fully-vaccinated individuals
16 greater mobility and the opportunity to resume commercial activities, there remains a
17 gap in ensuring that they will not be susceptible to breakthrough infections when they
18 are engaging with different persons and establishments;

19 WHEREAS, business establishments have dutifully followed government protocols and
20 are key enforcers of minimum public health standards, thus proving that positive health
21 and economic outcomes could both be achieved simultaneously;

22 WHEREAS, alongside granular lockdowns and bakuna bubbles, business bubbles must
23 be allowed in order to let businesses, whether deemed essential or non-essential, to
24 operate so long as they deploy fully vaccinated employees and they subject such
25 employees to regular COVID-19 testing to adequately protect both their livelihoods and
26 their consumers, complemented by transport bubbles that would safely ferry fully
27 vaccinated employees to their workplaces;

28 WHEREAS, in order to allow the economy to continuously operate while safeguarding
29 the people, the implementation of granular lockdowns together with bakuna bubbles
30 and business bubbles is the strategic choice because it will focus on isolating high-risk
31 areas from the general population while allowing the rest to open up businesses and
32 report to workplaces, subject to minimum health standards, vaccination rate, and
33 willingness of business establishments to test their workers regularly;

1 WHEREAS, there is a need for a more consultative pandemic response and recovery
2 policymaking, as well as the need to execute policy reforms to review and enhance the
3 powers, composition, and performance of IATF-MEID, including the revision of the
4 enabling law creating IATF-MEID by possibly converting it from an Executive task
5 force to an Executive and Legislative task force;

6 NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, that the House
7 of Representatives strongly urge the IATF-MEID and the Executive to recalibrate its
8 pandemic response quarantine measures by lifting the current policy on quarantine
9 classifications and by immediately implementing the granular lockdowns, bakuna and
10 business bubbles in Metro Manila and other metropolitan areas in the country to create
11 a more targeted response in arresting the rapid spread of the virus and avert the losses
12 we incur from reliance on enhanced mobility restrictions, and to spur economic
13 recovery while protecting the health of the Filipino people.

14 RESOLVED, FURTHER, that the House of Representatives create the Bayanihan Para sa
15 Pagbangon Ad Hoc Committee to review the powers, composition, and functions of the
16 IATF-MEID as well as oversee its economic recovery programs and policies.

17 Adopted,



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