



Congressional Record

PLENARY PROCEEDINGS OF THE 18th CONGRESS, SECOND REGULAR SESSION

House of Representatives

Vol. 5

Monday, March 22, 2021

No. 19

CALL TO ORDER

At 3:00 p.m., Deputy Speaker Arnolfo “Arnie” A. Teves Jr. called the session to order.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.).
The session is now called to order.

Majority Leader.

Let us recognize Rep. Greg G. Gasataya via Zoom for the Invocation.

Everybody rose for the Invocation.

INVOCATION

REP. GASATAYA. Let us remember that we are in the presence of the Lord.

Lord, God, our Heavenly Father, we come into Your presence, acknowledging that apart from You, we are nothing.

We thank You for the opportunity and the privilege that You have given us to be part of the Eighteenth Congress, to be of service to the respective congressional districts and the party-list groups that we represent, that should result in the improvement of the lives of our fellow Filipinos and our nation.

As we are in the midst of this COVID-19 pandemic that continues to endanger the lives of everyone, destroy the economy and attack our mental health, we claim Your promise in Proverbs 3:5-6 which says, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths.”

Lord, please continue to give us the realization that we need to submit to You and to surrender everything to You for a clear direction as we face

the hardships and uncertainties brought about by this pandemic.

We pray and ask for Your help and guidance as we continue our legislative work which should lead to the country’s economic recovery.

We continue to pray for physical and mental healing and protection for everyone. As a nation we pray for strength, hope and mercy, and deliverance from all the insurmountable challenges that beset us.

And that by Your grace and mercy, we, as a nation, will be able to surpass this. This, we pray, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

NATIONAL ANTHEM

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.).
Okay. Let us have the National Anthem.

Everybody remained standing for the singing of the Philippine National Anthem.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.).
Majority Leader.

ROLL CALL

REP. COLLANTES. Mr. Speaker, I move that we call the roll of Members.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Secretary General, please call the roll of Members.

*The Secretary General called the roll, and the result is reflected in Journal No. 19, dated March 22, 2021.**

* See ANNEX (printed separately)

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. Mr. Speaker, the roll call shows that 300 Members responded to the call.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). With 300 Members responding to the call, the Chair declares the presence of a quorum. Majority Leader.

APPROVAL OF THE JOURNAL

REP. COLLANTES. Mr. Speaker, I move that we approve Journal No. 18, dated March 15 to 17, 2021.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is carried.

Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we proceed with the Reference of Business and for this purpose, direct the Secretary General to read the title of the bills and resolutions on First Reading, as well as communications and committee reports.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Secretary General, go ahead with the Reference of Business.

REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

The Secretary General read the following House Bills and Resolutions on First Reading, Messages from the Senate, Communications and Committee Reports, and the Deputy Speaker made the corresponding references:

BILLS ON FIRST READING

House Bill No. 9006, entitled:

“AN ACT TO FURTHER ENHANCE THE BASIC EDUCATION SYSTEM BY PROVIDING FOR THE INCLUSION OF A SUBJECT ON SAVINGS AND INVESTMENTS IN THE SECONDARY EDUCATION CURRICULUM AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Oaminal
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC
EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 9010, entitled:

“AN ACT DECLARING DECEMBER 23 OF EVERY YEAR A NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE CITY OF DAGUPAN, PROVINCE OF PANGASINAN, IN COMMEMORATION OF THE BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DAGUPAN-BORN NATIONAL ARTIST VICTORIO EDADES, TO BE KNOWN AS VICTORIO EDADES DAY”

By Representative de Venecia
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL
GOVERNMENT

House Bill No. 9011, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AND DETERMINING A COMMUNITY FOREST IN BARANGAY BAYANGA IN THE 1ST DISTRICT OF CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representatives Rodriguez and Uy (Rolando)
TO THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON
REFORESTATION

House Bill No. 9012, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AND DETERMINING A COMMUNITY FOREST IN BARANGAY BESIGAN IN THE 1ST DISTRICT OF CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representatives Rodriguez and Uy (Rolando)
TO THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON
REFORESTATION

House Bill No. 9013, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AND DETERMINING A COMMUNITY FOREST IN BARANGAY DANSOLIHON IN THE 1ST DISTRICT OF CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representatives Rodriguez and Uy
(Rolando)
TO THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON
REFORESTATION

House Bill No. 9014, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AND
DETERMINING A COMMUNITY
FOREST IN BARANGAY
LUMBIA IN THE 1ST DISTRICT
OF CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY
AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR”

By Representatives Rodriguez and Uy
(Rolando)
TO THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON
REFORESTATION

House Bill No. 9015, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AND
DETERMINING A COMMUNITY
FOREST IN BARANGAY
MAMBUAYA IN THE 1ST DISTRICT
OF CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY
AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR”

By Representatives Rodriguez and Uy
(Rolando)
TO THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON
REFORESTATION

House Bill No. 9016, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AND
DETERMINING A COMMUNITY
FOREST IN BARANGAY
PAGALUNGAN IN THE 1ST DISTRICT
OF CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY
AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR”

By Representatives Rodriguez and Uy
(Rolando)
TO THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON
REFORESTATION

House Bill No. 9017, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AND
DETERMINING A COMMUNITY
FOREST IN BARANGAY TUMPAGON
IN THE 1ST DISTRICT OF CAGAYAN
DE ORO CITY AND APPROPRIATING
FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representatives Rodriguez and Uy
(Rolando)
TO THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON
REFORESTATION

House Bill No. 9018, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AND
DETERMINING A COMMUNITY
FOREST IN BARANGAY PIGSAG-AN
IN THE 1ST DISTRICT OF CAGAYAN
DE ORO CITY AND APPROPRIATING
FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representatives Rodriguez and Uy
(Rolando)
TO THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON
REFORESTATION

House Bill No. 9019, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AND
DETERMINING A COMMUNITY
FOREST IN BARANGAY SAN
SIMON IN THE 1ST DISTRICT
OF CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY
AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR”

By Representatives Rodriguez and Uy
(Rolando)
TO THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON
REFORESTATION

House Bill No. 9020, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A MULTI-
SPECIES MARINE HATCHERY IN
BARANGAY BAYABAS IN THE 1ST
DISTRICT OF CAGAYAN DE ORO
CITY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR”

By Representatives Rodriguez and Uy
(Rolando)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON
AQUACULTURE AND FISHERIES
RESOURCES

House Bill No. 9021, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AND
DETERMINING A COMMUNITY
FOREST IN BARANGAY
TAGLIMAO IN THE 1ST DISTRICT
OF CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY
AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR”

By Representatives Rodriguez and Uy
(Rolando)
TO THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON
REFORESTATION

House Bill No. 9022, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AND
DETERMINING A COMMUNITY
FOREST IN BARANGAY
TAGPANGI IN THE 1ST DISTRICT
OF CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY
AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR”

By Representatives Rodriguez and Uy
(Rolando)
TO THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON
REFORESTATION

House Bill No. 9023, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AND
DETERMINING A COMMUNITY
FOREST IN BARANGAY
TIGNAPOLOAN IN THE 1ST
DISTRICT OF CAGAYAN DE ORO
CITY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR”

By Representatives Rodriguez and Uy
(Rolando)
TO THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON
REFORESTATION

House Bill No. 9024, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AND
DETERMINING A COMMUNITY
FOREST IN BARANGAY
TUBURAN IN THE 1ST DISTRICT
OF CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY
AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR”

By Representatives Rodriguez and Uy
(Rolando)
TO THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON
REFORESTATION

House Bill No. 9025, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A MULTI-
SPECIES MARINE HATCHERY IN
BARANGAY BONBON IN THE 1ST
DISTRICT OF CAGAYAN DE ORO
CITY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR”

By Representatives Rodriguez and Uy
(Rolando)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON
AQUACULTURE AND FISHERIES
RESOURCES

House Bill No. 9026, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A MULTI-
SPECIES MARINE HATCHERY IN
BARANGAY BULUA IN THE 1ST
DISTRICT OF CAGAYAN DE ORO
CITY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR”

By Representatives Rodriguez and Uy
(Rolando)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON
AQUACULTURE AND FISHERIES
RESOURCES

House Bill No. 9027, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AND
DETERMINING A COMMUNITY
FOREST IN BARANGAY BAIKINGON
IN THE 1ST DISTRICT OF CAGAYAN
DE ORO CITY AND APPROPRIATING
FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representatives Rodriguez and Uy
(Rolando)
TO THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON
REFORESTATION

House Bill No. 9028, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A JUST AND
EQUAL SHARE IN THE INTERNAL
REVENUE ALLOTMENT FOR
BARANGAYS CREATED BY LOCAL
GOVERNMENT UNITS, AMENDING
FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT
NO. 7160, ALSO KNOWN AS THE
‘LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE OF
1991’ ”

By Representative Bañas-Nogales
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL
GOVERNMENT

House Bill No. 9029, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR
MECHANISMS TO SET A CEILING
ON THE PRICES OF DIFFERENT
VARIETIES OF RICE TO ENSURE
THE AFFORDABILITY OF RICE AND

PROTECT THE CONSUMERS FROM RICE CARTELS”

By Representative Bañas-Nograles
TO THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD AND THE COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND INDUSTRY

House Bill No. 9031, entitled:

“AN ACT CONVERTING THE SAN LORENZO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN BRGY. BIBINCAHAN, SORSOGON CITY, PROVINCE OF SORSOGON INTO AN INTEGRATED SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS SAN LORENZO INTEGRATED NATIONAL SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Escudero
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 9032, entitled:

“AN ACT CONVERTING THE ROAD STRETCHING FROM BARANGAY ARIMAN TO BARANGAY BERIRAN, MUNICIPALITY OF GUBAT, PROVINCE OF SORSOGON (GUBAT BYPASS ROAD) INTO A NATIONAL ROAD AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Escudero
TO THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND HIGHWAYS

House Bill No. 9033, entitled:

“AN ACT CONVERTING THE ROAD STRETCHING FROM BARANGAY CAMCAMAN, MUNICIPALITY OF MATNOG TO BARANGAY SAN RAFAEL, MUNICIPALITY OF BULUSAN, ALL OF PROVINCE OF SORSOGON INTO A NATIONAL ROAD AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Escudero
TO THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND HIGHWAYS

House Bill No. 9034, entitled:

“AN ACT CONVERTING THE ROAD STRETCHING FROM BARANGAY

POBLACION SUR TO BARANGAY ST. LOURDES, MUNICIPALITY OF BARCELONA, PROVINCE OF SORSOGON INTO A NATIONAL ROAD AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Escudero
TO THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND HIGHWAYS

House Bill No. 9035, entitled:

“AN ACT CONVERTING THE ROAD STRETCHING FROM BARANGAY AQUINO TO BARANGAY CADANDANAN, MUNICIPALITY OF BULAN, PROVINCE OF SORSOGON INTO A NATIONAL ROAD AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Escudero
TO THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND HIGHWAYS

House Bill No. 9036, entitled:

“AN ACT CONVERTING THE ROAD STRETCHING FROM JCT. SULANGAN, MUNICIPALITY OF MATNOG TO BARANGAY BIGO, MUNICIPALITY OF STA. MAGDALENA, ALL OF THE PROVINCE OF SORSOGON INTO A NATIONAL ROAD AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Escudero
TO THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND HIGHWAYS

House Bill No. 9037, entitled:

“AN ACT CONVERTING THE ROAD STRETCHING FROM BARANGAY SAN RAMON, MUNICIPALITY OF BULAN, TO BARANGAY GADGARON, MUNICIPALITY OF MATNOG, ALL OF THE PROVINCE OF SORSOGON INTO A NATIONAL ROAD AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Escudero
TO THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND HIGHWAYS

House Bill No. 9038, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN

E-LIBRARY IN BARANGAY INDAHAG IN CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Rodriguez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 9039, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN E-LIBRARY IN BARANGAY LAPASAN IN CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Rodriguez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 9040, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN E-LIBRARY IN BARANGAY MACABALAN IN CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Rodriguez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 9041, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN E-LIBRARY IN BARANGAY MACASANDIG IN CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Rodriguez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 9042, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN E-LIBRARY IN BARANGAY NAZARETH IN CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Rodriguez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 9043, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN E-LIBRARY IN BARANGAY PUERTO

IN CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Rodriguez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 9044, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN E-LIBRARY IN BARANGAY PUNTO D IN CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Rodriguez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 9045, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN E-LIBRARY IN BARANGAY TABLON IN CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Rodriguez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 9046, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN E-LIBRARY IN BARANGAY BALUBAL IN CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Rodriguez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 9047, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN E-LIBRARY IN BARANGAY BUGO IN CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Rodriguez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 9048, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN E-LIBRARY IN BARANGAY CAMAMAN-AN IN CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY

AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Rodriguez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 9049, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN E-LIBRARY IN BARANGAY CONSOLACION IN CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Rodriguez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 9050, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN E-LIBRARY IN BARANGAY CUGMAN IN CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Rodriguez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 9051, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN E-LIBRARY IN BARANGAY FS CATANICO IN CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Rodriguez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 9052, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN E-LIBRARY IN BARANGAY GUSA IN CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Rodriguez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 9053, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN E-LIBRARY LAB IN BARANGAY AGUSAN IN CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Rodriguez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 9054, entitled:

“AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND MANAGEMENT TO EARMARK THE REVENUE COLLECTED FROM THE TARIFF ON ALL MEAT AND POULTRY PRODUCTS TO THE LIVESTOCK DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM OF DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (DA)”

By Representative Geron
TO THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD AND THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

House Bill No. 9055, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING MT. BUSA-MAKIMA, LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF MAASIM, KIAMBA AND MAITUM, PROVINCE OF SARANGANI AS A PROTECTED AREA UNDER THE CATEGORY OF PROTECTED LANDSCAPE PURSUANT TO REPUBLIC ACT 7586 AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT 11038, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE EXPANDED NATIONAL INTEGRATED PROTECTED AREAS SYSTEM ACT OF 2018, PROVIDING FOR ITS MANAGEMENT, FUNDS AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Pacquiao (Rogelio)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

RESOLUTIONS

House Resolution No. 1657, entitled:

“RESOLUTION STRONGLY URGING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, THROUGH THE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS, TO CONDEMN AND INVESTIGATE, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE’S PROFILING

OF LAWYERS DEFENDING RED-TAGGED INDIVIDUALS”

By Representatives Zarate, Lagman, Belmonte, Cullamat, Gaité, Brosas, Castro (France) and. Elago
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1658, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR AN INVESTIGATION ON THE DISASTER PREPAREDNESS, MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND STRATEGIC RESPONSE PLAN AND ACTIONS BY CONCERNED NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, PARTICULARLY THE OFFICE OF CIVIL DEFENSE-NATIONAL DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT COUNCIL, THE DEPARTMENTS OF INTERIOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY WITH ITS ATTACHED AGENCIES PHILIPPINE INSTITUTE OF VOLCANOLOGY AND SEISMOLOGY AND THE PHILIPPINE ATMOSPHERIC, GEOPHYSICAL AND ASTRONOMICAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION, LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION, AGRICULTURE, TRADE AND INDUSTRY, BUDGET AND MANAGEMENT, AND THE NATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY ON THE POSSIBLE OCCURRENCE OF ERUPTION OF MT. PINATUBO IN CENTRAL LUZON AND NEARBY PROVINCES”

By Representative Gonzales (Aurelio)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1659, entitled:

“RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING THE RECIPIENTS OF ‘THE OUTSTANDING YOUNG MEN’ (TOYM) OF THE PHILIPPINES 2020 AWARD GIVEN BY THE JUNIOR CHAMBER INTERNATIONAL -

PHILIPPINES, INC., THE TOYM FOUNDATION, INC., AND THE GERRY ROXAS FOUNDATION, INC.”

By Representative Legarda
TO THE COMMITTEE ON YOUTH AND SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

Message dated March 15, 2021, informing the House of Representatives that the Senate on even date passed with amendment House Bill No. 8631, entitled:

“AN ACT GRANTING PHILIPPINE CITIZENSHIP TO BIENVENIDO MOREJON MARAÑON”.
TO THE COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE

Message dated March 15, 2021, informing the House of Representatives that the Senate on even date passed with amendment House Bill No. 8632, entitled:

“AN ACT GRANTING PHILIPPINE CITIZENSHIP TO KAKOU ANGE FRANCK WILLIAMS KOUAME”.
TO THE COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE

COMMUNICATIONS

Letter dated 10 February 2021 of Secretary Adelino B. Sitoy, LLB, LLM, Presidential Adviser on Legislative Affairs and Head, Presidential Legislative Liaison Office (PLLO), submitting to the House of Representatives the following financial accomplishment reports:

1. Statement of Appropriations, Allotments, Obligations, Disbursements and Balances for the year ending December 31, 2020 (FAR No. 1);
2. Summary of Appropriations, Allotments, Obligations, Disbursements and Balances for the year ending December 31, 2020 (FAR No. 1-A);
3. List of Allotments and Sub-allotments for the year ending December 31, 2020 (FAR No. 1-B);
4. Aging of Due and Demandable Obligations as of December 31, 2020 (FAR No. 3);

5. Monthly Report of Disbursements for the months of October, November and December 2020 (FAR No. 4); and
6. Quarterly Report of Revenue and Other Receipts as of December 31, 2020 (FAR No. 5).

TO THE COMMITTEE ON
APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated February 15, 2021 of Roderick A. Ongcarranceja, President, Calapan Waterworks Corporation, submitting to the House of Representatives a copy of their Operational Report for the year 2020.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT ENTERPRISES AND
PRIVATIZATION

Letter dated 23 February 2021 of Goddess Hope O. Libiran, Assistant Secretary for Communications and Commuter Affairs, Department of Transportation, transmitting to the House of Representatives a copy of their 2020 Annual Report, entitled "Revolutionizing Transportation amid the Pandemic".

TO THE COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION

Bureau of Customs Annual Report 2020, entitled "Makabagong Aduana, Matatag na Ekonomiya".

TO THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND
MEANS

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Report of the Committee on Youth and Sports Development (Committee Report No. 877), re H.R. No. 1660, entitled:

"RESOLUTION URGING THE INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCE FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF EMERGING INFECTIOUS DISEASES AND THE CONCERNED GOVERNMENT AGENCIES TO INCLUDE IN THE LIST OF PRIORITY GROUPS FOR VACCINATION AGAINST COVID-19 THE NATIONAL ATHLETES, INCLUDING PARALYMPIC

ATHLETES, WHO HAVE QUALIFIED AND THOSE VYING FOR QUALIFICATION TO THE 2021 TOKYO SUMMER OLYMPIC GAMES, THE 31ST SOUTHEAST ASIANGAMES, THE 16TH SUMMER PARALYMPIC GAMES, THE 4TH ASIAN YOUTH PARALYMPIC GAMES, THE 11TH ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PARALYMPIC GAMES, AND OTHER OFFICIAL MEMBERS OF THE PHILIPPINE DELEGATION THERETO"

recommending its adoption in substitution of House Resolution No. 1507

Sponsors: Representatives Dy (Faustino Michael), Romero and Albano
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report of the Committee on Transportation and the Committee on Appropriations (Committee Report No. 878), re H.B. No. 7070, entitled:

"AN ACT ESTABLISHING A DISTRICT OFFICE OF THE LAND TRANSPORTATION OFFICE (LTO) IN THE CITY OF GENERAL TRIAS, PROVINCE OF CAVITE AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR"

recommending its approval with amendments

Sponsors: Representatives Sarmiento and Yap (Eric)

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report of the Committee on Transportation and the Committee on Appropriations (Committee Report No. 879), re H.B. No. 9056, entitled:

"AN ACT ESTABLISHING A REGULAR DISTRICT OFFICE OF THE LAND TRANSPORTATION OFFICE (LTO) IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF PAGSANJAN, PROVINCE OF LAGUNA AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR"

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 7293

Sponsors: Representatives Sarmiento and Yap (Eric)

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report of the Committee on Transportation and the Committee on Appropriations (Committee Report No. 880), re H.B. No. 8034, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A DISTRICT OFFICE OF THE LAND TRANSPORTATION OFFICE IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF ENRIQUE B. MAGALONA IN THE THIRD LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT OF NEGROS OCCIDENTAL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

recommending its approval with amendments

Sponsors: Representatives Sarmiento and Yap (Eric)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology (Committee Report No. 881), re H.B. No. 9057, entitled:

“AN ACT MANDATING AND INSTITUTIONALIZING ROLL-OVER DATA ALLOCATION SCHEME AND PROVIDING FOR PENALTIES”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bills Numbered 7509, 8085 and 8639

Sponsors: Representatives Yap (Victor) and Pineda
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

RESOLUTIONS

House Resolution No. 1661, entitled:

“RESOLUTION URGING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, THROUGH THE COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE AND PROFESSIONAL REGULATIONS AND THE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS, TO INVESTIGATE, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, THE ALLEGED VIOLATION OF UNION RIGHTS, RED-TAGGING AND PROFILING OF MEMBERS OF CONFEDERATION FOR THE UNITY, RECOGNITION AND ADVANCEMENT OF

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES (COURAGE) AND ALLIANCE OF CONCERNED TEACHERS (ACT) THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT (DILG) - ISSUED MEMORANDUM ON THE MEMBERSHIP OF EMPLOYEES IN THE THE SAID ORGANIZATIONS”

By Representatives Gaité, Zarate, Cullamat, Castro (France), Brosas and Elago
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1662, entitled:

“RESOLUTION URGING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, THROUGH THE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT, TO INVESTIGATE, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, THE REPORTED DELAY ON THE COMPENSATION OF THE MEDIA AND PRODUCTION WORKERS, AND THE ALLEGED VIOLATIONS ON LABOR STANDARDS UNDER THE DEPED TV PROJECT”

By Representatives Gaité, Zarate, Cullamat, Castro (France), Brosas and Elago
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1663, entitled:

“RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE STATUS OF HOUSING AND RESETTLEMENT OF FAMILIES DISPLACED BY THE ARMED CONFLICT IN MARAWI CITY IN 2017”

By Representative Benitez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1664, entitled:

“RESOLUTION URGING THE HOUSE COMMITTEES ON GOVERNMENT ENTERPRISES AND PRIVATIZATION, GOOD GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY, AND ANY APPROPRIATE HOUSE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT A LEGISLATIVE REVIEW OF THE ONGOING NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND
MAYNILAD, INC. AND MANILA
WATER, INC. REGARDING THE
CONCESSION AGREEMENTS”

By Representative Herrera-Dy
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1665, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION URGING THE HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES, THROUGH
THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON
CREATIVE INDUSTRY AND
PERFORMING ARTS AND OTHER
APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, TO
CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF
LEGISLATION, ON THE PROSPECTS
OF THE UNESCO CREATIVE CITIES
NETWORK CONTRIBUTING TO
THE COUNTRY’S POST-PANDEMIC
ROAD TO ECONOMIC RECOVERY”

By Representative de Venecia
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1666, entitled:

“RESOLUTION DIRECTING
THE COMMITTEE ON GOOD
GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC
ACCOUNTABILITY TO CONDUCT
AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF
LEGISSLATION, ON THE CLOSURE
OF INSULAR PRISON ROAD IN THE
NEW BILIBID PRISON RESERVATION
BY THE BUREAU OF CORRECTIONS”

By Representative Biazon
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1667, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION URGING THE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH (DOH)
AND THE NATIONAL TASK
FORCE AGAINST COVID-19 (NTF)
TO EXPEDITE THE FORGING
OF TRIPARTITE AGREEMENTS
WITH COVID-19 VACCINE
MANUFACTURERS AND PRIVATE
ENTITIES WILLING TO PURCHASE
COVID-19 VACCINES FOR THEIR
EMPLOYEES”

By Representative Castelo
TO THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

House Resolution No. 1668, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION URGING THE HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES, THROUGH
THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE
ON CREATIVE INDUSTRY AND
PERFORMING ARTS AND OTHER
APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF
THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN
AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF R.A. NO. 9266
OR ‘THE ARCHITECTURE ACT OF 2004,’
R.A. NO. 10350 OR THE ‘PHILIPPINE
INTERIOR DESIGN ACT OF 2012,’
AND OTHER LAWS IN RELATION
TO DESIGN PROFESSIONALS”

By Representatives de Venecia and Co
(Angelica)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.).
Majority Leader. Majority Leader.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 8992
ON SECOND READING

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, in accordance
with Rule XVII, Section 125 of the Rules of
the House of Representatives, we seek the
indulgence of our colleagues who wish to
deliver privilege speeches this Monday. We
will be moving to them after we tackle the
Business for the Day so that we can finish
legislation, have them approved on Second
Reading and, hopefully, by Thursday, have
them approved on Third Reading.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move for the
consideration of House Bill No. 8992 as
contained in Committee Report No. 862.
Could the Secretary General be directed to
read the title of the said measure?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.).
Secretary General is so directed.*

* Copies of the bill were distributed to the members earlier. Section 53, Rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives provides that “[a] bill or joint resolution on Second Reading shall be read in full unless copies thereof have been distributed to the Members.”

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 8992, entitled: "AN ACT PROMOTING THE USE OF DIGITAL PAYMENTS FOR FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT AND ALL MERCHANTS."

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Joet Garcia, the Sponsor of House Bill No. 8992, of the Second District of Bataan.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Honorable Garcia is now recognized.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF REP. GARCIA (J.)

REP. GARCIA (J.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the honorable Members of the House, it is my pleasure to present to this august Body, in behalf of the Committee on Banks and Financial Intermediaries' Chairperson Junie Cua, Committee Report No. 862 on House Bill No. 8992, AN ACT PROMOTING THE USE OF DIGITAL PAYMENTS FOR FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT AND ALL MERCHANTS.

Let me just highlight that the main objective of the Bill is to hasten the adoption of digital payment as one of the mediums of exchange in financial transactions across the country. This will facilitate the attainment of the desired financial inclusion to support broad-based economic development which can contribute to the increase in growth in the country. The unfortunate health crisis brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic even heightened the need for promoting alternative modes of doing economic transactions. With no known cure for the disease at the moment and the still-increasing number of cases, we are compelled to adopt measures that limit movements and face-to-face interactions and observe health protocols never before imposed in recent times to prevent its spread. By accelerating the use of digital payments, we actually provide a medium where social

distancing is better observed and face-to-face interaction is minimized, if not eliminated, thereby enabling a wider population to have a safer and more efficient alternative to the traditional cash-based transactions.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this very timely, important measure is earnestly sought. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. France Castro of the Party-List ACT TEACHERS for her interpellation.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Honorable Castro is now recognized.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Maraming salamat, Ginoong Speaker. Magandang hapon po sa inyo at sa ating mga colleagues, at sa ating mga mamamayan na nakikinig sa ating pagdinig sa araw na ito.

So, Mr. Speaker, pahihintulutan po ba ako ng ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor na magtanong o mag-inquire kaugnay nitong House Bill No. 8992, Mr. Speaker?

REP. GARCIA (J.). It would be an honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Maraming salamat, Mr. Speaker, Honorable Sponsor.

So, first of all, Mr. Speaker, I welcome this measure. This is very timely, especially this pandemic time. Tama po iyong ating Sponsor, para ma-limit po iyong movement during pandemic time, maka-save ng time at siguro ng pera ang ating mga mamamayan, kasi kung mayroon na po tayong digital or may mga app na puwedeng gamitin para makapagbayad ng mga bayarin sa ating gobyerno, sa mga respective agencies ng gobyerno, ito po ay very timely and very welcome.

So, ilan lang pong paglilinaw, Mr. Speaker, Ginoong Sponsor: kapag ito po ba ay naipatupad at na-mandate na natin, ano, iyong mga lahat ng agencies, ibig sabihin

po ba ay hindi na puwede ang cash, wala na pong magbabayad sa ating mga agency ng cash later on?

REP. GARCIA (J.). Maraming salamat po sa katanungan. Actually, ang layunin ng ating panukala ay ma-enable o mabigyan ng kakayahan ang pamahalaan, pati ang ating pribadong sektor, ang ating mga merchants, para tumanggap ng mga digital payments. Ibig sabihin po nito, ito po ay dagdag sa kakayahan nila na tumanggap bukod sa cash payments.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay.

REP. GARCIA (J.). Kaya po sa madaling sagot, tatanggapin pa rin po iyong cash payments, ito po ay isa lang paraan para tumanggap ng digital payments.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Yes, salamat po, Ginoong Speaker, kagalang-galang na Sponsor.

So, nalinawan po ako sa sagot. Kasi marami tayong mga kababayan, halimbawa, iyong walang access, — kasi this is ano, 'no, this is technology, Internet na pangangailangan. So, kung wala pong access iyong ating mga pangkaraniwang mamamayan, makakapagbayad din po sila ng cash, pero this is just an alternative. Okay. Sa definition, Mr. Speaker, iyong sinasabi natin ditong “payment service provider,” okay, medyo pamilyar naman po ako doon sa iba't ibang mga apps kung saan puwedeng magbayad. Nagagamit po ito doon sa, halimbawa, pagbabayad po sa bangko or pag-ano, magse-send ka ng money. Hindi ba maraming ganyan, tapos iyong iba pa pong mga apps. So, ito po ba iyong tinutukoy natin dito na “payment service provider,” Mr. Speaker?

REP. GARCIA (J.). Tama po iyon, Mr. Speaker. Iyong sa definition natin na “payment service provider,” if I can read also, “refers to the entity that provides payment services to end users.” Maaari pong consumer, merchants, dealers, including government institutions. So, covered po natin dito, Mr. Speaker, ang lahat ng mga pamamaraan sa pamamagitan ng digital payments.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. So, halimbawa po, sa pagbabayad po ng mga utilities, hindi po ba iyong power, iyong water utilities, iyong telephone, iyong Internet access, so gumagamit po ng digital payment. So, ito rin po ba iyong sinasabi nating “payment service provider,” iyong kanilang mga ginagamit, iyong mga private corporations?

REP. GARCIA (J.). Tama po iyon, Mr. Speaker. When we say “payment service provider,” sila po iyong kasalukuyang nagagamit ng ating mga kababayan para po magbayad ng kanilang mga bayarin online, whether sa website o kaya naman sa mga applications sa kanilang telepono, tablet. Ito po iyong mga service providers para po makapagbayad tayo online.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay, sa mga government ...

REP. GARCIA (J.). So, kasama po dito, Mr. Speaker, idagdag ko na lang, yes, kasama po dito, of course, iyong tinatawag ho nating “e-money,” hindi ba, sila GCash, sila PayMaya, StarPay, kasama rin po dito ang credit card, kasama rin po dito ang debit card and the others, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Thank you po, Mr. Speaker, Ginoong Sponsor. So, halimbawa po, kapag nagbayad ka halimbawa noong NBI, iyong payment mo sa NBI, papupuntahin ka sa Bayad Center para magbayad doon at ibibigay mo na lang iyong resibo nila, so ganoon po. Kapag nagbayad ka po ng PhilHealth, puwede kang mag-access noong Bayad Center through your phone, puwede na iyon. Iyon po iyong ibig sabihin natin noong “payment service provider” or “digital payment.” So, maganda po ito, Mr. Speaker, Ginoong Sponsor. So, isa pa pong tanong ko, kung ano po ba ang time frame, mayroon po bang time frame tayo sa lahat ng mga government agencies and government entities na makapag-comply? Halimbawa nito — mayroon po bang time frame, Mr. Speaker?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Baka naputol iyong sa app.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARCIA (J.). Yes, Mr. Speaker. Yes, medyo nawawala po iyong signal.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Oo, ang tinatanong ko po, Mr. Speaker, ay ano po iyong time frame na kung saan iyong ating mga government agencies ay makapag-comply dito sa ating batas, proposed law?

REP. GARCIA (J.). Sa panukala po natin, Mr. Speaker, wala po tayong inilagay na time frame, pero ang expectation ho natin, ang intensyon natin ay kapag ito ay na-enact at nagawa na po iyong IRR, ay sa lalong madaling panahon ay mai-implement na po ito ng ating mga NGAs at ang ating mga local government units. Kaya rin po natin binigyan sila ng paraan para makapagtanda at magkaroon ng kani-kanilang implementasyon kasi alam naman po natin at we want to be sensitive to the different situations in the country pagdating nga po sa Internet access, pagdating din sa availability ng mga gadgets o devices para sa ating mga kababayan. So, although we did not put a time frame, but siguro po, Mr. Speaker, isa iyan sa puwedeng mai-specify kapag nagawa ho iyong IRR para depende ho sa NGA at saka depende rin ho sa mga local government units sa kani-kanila pong mga sitwasyon. Pero gusto ko po ipaalam, Mr. Speaker, na karamihan ng atin pong mga NGAs sa ngayon, katulad po noong o lalo na iyong mga madalas pong binabayaran ng ating mga kababayan—Pag-IBIG, SSS, NBI, LTO, BIR—lahat po iyan ay mayroon na, enabled na, mayroon na ho silang pamamaraan para tumanggap ng mga digital payments. And, of course, many of our local government units also have provided this digital payment facility.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Okay, thank you, Mr. Speaker, Ginoong Sponsor. So, sinasabi pa rin po natin dito iyong accreditation nitong mga digital payment system na ito. So, pakipaliwanag nga po, Mr. Speaker, Ginoong Sponsor, iyong proseso ng accreditation nitong mga digital payment or kasama na rito iyong apps? Okay.

REP. GARCIA (J.). Actually, ang mga payment service providers natin, napapasailalim po sila sa Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas. So, mula sa license, sa lisensiya nila para po pumasok sa ganitong klaseng negosyo hanggang sa implementasyon, iyong kanilang mga application, iyong kanilang mga processing hanggang sa auditing, kung meron pong mga maling transaksyon, kung meron pong nagreklamo, kung merong mga unusual transactions, lahat po iyan ay under the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas. So, very well monitored po ng BSP ang lahat ng ating mga payment service providers. Sila ho ang nagbibigay ng pahintulot o ng permit. Sila rin po ang nagre-regulate sa mga payment service providers po natin.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. So, malaki, Mr. Speaker—salamat po, Ginoong Sponsor.

So, malaki po pala ang magiging role ng BSP dito sa gagamitin nating sistema, tama po ba, in terms of, okay, in terms of regulation?

REP. GARCIA (J.). Tama po iyon, Mr. Speaker.

In terms of regulation sa ngayon, sila po iyong pinakaahensiya assigned to regulate all payment service providers, especially ito pong mga digital payments.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Thank you po.

Ang last question ko na lang po, Mr. Speaker, ano—kasi maganda naman po ito, welcome naman po ito para doon sa ease of doing transactions with our government, sana matiyak lang na available iyong Internet, 'di ba? Iyong ano, kailangan natin iyong mga facilities para maano ito, ma-improve natin iyong ways of payments natin. So, mae-ensure po ba, Mr. Speaker, ng ating Sponsor, butihing Sponsor, na later on hindi magkakaroon ng additional burden or additional payment ang ating mga consumers or ang ating mga kababayan? Kasi, Mr. Speaker, nakakadala. Halimbawa, itong mga nangyayari sa bangko, mga ATM nila, magbabayad ka kung magta-transact ka. Later on po, tingin n'yo po ba walang added expenses ang taong-bayan aside from iyong talagang payments lang nila? Kasi baka

merong gano'n, 'di ba, iyong mga payment provider natin manghingi ng service fee na two pesos or tataas iyan hanggang kung magkano ang gusto nila. Katulad niyan, doon sa mga ibang ginagamit na mga apps, may mga bayad din doon. So, paano po natin ma-ensure iyong ating mga kababayan na walang added payment sa kanila ito? Maipo-provide po ba ito ng batas?

REP. GARCIA (J.). Yes, thank you. Maraming salamat po ulit doon sa napakahalagang katanungan, Mr. Spaker.

Totoo po na bahagi naman ng mga service providers na ito, siyempre kinakailangan din po nila magkaroon ng income. Para maging sustainable ang kanilang mga negosyo, meron ho silang kani-kanilang mga fees na tsina-charge, mula sa mga convenience fee or transaction fee hanggang sa mga merchant discount rates, pareho ho noong mga ginagawa kunyari sa credit card. Pero ang kagandahan po, Mr. Speaker, dahil lumalawak at dumadami na ho iyong iba't ibang mga serbisyo na nai-offer, so ngayon, nandiyan ho iyong mga e-money companies, nandiyan ho iyong mga bangko. Sa ngayon ho, Mr. Speaker, ang EMIs natin, ito pong mga e-money companies, umaabot na ho sa 30. So, 30 na ho iyong mga providers ng e-money, so ang ibig sabihin ho nito, very healthy iyong competition. Kaya ginagawa ho nila iyon lahat para, number one, maging accessible sa ating mga consumers ito pong kanilang mga apps at saka mga pamamaraan para magamit ito, makatulong sa kanilang mga transaksyon. Pangalawa, naglalaman din po sila, Mr. Speaker, sa pababaan ng rate or minsan nga, karaniwan, lalo na sa mas mahihirap ho nating mga kababayan ay libre ibinibigay itong mga iba't ibang pamamaraan ng pag-transact. Example na lang, Mr. Speaker, ang paggamit kunyari ng isang — hindi ko na lang babanggitin, 'no, kung sino pong provider — pero iyong paggamit noong app, kung dati-rati ay nag-cha-charge kasi gumagamit iyan ng data, 'no, so kahit papaano mayroon pong nagagamit na data, ngayon po ang ibang mga provider ay wini-waive na iyong kanilang mga data fee para tuwing ginagamit mo iyong app para magbayad ka o kaya magpadala ka

ng pera kung kanino ay wala ho silang fees na babayaran pagdating ho sa data usage.

Then bukod ho diyan, sa mga kababayan natin, 'no, kunyari, example na lamang sa mga TODA, iyong atin pong mga tricycle driver, iyong atin pong mga tindera sa palengke, wala hong tsina-charge na merchant discount rate sa mga maliit po nating negosyante kasi alam ho natin, maliit lang ho o maliitan lang po iyong transaksyon na nangyayari and kung magpapatong pa ho tayo ng additional fees ay hindi ho natin mapro-promote ito pong digital payment at lalo hong hindi dadami ang gagamit nito. So, ganoon po ang nangyari, Mr. Speaker, Congresswoman Castro. Ganoon po ang nangyayari ngayon, na bumababa ho iyong mga rates at the same time, umaabot pa nga sa libre dahil nga ang objective din ng lahat ay maging bahagi na ng ating pamumuhay itong digital payments, maging safe, maging mas mabilis, at magkaroon po ng dagdag na oportunidad para po sa lahat, lalo na sa ating mga negosyante, na mas lumawak pa iyong kakayahan nila makipag-transact kahit kanino kasi nga hindi na kinakailangan face-to-face at online, through sa mga apps lang ay nagkakaroon na ng mga transaction. So doon ho tayo papunta, iyon ho iyong main objective. Kaya tingin ko, kung ang katanungan ay, in the future ba, baka maging burden ito sa ating mga kababayan, tingin ko habang tumatagal po iyong panahon, lalong dumadami iyong mga providers, lalong dumadami iyong gumagamit, nagkakaroon po ng economies of scale kaya lalo pong bababa o kung hindi nga tuluyan na malibre ito, lalo na sa mga kababayan po natin na mas nangangailangan po. So, hindi po ako naniniwala na magiging burden po ito, Mr. Speaker, Congresswoman Castro.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Yes, Mr. Speaker. Siguro magkaroon din siguro tayo ng provision dito o regulation ano, para magkaroon din tayo ng check or monitoring dito sa mga apps or mga provider na i-a-access po o gagamitin noong ating mga NGAs. At alam ko po na isa rin itong pamamaraan para ma-curb din siguro iyong corruption. Tama po ba ako? Kasi siyempre kapag cash, cash iyan, mga ano, hindi ba. So, tingin ninyo po ba — last

na ito, last na last na—tingin ninyo po ba, paano ba ma-ke-curb ang corruption dito sa pamamaraan na ito?

REP. GARCIA (J.). Actually, Mr. Speaker, sa pag-aaral ko, ano, ito pong digital payments ay isa sa itunulak ng bansang India to help pagdating sa corruption and, in fact, even increase revenues. Dahil sa digital payments, iyon nga, wala kang maitatago, lahat po iyan ay dumadaan sa mga sistema, sa mga computers, so dahil po doon, mas na-track po nila ang lahat ng mga tax payments kung tama ho iyong dinedeclare. Tapos siyempre kapag transparent, kapag malinaw kung ano iyong numero, magkano ba iyong nabenta, magkano iyong kinakailangang bayarang tax, kung malinaw na malinaw po iyan, wala na raw hong paraan para magkaroon po ng mga hindi kanais-nais na mga transaksyon. So, naniniwala ho ako na makakatulong po ito.

Panghuli na lang, nabanggit ninyo ho kanina, 'no, iyong kung ano iyong paraan para hindi na maging burden ito sa ating mga kababayan. Malaking role ho, tama ho kayo, malaking role, Mr. Speaker, ang ginagampanan ng BSP. Kasi iyong isa ho sa digital payment system na ginagamit po ng marami ho sa atin, marami ng ating mga kababayan, ay iyong kung narinig na po natin iyong InstaPay at saka PESONet, 'di ba. Iyan ho iyong ginagamit ngayon para sa mga bank-to-bank transfer. Iyan po, kung hindi ako nagkakamali, ay pagmamay-ari ng Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas. Sila po iyong gumawa ng sistema at pinapagamit po nila sa mga bangko. So, dahil ho sa COVID pandemic, dahil po mayroon ho tayong problema ngayon, simula ho last year hanggang ngayon ay libre ho, walang fees na tsina-charge or na-waive ang fees ng PESONet at saka ng InstaPay. So, in fact, ang sinasuggest ko po dito, Mr. Speaker, ay bukod sa mga payment service providers natin, malaki ang role ng BSP para lalo pang mapababa ang mga iba't ibang fees na maaaring bayaran ng ating mga kababayan in the future, lalo na sila po ang may hawak ngayon ng InstaPay at saka ng PESONet na ginagamit po sa napakaraming mga interbank transaction.

Kasama na rin po sa mga transaction, kasama itong mga digital payments or e-money. So, may paraan ho. Tama po kayo, may paraan tayo para talagang ma-assure na hindi ho mahihirapan iyong ating mga kababayan.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). So, with that assurance, Mr. Speaker, Ginoong Sponsor, iyon na lang po ang aking interpellation at salamat po sa pagpapaliwanag at pagbibigay ng linaw doon sa ilang mga katanungan. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARCIA (J.). Thank you, Congresswoman France.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, there being no other Member who wishes to interpellate the Sponsor, I move that we close the period of sponsorship and debate.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; now, we close the period of sponsorship and debate.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we open the period of amendments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; we will now open the period of amendments.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we open the period of committee amendments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; we will now open the period of committee amendments.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, there being no Committee amendments, I move that we proceed to the individual amendments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none;

let us now proceed to the period of individual amendments.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Hon. Stella Quimbo of Marikina for her individual amendments.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Representative Quimbo is now recognized.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Go ahead. Please proceed.

INDIVIDUAL AMENDMENTS

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, I would like to propose amendments to House Bill No. 7425.

On page 3, lines 23 to 25, insert the phrase OR CONSUMES after the word "resides" and delete the phrase "in the Philippines and who acquires" after the same term "resides." Said paragraph shall now read as follows: "For this purpose, the term buyer refers to any person who resides OR CONSUMES taxable digital services in the Philippines from a digital service provider, either for personal consumption or for trade or business purposes."

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). What does the Sponsor say?

REP. GARCIA (J.). We accept, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Majority Leader.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we approve the amendments proposed and as accepted by the Sponsor.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, ...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*)

REP. QUIMBO. ... for my second ...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Hearing none, the motion is approved.

Yes, Honorable Quimbo is now recognized.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, on page 8, line 7, amend Section 109(h) of the National Internal Revenue Code by deleting "XXX" after (h) and by inserting the following subsection: EDUCATIONAL SERVICES INCLUDING ONLINE COURSES AND WEBINARS RENDERED BY PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS DULY ACCREDITED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (DepEd), THE COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION (CHED), THE TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (TESDA), AND THOSE RENDERED BY GOVERNMENT EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). What does the Sponsor say?

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. GARCIA (J.). Mr. Speaker, may I move for a one-minute suspension of the session.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). The session is suspended.

It was 3:55 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:58 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). The session is resumed.

Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Joet Garcia has the floor.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Honorable Garcia is now recognized.

REP. GARCIA (J.). Yes. Mr. Speaker, I believe the proposed amendments are for a different bill, but we may want to hear from Congresswoman Stella a withdrawal of the proposed individual amendments.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, I apologize, there has been some miscommunication. I was proposing amendments for House Bill No. 7425, which is the digital tax, the proposed digital tax. So, I respectfully withdraw the amendments proposed earlier, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I also move to withdraw the motion to approve the proposed amendments, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Any objection? (*Silence*) Hearing none, the motion is carried.

Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, there being no other individual amendments, I move that we close the period of amendments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the period of individual amendments is now closed.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I move for the approval on Second Reading of House Bill No. 8992.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

VIVA VOCE VOTING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). There is a motion for the approval on Second Reading of House Bill No. 8992. Those who are in favor, please say *Aye*.

SEVERAL MEMBERS. *Aye*.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.).

Those who are against, please say *Nay*. (*Silence*)

APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 8992 ON SECOND READING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). The *ayes* have it; the motion is approved.

House Bill No. 8992 is now approved on Second Reading.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. BOLILIA. I move to suspend the session for a few seconds.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). The session is suspended.

It was 4:00 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 4:00 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). The session is resumed.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 8999 ON SECOND READING

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we consider on Second Reading House Bill No. 8999, contained in Committee Report No. 866, and that the Secretary General be directed to read the title of the Bill.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Secretary General, please read the title.*

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 8999, entitled: "AN ACT INSTITUTING THE MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR."

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Majority Leader.

* Copies of the bill were distributed to the members earlier. Section 53, Rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives provides that "[a] bill or joint resolution on Second Reading shall be read in full unless copies thereof have been distributed to the Members."

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Rep. Angelina “Helen” Tan, the Chairperson of the Committee on Health, to sponsor House Bill No. 8999.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Hon. Angelina Tan is now recognized.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF
REP. TAN (A.D.L.)

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Maraming salamat po, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to present Committee Report No. 866 on House Bill No. 8999, entitled: “AN ACT INSTITUTING THE MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.”

Just to cite the objective of this Bill, primarily it is to organize a group of trained and equipped medical and health-related personnel for rapid mobilization during national or local public health emergencies which require manpower support to reinforce and strengthen the existing capabilities of the national agencies and local government units. Some of the key provisions of this Bill are: it establishes a medical reserve corps under the Department of Health composed of persons who are licensed physicians, medical students who have completed their four years of medical course, graduates of medicine, registered nurses and licensed allied health professionals who may be called upon to assist the national government, its agencies and instrumentalities, and local government units in the discharge of their functions in addressing the medical needs of the public.

It also mandates the DOH to regularly publish an annual report of the accomplishments, status of the operations, number and demographic distribution of the medical reserve corps; assess the readiness for mobilization and details of each mobilization for the year concerned; and promulgate the specific mechanisms by which the deployment is efficiently implemented, including the organization of the corps to be deployed, their territorial assignments, how deployment orders are communicated to each member of

the corps to which mobilization centers they will report to. It also grants the President of the Philippines the power to mobilize the medical reserve corps nationwide in case of a declaration of a state of war, state of lawless violence, and state of calamity; and enlists the Armed Forces of the Philippines to provide expertise in the organization of the MRC for efficient and effective and swift deployment, provide training to recruits in disaster and emergency response, and complement the MRC logistics and manpower for large-scale operations in times of disasters and other public health emergencies; and establishes mobilization centers in every province, city, as needed, based on the number and geographic distribution of the corps. That is all, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that the Hon. Carlos Zarate of the BAYAN MUNA Party-List be recognized for his interpellation.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Honorable Zarate is now recognized.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the good Sponsor entertain a few clarificatory questions on the Bill under consideration?

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Yes, Mr. Speaker, I will gladly accept the interpellation of Honorable Zarate.

REP. ZARATE. Maraming salamat po. Magandang hapon po sa ating Sponsor.

Gaya nga ng nabanggit ng ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, ang tinutuntungan ng panukalang ito na creation of a Medical Reserve Corps ay ang sinasabing – lalong-lalo na sa panahon ng pandemya at mga emergencies, especially na nararanasan natin ngayon, at gustong dalhin dito sa Medical Reserve Corps na ito – gaya ng nabanggit kanina, iyong mga doktor, licensed physicians, iyong mga medical students, nurses and licensed allied professionals. Kahit

na noong nasa lebel ng Komite pa naman ito ay ni-raise ko na rin ang usapin na ito, Mr. Chair – Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor. Ang akin lang talagang nakita kaagad dito, especially, dideretso na po ako doon sa usapin ng Section 4, ang sinasabi dito, na ang proposed Medical Reserve Corps shall be created under the Health Emergency Management Bureau but its organizational structure and manning shall be set up with a paramilitary structure. Ano po ba ang ibig sabihin nito, kagalang-galang na Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, noong sinasabi natin na ang kaniyang structure ay paramilitary?

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Thank you so much for your question, Honorable Zarate.

Mr. Speaker, ang ibig sabihin lang po nito ay kinukuha natin iyong current set-up and expertise ng ating AFP pagdating sa pagresponde doon sa public health emergencies and disasters.

REP. ZARATE. So, gaya ng nabanggit ninyo, expertise on disaster and emergencies. Sa ibang ahensiya po ba ay walang ganitong expertise or experience para po mapaghalawan ng pag-aaral o maging modelo ng itatayo na Medical Reserve Corps, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Actually, Mr. Speaker, Honorable Zarate, mayroon din naman po, katulad noong ating NDRRMO. Subalit nakita naman natin na sa tuwing may darating na public health emergencies or disasters ay palaging nasa forefront natin ay ang ating military at kinikilala natin iyong kanilang kakayanan, skills and expertise pagdating sa pagtugon dito. And I just want to cite, in the Committee Report, nakalagay naman doon that, line five: “The DOH shall develop an effective and efficient MRC organization and structure that is responsive to national and local disasters and other public health emergencies, under such rules and regulations as the Secretary of Health may prescribe.” Ito iyong nai-raise po ng ating Kagalang-galang na Zarate during the Committee hearing, at his concern on the paramilitary setup or structure na binabanggit niya kanina.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker. As you know, nire-raise natin iyong concern na iyan dahil po sa mga konteksto ng ating bansa ngayon, that the mere mention of “paramilitary” evokes experiences, especially in the rural areas, of widespread human rights violations by paramilitary forces. And if that will become the model of the structure that will be set up, so, iyon po kaagad ang pumapasok sa isipan ng ating mga kababayan. How come this supposed Medical Reserve Corps, na ang kaniyang layunin ay supposedly magserbisyo sa ating mamamayan, ay ganoon ang kaniyang magiging modelo, iyong paramilitary model, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

Now, dito rin po sa Panukalang Batas na ito, sinasabi rito na the deployment of the Medical Reserve Corps is not only limited during times of calamity, national emergencies, health emergencies, but it may include the deployment of the members of the medical corps during situations of war and lawless violence. Tama po ba iyon, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. And since this is a corps that will be called upon by the President later on, ang ibig po bang sabihin dito, if there is a state of war or there is lawless violence, ang mga miyembro ng medical corps na ito will be mandated and forced to be deployed in areas where there is war or there is lawless violence, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Tama po iyon, Mr. Speaker, pero gusto lang po nating linawin na ang pagtugon po ng ating pool of trained health personnel na Medical Reserve Corps ay patungkol lamang doon sa pagtugon sa pangangailangan na pangkalusugan. So, tama po iyon, nakasaad po sa Section 8, Deployment Order: “The President of the Philippines, upon recommendation of the DOH, may order nationwide mobilization of the MRC to complement the AFP Medical Corps in case of a declaration of a state of war, state of lawless violence, and state of calamity.” So, ang pangunahin pong tatawagin ay iyong

existing natin na AFP Medical Corps at kung kinakailangan pa po ng augmentation o tulong ay doon po tatawagin iyong ating MRC, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker. Again, dugtong ko doon sa tanong ko, when the President mobilizes the MRC, so ito pong miyembro ng reserve corps, ipapadala sila sa war zone. My question, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, puwede po bang mag-refuse ang isang member ng medical corps to be deployed to a war zone or to an area where there is lawless violence, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Puwede naman, Mr. Speaker, Honorable Zarate, subalit nakasaad po doon na should a health worker enlisted in the MRC refuse to be deployed, ay mayroon po lamang tayo doong kaukulang penalty na ibinibigay na kailangan niyang bayadan iyong expenses incurred during the training. So, iyon po ang ating inilagay na penalty dito sa panukala na ito.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you for that answer, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker. But the way I understand it, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, the membership in the medical corps is, in fact, on a voluntary basis. Tama po ba iyon, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Come again. Could you repeat that, Mr. Speaker?

REP. ZARATE. Ang pagiging miyembro po ng MRC or Medical Reserve Corps ay boluntaryo po. Tama po ba iyon, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Yes, Mr. Speaker, Honorable Zarate. Ito po ay boluntaryo na pagpapalista.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat po. At dahil ito ay boluntaryo, puwede hong sa mga panapanahon, ang miyembro ng medical corps talaga ay mag-refuse for probably valid reasons dahil gusto niyang huwag mapadeploy to a war zone or to an area where

there is lawless violence or kahit na sa area na tinamaan ng kalamidad. Hindi po ba posible iyong ganoon, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, at bakit kailangang i-penalize siya sa pamamagitan ng pagbabayad ng cost of training, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Sapagkat as I have mentioned earlier, iyong objective po ng ating panukala na ito, na sana ay tutugon base doon din sa experience natin with this pandemic, na mag-o-augment siya doon sa pool of healthcare workers that we have right now ay bagaman boluntaryo, Mr. Speaker, ay gusto rin nating bigyan naman ng teeth o sana mas maging matibay ang pagpapatupad nitong panukala na ito sakaling maging isang batas. So, napaka – actually, mababaw po iyong penalty na inilagay natin, iyong reimbursement ng expenses na gagastusin sa kanilang training. Initially, medyo mabigat iyong mga proposals ng ibang authors, but the Committee agreed on just imposing this penalty. I think ito iyong pagbibigay lang natin ng tibay na sana hindi ma-defeat iyong purpose natin on creating this MRC.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker. Sa kasalukuyang setup po ng Department of Health, we already have a Health Emergency Bureau, and, in fact, one of the general functions of such bureau is to act as the DOH's coordinating unit and operation center for all health emergencies and disasters, as well as incidents with the potential of becoming an emergency, and to coordinate the mobilization and sharing of resources. Under that same setup, it also provides the communication linkages among the DOH Central Office and other concerned agencies, including the hospitals in the regions during emergencies, disasters.

Now, one of its divisions is the Response, Recovery and Rehabilitation Center that mobilizes resources of technical experts, health response teams and tangible logistics needed locally and internationally. Also, it develops and capacitates human resources of the regional offices, its operational centers and local government units in responding to emergencies and disasters, among others.

Now, in line with this and also under Republic Act No. 2382, it even empowers the Secretary of Health to authorize medical students to render services in times of epidemic or national emergencies. So, such a power is already present and lodged with the Secretary of Health even without yet the creation of this Medical Reserve Corps. And additionally, as it is now, even under the structure of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, they already have their own medical corps. That is why it begs the question, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, if there are already existing mechanisms, why is there a need for this Medical Reserve Corps during a state of war or even during a state of lawlessness or even in times of calamity?

So, I will go now to my specific question by laying that premise, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker. What really is the difference between this Medical Reserve Corps with the current setup of the Department of Health when there is already such a structure, itong Health Emergency Bureau, under the DOH currently? Ano ba talaga ang pagkakaiba nila that would warrant still the creation of this structure na patterned after the military or paramilitary, however you may call it, but again, that function is already present under the current DOH setup, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Actually, ito pong MRC, you will recruit, and included po iyong mga nasa private sectors natin. Ngayon po, doon sa Health Emergency Management Bureau, kung napansin po natin, na binasa po natin, actually, mandated na iyong Secretary of Health natin to call on nurses or other healthcare workers in times of public health emergencies. But napansin po natin na ito ay hindi nabigyan o hindi nagagamit ng Secretary of Health upang makapag-create ng pool of healthcare workers, kung kaya't minabuti po natin na mag-propose ng specific na panukala na tatalakay mismo dito sa Medical Reserve Corps.

I think iyong pagbibigay natin ng direksyon, through this Bill, on how to enlist, ano ang kinakailangang gawin at

siya ay regularly magkakaroon ng trainings, ay naiiba doon sa existing na istruktura na mayroon sila ngayon. Dahil nga first time na dumating tayo doon sa pandemic ay isa ito doon sa natutunan natin which I, also as an author of this Bill, believe na kailangan natin na ihanda iyong training, hindi at times of need lamang saka natin sila tatawagin. So ang pagkakaiba is that magkakaroon ng recruitment, enlistment, nandiyan ang mga pangalan nila and magkakaroon ng continuous na training so that in times of public health emergencies or disasters ay ready ang nandoon sa MRC to respond.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

So ang lumalabas pala rito, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, we need to create a Medical Reserve Corps para sa usapin ng pag-train ng ating mga healthcare workers or professionals that can be mobilized during times of emergencies. Tama po ba iyong pagkakuha ko, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Tama po, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. So, if that is the case, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, the current setup of the Department of Health, with its Health Emergency Management Bureau, can already suffice at kailangan lang siguro na i-capacitate iyong kanilang training para matugunan iyong mga pangangailangan sa panahon ng may kalamidad or emergencies at hindi na kailangan pa ng bagong istruktura, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Well, Mr. Speaker, this Representation believes that kailangan din nating gabayan iyong Health Emergency Management Bureau, HEMB, as their reference on implementing that specific mandate that you mentioned earlier. So, ako pa rin ay naniniwala na kapag gumawa tayo at sinabi natin, "Okay, we are mandating you to create this MRC and capacitate them, and have continuous training provided for them to be ready for deployment in times of emergency," naniniwala ako, Sir, na mas makaka-respond

tayo readily when a pandemic or an outbreak sets in or comes in.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

One appreciation na nakita ko rito with the current setup, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, ang kasalukuyan kasing setup ng Health Emergency Management Bureau ng DOH ay ang mga health professionals will be mobilized through voluntary enlistment during times of health emergencies only. Pero dito ho, ang pagkakaiba nitong sa ating bagong panukalang batas ngayon, maliban doon sa kalamidad, health emergencies, e ang mga magiging miyembro ng Medical Reserve Corps ay puwede rin silang ma-deploy actually during times of, kagaya noong nabanggit ko kanina, during a state of war and lawless violence. So, is that a correct appreciation, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, ang pagkakaiba ng current setup and the setup being proposed under this Bill in consideration?

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Yes, Mr. Speaker. I think, Mr. Speaker, ay importante na ma-recognize natin, the importance of having this Bill is that iyong current setup natin, the workforce that we have, wala pong enough tayo, kung kaya ino-open natin na even those who are retired already and not in active practice, na tawagin through this MRC. So, I think we need a structure, a good structure for deployment in times of a pandemic or a public health emergency.

REP. ZARATE. Okay, thank you, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

At least, that is very clear now to this Representation, that one of the objectives of this Bill is actually really for the government to make use of the services of private physicians, medical students and allied or health organizations for military purposes or during a state of war or during lawless violence. Because as it is now, the Health Emergency Management Bureau as well as the NDRRMC already serve the purpose of responding during disasters and emergencies but not really during a war and state of lawlessness.

Now, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, another appreciation that, after reading through the Bill, I got is that the objective of organizing a medical corps, reserve corps is because of the realization that, indeed, as mentioned earlier by the good Sponsor, we lack health professionals or health workers to address the health needs of our people, especially during these emergencies that you mentioned. Is that a correct appreciation, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Yes. That is why in Section 9 of the Bill in consideration, we are mandating the creation of mobilization centers in every province for the MRC. In Section 10, also of the same Bill, we are mandating the DOH to procure and maintain mobilization stocks for the MRC. In Section 17, we provide appropriations for other budget requirements. So, along that line, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, if the realization of the Committee—if it is the realization of the Committee as well as the good Sponsor that the real problem here is the lack of health workers to address the health needs of our people, why then wala ho tayong o hindi natin itinutulak, halimbawa, na gawing regular, dagdagan ang mga healthcare professionals na ipapasok sa iba't ibang ahensiya ng ating pamahalaan, especially with the DOH? Alam natin na ang mga health units natin sa iba't ibang antas ay kulang, kulang ang ating mga health professionals.

So, parang ang lumalabas dito, nakakatipid ang pamahalaan dahil sa halip na tugunan niya ang problema ng kakulangan ng ating mga public health professionals, it will just organize a medical reserve corps with voluntary members and spend for some training. But again, to this Representation, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, hindi nito tinutugunan ang tunay na problema ng ating healthcare system na kulang ang kaniyang personnel. May we get a reaction, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hindi naman po sa hindi itinutulak na magkaroon ng karagdagan na manggagawa pagdating doon sa aspeto ng pagtugon sa problema ng kalusugan. Definitely, kasama po ako doon sa adbokasiya na ma-fill up-an iyong mga kinakailangan. Ang pagkakaiba lang po dito sa Medical Reserve Corps, as I mentioned kanina nga po, iyong sino-sino ba iyong pupuwede na makasama dito at sinabi natin dito, doon sa pool of trained responders ay hindi lang iyong mga nandoon sa edad na pupuwedeng magtrabaho sa gobyerno kundi retired also and unlicensed, the graduates of allied health professionals. So, mayroon tayong licensed allied health professionals and mayroon ding hindi licensed na pupuwedeng i-train. So, mayroong limitations on hiring. Mayroon tayong nakikita na even though available, for example po, ang nurses natin, mayroon po tayong mga nurses na pangangailangan sa lahat ng mga hospitals or at all levels of healthcare, but kailangan natin ng—at iyong mga unlicensed natin, limited iyong opportunities nila in the government or in private institutions and naniniwala tayo, kailangan talaga natin ng reserve. Itong mga hindi qualified and napapasok at this time and those who are in the private sector ay puwedeng makapag-enlist. So, hindi lang siya sa government kasi, those who are employed in the government can also be a member or can be enlisted in the MRC. So, iyon siguro, Sir, iyong pagkakaiba nito, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Maraming salamat, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker. Tama po ang ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor, sa katunayan, ang sponsoring Committee ay maraming mga panukalang batas na naipasa rin para matugunan ang kakulangan ng ating mga healthcare professionals.

Ang gusto ko lang pong puntuhan, sa halip na—dahil dito ho sa ating Panukalang Batas, nabanggit ko na ito kanina, some funds will really be diverted for purposes na sa tingin ko ay natutugunan na sa kasalukuyang mga setup ng Department of Health. Kailangan nating magdagdag o mag-allocate uli ng pondo rito, halimbawa nga doon sa pag-setup ng mga mobilization centers, na minamandato rito na every province should

create a mobilization center. This will require appropriation again from the government just to house MRC members. And in Section 10, funds will again be diverted for mobilization stock that will be allocated or set aside for the MRC and, finally, in Section 17, we have to set up a Medical Reserve Corps Fund. This will add another layer. In fact, baka ang isa nga sa pinapangambahan natin, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, this will again add to another layer in our bureaucracy, especially now that we are in a very deep crisis aggravated by this COVID-19 pandemic, and some experts are saying that this will not be the first nor the last pandemic that we will possibly experience. So, iyong very limited resources po natin na puwedeng gamitin just to strengthen the current programs that we have now will be diverted again because we want to create a new agency or a new layer in our bureaucracy. So, iyon po ang isa sa ating agam-agam dito sa Panukalang Batas na ito, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, and may we get a reaction or a reply from the Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, nauunawaan po natin iyong apprehensions ng ating kagalang-galang na Honorable Zarate na another fund will be allocated to operationalize this MRC. But puwede naman, Sir, like, for example, in mobilization centers, hindi naman sinasabi na magpagawa, but it depends on their provincial government; they can just designate an existing multipurpose hall. When it comes to the mobilization of stock, we just have to harmonize the existing stocks that we have and put in one place, and magkaroon ng proper deployment. I do not want to see it na mayroon pong duplication and diversion of funding but actually, we can use the existing fund here because mayroon naman po tayo, like for example, in this pandemic that we are experiencing right now, when we say “mobilization stock,” now that we are experiencing this, pagdating ng panahon, kung kinakailangan, mayroon na tayo na pondo na magagamit at hindi masasayang, so ready tayo.

I think kailangan lang din bantayan siguro, Mr. Speaker, ng Kongreso iyong funding

requirement to implement this, but I do not want to see nga this na magkakaroon ng another fund needed. Kasi for example, sa training, we do have an existing training na puwedeng i-incorporate natin doon, with these existing trainings, iyong mga skills training na kinakailangan ng ating Medical Reserve Corps. So, yes, kailangang bantayan po iyong tamang paggamit doon sa pondo, but I do not think there will be additional burden to the government to fund this Bill.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

Incidentally, will the good Sponsor state for the record, saan po ba natin kukunin ang pondo to fund this program, from the appropriation of the DOH or will this be financed by funds coming from the local government units, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Mme. Speaker, on Section 18, Appropriations, ang nakalagay po dito ay that the fund will be under the department or the DOH Program, so under the GAA po.

REP. ZARATE. Okay. So, this will not be a function that will be devolved to the local government units. Is that a good appreciation, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). No, Sir.

REP. ZARATE. Okay, thank you.

Naitanong ko po iyan dahil alam naman po natin, by 2022, sa full implementation ng Mandanas Ruling, ay napakalaking pondo na o ang malaking bahagi ng buwis ay mapupunta na sa local government units. Nakikita po ba ng ating good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, ang implikasyon nito in terms of funding as far as the current Bill in consideration is concerned?

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Definitely, Sir, Mr. Speaker, nakikita po natin. In any of the proposed bills in the Committee on Health, tinitingnan po natin ang impact noong Mandanas-Garcia Ruling, especially doon po sa pag-implementa ng mga programa ng Department of Health.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat po doon sa katugunan, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

Bilang panghuli po, gusto ko lang mag-manifest na sa tingin ng Kinatawang ito, there are already existing mechanisms with the present setup that we have with the Department of Health doon sa usapin ng, halimbawa, pagtugon sa mga kalamidad at maging sa emergencies that may arise. Sa tingin po ng Kinatawang ito, ang kakulangan ay ang pag-rationalize ng mga programa at mga istruktura na already existing na. Hindi kailangang palitan ito o gumawa tayo ng panibagong layer of bureaucracy na matingkad iyong kaniyang o sa istruktura pa lamang, matingkad na sinusunod nito ang militaristang istruktura at ito ay gagamitin, hindi lamang— gaya ng nabanggit kanina, ang magiging volunteers dito sa Medical Reserve Corps na ito, sila ay ipapadala maging doon sa mga war zones or even in areas where there is lawless violence in the future. On the other hand, malinaw na nakita rin natin dito na sa kalakhan, problema talaga sa ating sistema ng pangkalusugan ay kung paano ba natin i-strengthen especially our public health system, ang kakulangan ng mga personnel at ang kakulangan ng suporta para sa ating mga healthcare professionals na nasa ating public healthcare system. Hindi tugon, sa tingin ng Kinatawang ito, ang pag-create ng isang istruktura na hindi naman nirerespondehan ang malalim na problema ng ating public healthcare system.

So, iyong lang po ang aking mga katanungan at paglilinaw sa ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor. We thank the good Sponsor for entertaining the questions and for the answers in clarification of some of the provisions of this Bill in consideration.

Thank you, good Sponsor, and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Maraming salamat po, Mr. Speaker, sa ating kagalang-galang na Honorable Zarate sa kaniyang paglinaw, at iginagalang po natin ang kaniyang pananaw at posisyon dito sa ating panukala. Maraming salamat, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Thank you. Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, there being no other Member who wishes to interpellate the Sponsor, I move that we terminate the period of sponsorship and debate.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; we now terminate the period of sponsorship and debate.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we open the period of amendments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the period of amendments is now open.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we open the period of Committee amendments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the period of Committee amendments is now open.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, there being no Committee amendments, I move that we proceed with the individual amendments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; we now proceed with the period of individual amendments.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, there being no individual amendments, I move that we terminate the period of individual amendments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the period of individual amendments is now terminated.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, there being no other Committee or individual amendments, I move that we terminate the period of amendments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the period of amendments is now terminated.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I move for the approval on Second Reading of House Bill No. 8999.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

VIVA VOCE VOTING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). There is a motion to approve House Bill No. 8999. Those who are in favor, please say *Aye*.

SEVERAL MEMBERS. *Aye*.

APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 8999 ON SECOND READING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Those who are against, please say *Nay*. (*Silence*) The *ayes* have it; House Bill No. 8999 is now approved on Second Reading.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 9007...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Majority Leader.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 9007 ON SECOND READING

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we consider on Second Reading House Bill No. 9007, contained in Committee Report No. 873, and that the Secretary General be directed to read the title of the House Bill.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Secretary General, please read the title.*

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 9007, entitled: "AN ACT

* Copies of the bill were distributed to the members earlier. Section 53, Rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives provides that "[a] bill or joint resolution on Second Reading shall be read in full unless copies thereof have been distributed to the Members."

REGULATING THE MANUFACTURE, USE, SALE, PACKAGING, DISTRIBUTION, ADVERTISEMENT AND PROMOTION OF ELECTRONIC NICOTINE AND NON-NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND HEATED TOBACCO PRODUCTS.”

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Cong. Wes Gatchalian.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Deputy Speaker Wes Gatchalian is now recognized.

REP. GATCHALIAN. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May we ask the Secretary General if they are in receipt of my PowerPoint presentation?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Teves, A.). Yes, Deputy Speaker.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF
REP. GATCHALIAN

REP. GATCHALIAN. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon to all my colleagues, both physically and those in Zoom right now.

Being the Deputy Speaker for Trade and Industry, it is my honor to sponsor House Bill No. 9007, otherwise known as the “ACT REGULATING THE MANUFACTURE, USE, SALE, PACKAGING, DISTRIBUTION, ADVERTISEMENT AND PROMOTION OF ELECTRONIC NICOTINE AND NON-NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND HEATED TOBACCO PRODUCTS.”

Mr. Speaker, the regulation of ENDS, HTPs, and other similar products is not new. It can be traced as far back as the Tobacco Regulation Act, which was passed in 2003. The Tobacco Regulation Act is an omnibus law regulating smoking in public places, tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship, and sales restrictions, among others. And while the Tobacco Regulation Act was passed even before HTPs were introduced into the Philippine market, some argue that the definition of “tobacco products” is broad enough to include HTPs.

In 2012, the Fifteenth Congress passed Republic Act No. 10351 or the Excise Tax Reform Law, which took effect on January 2013. It played a major role in regulating tobacco products. The law corrected a long-standing weakness in the alcohol and tobacco excise tax system and increased the excise taxes on these products to reduce demand. The following year, the Graphic Health Warnings Law, which regulates the packaging and labelling of tobacco products, was passed. It is argued that this law, together with the Tobacco Regulation Act, are sufficient to govern the regulation of HTPs. In the same year, Mr. Speaker, 2014, the use of ENDS gained national significance, prompting the DOH to issue Administrative Order No. 2014-0008 or the Rules and Regulations on ENDS. This was the first regulation issued by a government agency specifically regulating ENDS.

In 2017, the President issued Executive Order No. 26, series of 2017, which principally prohibits smoking within enclosed public places and public conveyances. In addition, EO No. 26 laid down the standards for designed smoking areas and provided the penalties for violations of the order. It can be noted that there was yet no specific prohibition on ENDS when EO No. 26 was issued back in 2017. On May 30, 2018, House Resolution No. 125 was approved by the Seventeenth Congress. The Resolution urged the Department of Health to promote harm-reduction measures as part of its national tobacco control strategy, particularly the use of electronic cigarettes as an alternative for smokers.

In June of 2019, the DOH issued another Administrative Order, AO No. 2019-0007 or the Revised Rules and Regulations on ENDS/ENNDS. The DOH issued the order to provide an updated policies on ENDS/ENNDS which shall serve as a guide to all individuals, enterprises and businesses which seek to manufacture, distribute, import, export, sell, offer for sale, and/or use of these products. In July 2019, Republic Act No. 11346 was signed into law, which raised tobacco excise tax rates and imposed taxes on heated tobacco and vapor products, which took effect on January 1, 2020. Less than a month later, Mr.

Speaker, this Congress passed on Third and final Reading House Bill No. 1026, seeking to impose even higher taxes on HTPs, vapor products, nicotine salt, conventional free-base or classic nicotine and other similar products. This Bill has since been passed into law as Republic Act No. 11467 and is seen to generate P16.3 billion in 2020 and a total of P108 billion over the next five years.

On October 1, 2019, Mr. Speaker, the RTC of Pasig issued a Writ of Preliminary Injunction enjoining the DOH from implementing Administrative Order No. 2019-0007 and exercising jurisdiction over e-cigarettes. Because of the injunction, there is a gap in the regulation of ENDS, whereby the industry is again left to their own devices.

At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Teves (A.) relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Bernadette "BH" Herrera-Dy.

On November 19, 2019, President Duterte proclaimed that he will ban the use and the importation of e-cigarettes. This prompted the PNP to issue a memorandum the following day ordering the enforcement of the President's pronouncements and the arrest of all violators. The Department of Justice supported the President's pronouncement, stating that "vaping is covered by the existing ban on public smoking if the same uses any tobacco derivatives."

The foregoing are the current major laws and regulations governing ENDS and HTPs. These multisectoral measures were issued because of scientific research which state that the consumption of any of these products—cigarettes, ENDS, HTPs—is harmful to human health. According to the World Health Organization, smoking cigarettes is the single greatest preventable cause of death in the world today. It kills more than eight million people every year and unfortunately, around 80 percent of the 1.1 billion smokers in the world live in low and middle-income countries like the Philippines.

Mme. Speaker, based on the latest survey conducted by the Department of Health and the Philippine Statistics Authority, of the 108 million Filipinos, there are around 15.9

million Filipino smokers or 14.7 percent of the population. Of these smokers, 12 million or 76 percent are interested or plan to quit smoking tobacco. According to the Philippine E-Cigarette Industry Association or the PECIA, this is where ENDS or HTPs can play an important role. They allegedly provide a less harmful choice for those who wish to quit smoking regular tobacco. This is supported by data from the European Commission which found that 61 percent of those who start using e-cigarettes do it to stop smoking.

Whether or not this is true, the ENDS and HTP industry, which has been around for more than a decade, has grown to become a multimillion-peso industry. It has 800,000 users, representing less than 1 percent of the Philippine population. It should be noted, Mme. Speaker, that the growth of the ENDS and HTP market is not limited to the Philippines. It is a worldwide trend. Data from Euromonitor International shows that the global market size for ENDS and HTP products are steadily growing. In 2011, the global market size for vapor products was estimated at less than \$2 billion. By 2016, the market has grown to around \$12.3 billion. This represents a growth of almost 818 percent in six years. By 2019, Euromonitor projected the global market to have grown to over \$26 billion, representing a growth of over 1,700 percent in nine years.

Based on the World Health Organization's data, vapor products still represent a small market compared to other forms of tobacco products, which includes cigarettes, cigars, cigarillos, smoking tobacco, and smokeless tobacco. But by 2021, Euromonitor estimates that vapor products will be more valuable than all other tobacco products except cigarettes, with the global value of \$34 billion. Though the market is still small compared to cigarette products, which has a market value of \$683.4 billion, what is clear is that the popularity of vapor products is steadily growing. The growth of the ENDS and HTP market has also benefited the Philippines' trade and industry. According to the PECIA, there are now over 879 vaping stores employing at least 2,637 employees. In addition, the Philippine industry for vapor products also contributes

to our export market because they are known to manufacture and export these products abroad. However, because of a number of issues that have recently gained media attention both in the Philippines and abroad, the use of ENDS and HTPs is now a national concern. So much so that the President recently issued a directive banning the importation and use of ENDS and HTPs in public spaces. The Committee on Trade and Industry respects the directive of the President and sees this as an opportunity for the Philippines to finally regulate this innovative device.

According to the World Trade Organization, at least 72 countries regulate ENDS, while 33 ban the sale of ENDS. However, despite being banned, data show that ENDS are still known to be available in 14 out of the 33 countries through unregulated markets. The other 88 countries have no specific law or regulations on ENDS yet. Based on the World Health Organization's data, of the 72 countries which regulate ENDS, 41 regulate it as consumer products while 30 countries regulate it as a medicinal product.

House Bill No. 9007, Mme. Speaker, is our attempt at regulating this product. The Committees on Health and Trade and Industry acknowledge that there are risks associated with these products. Nevertheless, initial studies are showing that these risks are either the same or much less than conventional cigarettes, which are currently widely available nationwide. Thus, ENDS and HTPs will be available for sale in the Philippines, but they will be strictly regulated. For example, they shall not be available to minors just like conventional cigarettes. Online sales of these products will be allowed; however, their distribution shall also be limited to persons above the age of 18 years old. Finally, Mme. Speaker, these products will be under the supervision and control of the Department of Trade and Industry and the FDA to ensure that the health of the Filipino is protected.

In view of the foregoing, Mme. Speaker, and being the Deputy Speaker for Trade and Industry, I am seeking your support for the immediate passage of this Bill. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Majority Leader.

REP. COLLANTES. Mme. Speaker, I wish to recognize Cong. Alfred Garbin of the AKO BICOL Party-List for his sponsorship speech.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Rep. Alfredo Garbin is hereby recognized.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF REP. GARBIN

REP. GARBIN. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Mme. Speaker, my dear colleagues, it is the pleasure of this Representation to co-sponsor House Bill No. 9007, especially in honor of our departed colleague, my fellow AKO Bicol Representative, Rodel Batocabe. Five years ago, Congressman Batocabe encouraged me to support his advocacy on tobacco harm reduction by filing House Bill No. 330 or the Vaporized Nicotine Product Regulation Act of 2016. He was such a staunch advocate of tobacco harm reduction and he supported risk-proportionate regulation of this novel tobacco and nicotine products. And I am happy, Mme. Speaker, that tobacco harm reduction is now reflected in the Declaration of Policy of House Bill No. 9007. I am sure Cong. Rodel Batocabe is smiling in heaven that this is now reflected in this Bill.

So, what is tobacco harm reduction, Mr. Speaker or Mme. Speaker and why is this important? In 1962, the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) published a report that would spark a global campaign against the harms of smoking titled, "Smoking and Health of Summary of Report of the Royal College of Physicians of London on Smoking and Relations to Cancer and Other Diseases." This later inspired another landmark report in the United States, published in 1964, titled "Smoking and Health: Report of the Advisory Committee to the Surgeon General of the Public Health Service." Forty-five years later, the Royal College of Physicians would publish in 2007 another radical report, this time advocating tobacco harm reduction, titled, "Harm Reduction and Nicotine Addiction:

Helping People Who Can't Quit," the prefatory page read:

The Royal College of Physicians first called the radical policies to reduce the prevalence of smoking in 1962. Several policies we recommended then have since become established international practice. However, those measures, then and now, do not address the problems of smokers who cannot quit. The majority of the 150 million deaths from smoking expected worldwide in the next 20 years will occur in people who are smoking today. These people need help.

In this report, we make the case for harm-reduction strategies to protect smokers. We demonstrate that smokers smoke predominantly for nicotine, that nicotine itself is not especially hazardous and that if nicotine could be provided in a form that is acceptable and effective as a cigarette substitute, millions of lives could be saved. Hence, in 2016, the Royal College of Physicians strengthened its position supporting the harm-reduction approach to tobacco control when it published its now well-cited report titled, "Nicotine Without Smoke: Tobacco Harm Reduction." The Royal College of Physicians Report discussed the public health opportunities of vaping or e-cigarettes. On the subject of relative risk based on the smoke and vapor toxicology, the RCP stated: "Although it is not possible to precisely quantify the long-term risks associated with e-cigarettes, the available data suggest that they are unlikely to exceed 5 percent of those associated with smoked tobacco products, and may well be substantially lower than this figure."

London is not alone in embracing this view of nicotine and harm reduction. Former US FDA Commissioner Dr. Scott Gottlieb himself announced in one of his speeches that nicotine is not directly responsible for the cancer, lung

disease and heart disease that kill hundreds of thousands of Americans each year. It is the other chemical compounds in tobacco and in the smoke created by setting tobacco on fire that directly and primarily cause the illness and death, not the nicotine. This scientific view has now been embedded in the USFDA's Strategic Policy Roadmap.

In addition, the US National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine or NASEM also published a report supporting the findings of a number of scientific papers that e-cigarettes are likely to be far less harmful than combustible tobacco cigarettes. The governments of Canada and New Zealand have now also recognized the potential benefit smokers can gain when switching to vaping. Their decision to adopt such policies is anchored on decades of research on the subject of nicotine, e-cigarettes, tobacco and harm reduction.

In conclusion, Mme. Speaker, we would like to end by citing again the Royal College of Physicians 2007 Report:

Harm reduction is a fundamental component of many aspects of medicine and, indeed, everyday life, yet for some reason, effective harm-reduction principles have not been applied to tobacco smoking. This report makes the case for radical reform of the way that nicotine products are regulated and used in society. The ideas we present are controversial and challenge many current and entrenched views in medicine and public health. They also have the potential to save millions of lives. They deserve serious consideration.

Indeed, Mme. Speaker, this Bill deserves our serious consideration and our support. I hope our colleagues will support the immediate passage of this measure.

Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Majority Leader.

REP. COLLANTES. Mme. Speaker, we

would like to recognize Cong. Sharon Garin to deliver her sponsorship speech.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). The Honorable Garin is hereby recognized.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF REP. GARIN (S.)

REP. GARIN (S.). Good afternoon, Mme. Speaker and dear colleagues.

It is the pleasure of this Representation to present for consideration House Bill No. 9007 or AN ACT REGULATING THE MANUFACTURE, USE, SALE, PACKAGING, DISTRIBUTION, ADVERTISEMENT AND PROMOTION OF ELECTRONIC NICOTINE AND NON-NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND HEATED TOBACCO PRODUCTS.

First of all, I would like to congratulate the then Chairman of the Committee on Trade and Industry, Deputy Speaker Wes Gatchalian, for his patience with all the members but finally, it passed through his Committee with a lot of heartache and happiness. But I am happy to report that this measure is coauthored by 154 of our colleagues. This Bill was approved with an overwhelming 102 affirmative votes, with only 12 negative votes and 2 abstentions after extensive discussions of the Joint Committees of Trade and Industry, and Health.

In passing this Bill, we aim to achieve three objectives. First, although the country is already experiencing a proliferation of sales in the use of HTPs and vaping products among Filipino consumers, we do not have clear and effective law and regulation, including product standards, that should govern these products. Thus, through the passage of this Bill, we will fill this gap in regulation. The second is to address the unintended and potential adverse consequences of the use of these products. Thus we have included in this Bill mechanisms on controlling safety risks and preventing youth uptake of all tobacco and nicotine products. Finally, by recognizing the principle of harm reduction, we envision that this Bill will contribute in the protection of public health, not only for the non-smokers but also for the current adult smokers.

I have attended religiously the public hearings, including six technical working groups in the Joint Committee meetings held, where we invited experts and scientists and listened to other stakeholders—numerous stakeholders. We listened to the experts. We debated with the scientists. We have received and read all evidence submitted to us.

One very important lesson we learned from the Committee's public hearings and the TWGs is that not all nicotine products are the same. This novel and emerging nicotine and tobacco products are substantially different—probably less harmful and better than smoking cigarettes and, therefore, should be regulated differently and proportionately. In fact, there are at least 32 independent local, international renowned organizations that agreed that vaping is far better than smoking. Unfortunately, it remains the case that as of 2020, 85 countries like the Philippines have no specific laws yet or regulations regarding nicotine vaping products. Note that 75 countries already have laws regulating the sale of vaping products, meaning, they have allowed the use and sale of these products. There is a minority of countries, around 36, that have banned these products but this is down from 39 in 2018, and the latest country to reverse its policy from a ban to regulation is Norway. But Mme. Speaker, we also listened to the concerns of our public health advocates, especially in the issues of youth uptake. Thus, under H.B. No. 9007, there are provisions on (a) minimum age sales and purchase, (b) tamper-resistant and child-resistant design, and (c) proof of age verification. There are also provisions on product communication restrictions, restrictions on vapor products and HTP promotions, ban on sponsorships. There are, moreover, provisions on public place use, standard for designated vaping areas and huge penalties for erring companies. Finally, there is also a provision for strict standards for manufacturing vaping products that the industries should comply with or else face penalties.

Lastly, Mme. Speaker, we recognize that the entry of alternative products, such as vapor products and HTPs, in the market raises the need for regulation, primarily in the interest of public welfare. On top of public health concerns,

regulation is needed to balance factors such as revenue generation, trade and commerce, job creation, protection of minors and non-smokers, public safety against substandard or malfunctioning products, interest of tobacco farmers, interest of the industry, and interest of all stakeholders who stand to be affected by the introduction of said category.

This Bill, when passed into law, will provide for a holistic, regulatory framework for vapor products and HTPs that take into consideration and balance the interests of the general public along with the stakeholders most interested in their use and sale. Mme. Speaker, we earnestly hope for the support of the honorable Members of this august Body for the immediate passage of this measure because we earnestly hope for your support to regulate this product before it is too late. This House Bill No. 9007 will protect our children, will protect the smokers, the non-smokers and, likely, public health. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, and good afternoon to everyone.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Majority Leader.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION
OF H.B. NO. 9007

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we suspend the consideration of House Bill No. 9007.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) Hearing none, the consideration of House Bill No. 9007 is hereby suspended.

APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 8842
ON THIRD READING

REP. BOLILA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we approve on Third Reading House Bill No. 8842 and direct the Secretary General to read the title of the measure, and call the roll for nominal voting.

I so move.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

Thereupon, the Secretary General read the title of the measure, printed copies of which were distributed to the Members on March 11, 2021, pursuant to Section 58, Rule X of the House Rules.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 8842, entitled: "AN ACT RENAMING THE CAGAYAN DE ORO CONVENTION CENTER LOCATED AT BARANGAY INDAHAG, CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY AS AQUILINO Q. PIMENTEL, JR. INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTER."

The Chair directed the Secretary General to call the roll for nominal voting. The result of the voting on Third Reading on the aforesaid measure is reflected in Journal No. 19, dated March 22, 2021.*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). With 231 affirmative votes, no negative vote and no abstention, House Bill No. 8842 is approved on Third Reading.
Majority Leader.

APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 8882
ON THIRD READING

REP. COLLANTES. Mme. Speaker, I move that we approve on Third Reading House Bill No. 8882 and direct the Secretary General to read the title of the measure, and call the roll for nominal voting.

I so move.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

Thereupon, the Secretary General read the title of the measure, printed copies of which were distributed to the Members on March 11, 2021, pursuant to Section 58, Rule X of the House Rules.

* See ANNEX (printed separately)

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 8882, entitled: "AN ACT REVISING THE CHARTER OF THE CITY OF BAGUIO."

The Chair directed the Secretary General to call the roll for nominal voting. The result of the voting on Third Reading on the aforesaid measure is reflected in Journal No. 19, dated March 22, 2021.*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). With 231 affirmative votes, no negative vote and no abstention, House Bill No. 8882 is approved on Third Reading.

Majority Leader.

REP. COLLANTES. Mme. Speaker, I move that we authorize Deputy Speaker and Deputy Majority Leader Juan Pablo "Rimpy" Bondoc to act on measures, on inquiries in aid of legislation, for their referral to the appropriate committees.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) Hearing none, Deputy Speaker and Deputy Majority Leader Rimpy Bondoc is hereby authorized to do so.

Majority Leader.

ELECTION OF REP. PADIERNOS TO THE COMMITTEE ON SUFFRAGE AND ELECTORAL REFORMS

REP. COLLANTES. Mme. Speaker, on behalf of the Majority, I move to nominate and elect Rep. Jose Gay Padiernos as member of the Committee on Suffrage and Electoral Reforms, vice Rep. Francisco Datol Jr.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) Hearing none, the said nomination is hereby adopted.

Majority Leader.

RATIFICATION OF CONF. COMM. RPT. ON H.B. NO. 8145 AND S.B. NO. 1877

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, we are in

receipt of the Conference Committee Report on the disagreeing provisions of House Bill No. 8145 and Senate Bill No. 1877, extending and enhancing the implementation of the Lifeline Rate by amending Republic Act No. 9136, otherwise known as the EPIRA, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). All those in favor ...

REP. BOLILIA. In accordance with our rules, I move that we ratify the said Conference Committee Report.

VIVA VOCE VOTING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). All those in favor of the ratification of the Bicam Report, please say *Aye*.

SEVERAL MEMBERS. *Aye*.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). All those against, please say *Nay*. (*Silence*) The *ayes* have it; said Bicam Report is hereby ratified.

CONCURRENCE WITH SENATE AMENDMENTS TO H.B. NO. 8632

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, we are in receipt of a message from the Senate informing the House that the Senate passed, with amendments, House Bill No. 8632, entitled: "AN ACT GRANTING PHILIPPINE CITIZENSHIP TO KAKOU ANGE FRANCK WILLIAMS KOUAME."

Mme. Speaker, we have been advised that the Committee on Justice, sponsor of the said House Bill, and the author thereof have no objections to the amendments introduced thereto by the Senate.

In accordance with our rules, I move that we concur with the Senate amendments to House Bill No. 8632.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion to concur with

* See ANNEX (printed separately)

the Senate amendments to House Bill No. 8632 is hereby approved.

Majority Leader.

CONCURRENCE WITH SENATE
AMENDMENTS TO H.B. NO. 6413

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, we are in receipt of a message from the Senate informing the House that the Senate passed with amendments House Bill No. 6413 entitled: "AN ACT DIVIDING THE PROVINCE OF MAGUINDANAO INTO TWO (2) PROVINCES, NAMELY: NORTHERN MAGUINDANAO AND SOUTHERN MAGUINDANAO."

Mme. Speaker, we have been advised that the Committee on Local Government, sponsor of the said House Bill, and the author thereof have no objections to the amendments introduced by the Senate.

In accordance with our rules, I move that we concur with the Senate amendments to House Bill No 6413.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) Hearing none, then, the motion to concur with the Senate amendments to House Bill No. 6413 is hereby approved.

Majority Leader.

CHANGE OF REFERRAL OF H. RES. NO. 1497

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move for the change of referral of House Resolution No. 1497, RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING MAYOR VICO N. SOTTO, GEORGE I. ROYECA AND THE OTHER RECIPIENTS OF "THE OUTSTANDING YOUNG MEN" (TOYM) OF THE PHILIPPINES 2020 AWARD BESTOWED BY THE JUNIOR CHAMBER INTERNATIONAL (JCI) PHILIPPINES, TOYM FOUNDATION, INC., GERRY ROXAS FOUNDATION AND PLDT HOME FIBR, from the Committee on Rules to the Committee on Youth and Sports Development.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) Hearing none, the referral is hereby adopted.

REFERRAL OF HOUSE RESOLUTIONS ON
INQUIRIES IN AID OF LEGISLATION

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, in accordance with our Rules Governing Inquiries In Aid of Legislation, I move that we refer House Resolutions Nos. 1665 and 1668 to the Special Committee on Creative Industry and Performing Arts.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) Hearing none, it is so referred to the Special Committee on Creative Industry and Performing Arts.

Majority Leader.

PRIVILEGE HOUR

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we open the Privilege Hour.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) Hearing none, the Privilege Hour is hereby opened.

Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize Rep. Aloy Lim of the Party-List MAGDALO for her privilege speech.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Rep. Aloy Lim from the ...

REP. BOLILIA. I am sorry, of the Party-List RAM.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Rep. Aloy Lim from the Party-List RAM is hereby recognized.

Please proceed, Mme. Aloy.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. LIM

REP. LIM. Mme. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, good afternoon.

Women's Month is more than just a celebration of women's talents, creativity, achievements and contributions to society.

It is more than just celebrating the strides we took to demand recognition and equality. This month is just another month of the many months we will untiringly celebrate to challenge the culture that degrades our dignity and robs us of our self-worth. Some may dismiss us as noisy bitches, others feel us as thorns in their patriarchal lives. Let us then be noisy bitches and stinging thorns that will never go away until such time that we are able to raise generations and generations of Filipinos who shun discrimination and treat women as equals.

At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Herrera-Dy relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Kristine Singson-Meehan.

There are so many issues affecting women but allow me to focus on one significant issue at hand, the economic empowerment of women. According to the Philippine Commission on Women, the rate of labor force participation of women in our country is at 48 percent while the rate for men is at 77 percent. It means that less than half of our working-age women, those aged 15 years and above, are working. In fact, according to the Global Economy, which provides business and economic data for 200 countries, from 1992 to 2019, our female labor force participation averaged at 47.81 percent, with a minimum of 42.45 percent in 2017 and a maximum of 49.52 percent in 2014. Since 1990 until today, we have been struggling to bring our working-age women into the labor force. Exclusion from the labor force increased the rate of poverty among women, decreased social mobility, and increased the dependency on husbands or other members of the family for survival and vulnerability to abuse and different forms of discrimination. According to the study of the Philippine Institute for Development Studies on gender gaps in labor participation, this problem shows that some women are forced to take “vulnerable employment, such as self-employment and family work, which is often characterized by inadequate earnings, low productivity and poor conditions that undermine workers’ fundamental rights.”

The National Economic and Development Authority in its report, “Determinants of Female Labor Force Participation in the Philippines,” provided findings that will help us in crafting adequate and corrective legislations on this matter. According to the report, the rate of labor participation of young people ages 20-24 is high and this rate is maintained for men until the age of retirement. However, the rate for women declines when they reach the age of 25 to 29, the child-bearing period. Getting married and having children are significant factors that affect the participation of women in the labor force. Married women or those in consensual union are 40 percent less likely to work and those with children three years and below are 16 percent less likely to seek employment. These indicate the stereotyping of women for domestic and reproductive roles.

Another significant finding of NEDA is the factor of conditional cash transfer or 4Ps in discouraging women to join the labor force. There is a perception among 4Ps beneficiaries that they may be disqualified from the program if they work or that having work would prevent them from complying with the conditions of the cash transfer, like regularly bringing their children to medical and health check-ups, sending their children to school and attending monthly seminars. On the other hand, education plays a huge role in women’s participation in the labor force. There is a higher rate of participation among women with college degrees than the least educated or even the college undergraduates. Based on the report, low-educated women are less likely to be employed and those who get employed are more likely to be working in private households or in the informal sector with a low salary, inadequate social protection and poor working conditions. I repeat, poverty, discrimination, abuse and dependency are just some of the problems brought about by the economic disempowerment of women.

My dear colleagues, allow me to bring your attention to one silent and neglected sector that suffers the brunt of this disempowerment: the widows. These are the widows of our low-ranked uniformed personnel, the widows of our ordinary government employees and

the widows of our daily-wage earners. They who never got the chance to be gainfully employed. They who chose to become full-time housewives. They who took care of their elderly. They, who work side-by-side their husbands in tilling the land. They, who, due to circumstances only known to them, became dependent economically on their husbands. The World Bank aptly worded them as “widows often hidden from view in their own communities” and that “the absence of data limits broader public awareness about their issue.” A widow who is economically dependent on her husband gets a double whammy – the loss of a loved one and the loss of the means to survive. Compound this with the burden of raising their children alone and providing them with the necessary education to survive when they reached maturity. She who quit working at her most promising and productive years for marriage and domestic life and suddenly loses her partner or husband will find it tremendously difficult to rejoin the labor force. It is even doubly challenging for those who never had a taste of working, more so for those who are no longer in the working-age bracket. These circumstances have forced some to accept informal and odd domestic jobs that neither give security in terms of remuneration nor protection against hazardous working conditions. There are instances among the low-income bracket of women drawn into prostitution. Others are compelled to enter into another relationship in order to have someone helping them raise the children or simply providing their daily needs. This does not work well most of the time. Some find themselves digging their grave bigger, deeper.

A Ukrainian-American writer, Victor Robinson, once said, “Widows are divided into two classes: the bereaved and the relieved.” It is a relief for those in an abusive and unhealthy relationship. However, the sigh of relief might be temporary for those facing an uncertain future of standing on their own feet after years of dependency. I believe all widows are bereaved: the bereaved who lost her loving and supportive husband or partner, and the bereaved who lost her family’s means of survival, not so much on

losing someone abusive. At this juncture, I urge my dear honorable colleagues to look into the survivor’s benefits program of the Government Service Insurance System and the Social Security System. I will file a resolution on this, specifically looking into the adequacy of burial benefits, given the rising prices of funeral services and internment places. I would also ask for a review of the pension or allowance given to the dependent’s minor children. This is to ensure that the pension or allowance not just meet their daily needs but ensures that they finish their education. Another issue that needs our attention is the discriminative policy on common law partners. I am referring to deceased members who have never been married but whose common law partner is not recognized as legitimate beneficiary. This policy should be looked into because most of the time, these common law partnerships beget children who equally need our protection.

I also take the opportunity to call on our national government agencies to craft programs and projects that will benefit or give special assistance to our widows. In line with our oversight function, I will also file a resolution requiring these agencies to furnish Congress with the list of programs that benefit them. A recognition system may also be set up for outstanding widows who, despite their multiple responsibilities, are able to contribute to nation-building. Let us all work towards increasing the rate of women joining the labor force and decreasing their economic dependency on anyone. Let our efforts gear towards raising and supporting economically empowered women. Lastly, let our laws and programs reflect our recognition of the plight of the Filipino widows. Thank you very much and a pleasant afternoon, once again.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson-Meehan). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that the privilege speech of Hon. Aloy Lim be referred to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson-Meehan). Are there any objections? (*Silence*) Hearing none, the motion is approved.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that Rep. France Castro of the Party-List ACT TEACHERS be recognized to avail of the Privilege Hour.

I so move, Mme., Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson-Meehan). The Hon. France Castro is recognized.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. CASTRO (F.L.)

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Maraming salamat, Ginang Speaker. Magandang araw po, Mme. Speaker at sa mga kapwa ko Kinatawan.

Nakakalungkot at nakakagalit po na isa na namang guro na miyembro ng Alliance of Concerned Teachers-CARAGA ang biktima ng paglabag sa karapatang pantao, sinampahan ng gawa-gawang kaso at inaresto ng PNP noong March 17, 2021. Sa ngayon, pansamantalang nakalaya si Teacher Rosanilla "Lai" Consad dahil sa bail ngunit patuloy pa rin ang red-tagging sa kaniya at kawalan ng due process. Si Teacher Lai ay matagal nang guro sa pampublikong paaralan at kasalukuyang assistant principal ng San Vicente National High School sa Butuan City at Union Secretary ng ACT Region XIII o ng CARAGA. Sinampahan siya ng gawa-gawang kasong attempted homicide ng isang sundalo o CAFGU member daw. Ngunit mula pa noong 2018, si Teacher Lai ay biktima na ng red-tagging, harassment at surveillance ng mga militar at ng pulis.

Saan hahanap ng panahon si Teacher Lai para gawin ang mga paratang laban sa kaniya lalo na po siya ay assistant principal at napakaraming inaatupag na gawain tulad ng blended learning? Napakarami pong responsibilidad ng mga guro ngayong pandemya para lang maitawid and edukasyon at makaabot sa mga kabataan ang mga modules at online learning. Nasaan po ang due process? Nasaan po ang presumption of innocence? Chalk lang po ang hawak ni Teacher Lai at ang kaniyang pagmamalasakit

sa mga kapwa guro, estudyante at ang kampanya para sa karapatan at kagalingan ng mga guro lalo na sa usapin ng sapat at nakabubuhay na sahod at magkaroon ng ligtas na balik-eskuwela. At, idagdag pa dito, Mme. Speaker, si Teacher Lai po ay mayroong inaalagaan na anak na bulag.

Habang naka-detain si Teacher Lai, nakaranas na ito ng paglabag sa kaniyang karapatang pantao: hindi siya binigyan ng immediate access sa abogado or communication sa kaniyang immediate family; pagpresenta sa kaniya sa isang presscon o media firing line; pagpublicize ng kaniyang mugshot; at mga press releases at social media posts na binabanggit siya bilang isang wanted public school assistant principal who is a communist and a member of the underground group Katipunan ng mga Gurong Makabayan o KAGUMA. Ang mga ginawang ito ng PNP ay isang porma ng mental o psychological torture.

Mme. Speaker, ayon po sa Republic Act No. 9745, sa Section 4 (b): " 'Mental/Psychological Torture' refers to acts committed by a person in authority or agent of a person in authority which are calculated to affect or confuse the mind and/or undermine a person's dignity and morale, such as: x x x (5) Preparing a prisoner for a "show trial," public display or public humiliation of a detainee or prisoner; x x x (7) Maltreating a member/s of a person's family" dahil kung saan-saan po sila pinapunta at hindi binigyan ng impormasyon at dokumento at iba pa; (10) Shame infliction; and "(11) Deliberately prohibiting the victim to communicate with any member of his/her family;"

Mme. Speaker, mayroon pong 2008 PNP Circular at 2018 PNP Human Rights Affair Advisory tungkol sa prohibition of media presentation of suspects, na mismong PNP ang lumalabag sa kanilang polisiya at patakaran. Kahit na sa Magna Carta of Public School Teachers, hindi nito pinapayagan ang publicity kung may kaso ang isang guro. Ang ginagawang ito ng mga State forces tulad ng red-tagging, profiling, pagbisita at interogasyon sa mga paaralan pati na sa bahay ng mga guro at pagpapasagawa ng mga forum laban sa lehitimong mga unyon

tulad ng ACT Region XIII ay isang porma ng pananabotahe at pangiangalam sa unyon ng mga guro o union-busting. Halos kasisimula pa lamang ng pag-uunyon ng mga guro, lalo na ng mga guro sa gobyerno, lalo na ang pampublikang guro, ngunit gusto na itong lusawin ng Estado. Ganito po ang trato sa mga guro lalo na iyong mga walang takot tulad ni Teacher Lai. Patuloy ang panggigipit at pananakot sa mga guro lalo na sa mga patuloy na naninindigan para sa sosyo-ekonomikong mga kapakanan at karapatan. Hindi na nga po tinutupad ang pangakong salary increase para sa mga guro, patuloy pa rin ang administrasyon sa pag-target sa malaking organisasyon ng mga guro tulad ng Alliance of Concerned Teachers at ang mga unyon nito.

Nananawagan po ang Kinatawang ito na dapat ibasura na ang gawa-gawang kaso kay Teacher Lai at panagutin ang mga perpetrators na lumabag sa kaniyang karapatang pantao. Dapat panagutin ng administrasyon ang liderato ng PNP-PRO 13 dahil sa malinaw na paglabag sa batas, ang psychological torture na kanilang ginagawa at direktang paglabag sa kanilang polisiya, regulasyon at human rights advisory. Ang ginagawang pandarahas ng administrasyong Duterte laban sa mga guro ay lalo lamang nagpapalakas ng ingay at panawagan para kay Teacher Lai para sa sapat na dagdag na sahod, para sa karapatang mag-uyon at para sa ligtas na balik-eskuwela. Nakakapangamba na kayang gawin ng militar at PNP ang ganitong harassment at pananakot sa isang well-respected teacher at miyembro ng komunidad. Senyales lamang ito na kayang-kayang gawin ito kahit sa sinumang tao lalo na sa mga mahihirap o walang boses at hindi kilalang personahe. Kahapon nga lang po, March 21, hinuli rin si Renalyn Tejero. Siya po ay isang human rights worker at isa sa mga paralegals na tumutulong kay Teacher Lai. Sinampahan din po siya ng gawa-gawang kaso, ginawa rin sa kaniya ang parehong public shaming at psychological torture tulad ng ginawa kay Teacher Lai. Dagdag na naman ito sa mga pag-atake laban sa mga human rights defenders.

Bilang Kinatawan ng mga guro, Mme. Speaker, asahan ninyo po na patuloy kaming

lalaban para sa karapatan at kagalingan ng mga guro at buong sektor ng edukasyon kahit pa sunod-sunod ang pasismo ng Estado. Ito ang aming panawagan: Junk trumped-up charges against Teacher Lai and Renalyn! Unionism is not terrorism! Hands-off our teachers. Maraming salamat, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson-Meehan). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that the privilege speech of Hon. France Castro be referred to the Committee on Rules.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson-Meehan). Are there any objections? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that Rep. Angelina “Helen” D.L. Tan of the Fourth District of Quezon be recognized to avail of the Privilege Hour.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson-Meehan). The Hon. Angelina Tan is recognized.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. TAN (A.D.L.)

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Maraming salamat po, Mme. Speaker. Magandang hapon po sa inyong lahat.

Today, I stand before this House of the People to call attention to the urgent need to end tuberculosis, the ancient “captain of all these men of death,” even as we grapple to survive amid the flurry of loss and devastation brought about by the present pandemic that is COVID-19.

Mme. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen of this august Chamber, mga kababayan, I have entitled this speech, “Tuberculosis in the Time of COVID-19: Why the ancient is more potent than the present pandemic.” The title partly runs along Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s novel, “Love in the Time of Cholera,” and the speech will discuss why it is critical for the government to address TB elimination alongside efforts to stop COVID-19, and why

political will is necessary to sustain the vision of a world free of tuberculosis.

Every year, we commemorate World TB Day not only to remember Robert Koch's announcement of his discovery of mycobacterium tuberculosis on March 24, 1882 but to raise public awareness about the devastating health, social and economic consequences of TB and, more importantly, to step up efforts to end the global tuberculosis epidemic. Amid the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic, I hope we do not lose sight of the fact that tuberculosis remains to be the world's deadliest infectious disease that kills more than a million lives each year and affects millions more. While many of us are aware of the number of COVID-19 cases both globally and domestically, very few realize the staggering fact that since 2000, over 30 million people have died from tuberculosis across continents and countries of the world. In fact, it is estimated that over the last 200 years, more than one billion people have died from tuberculosis, far more than from any other infectious disease.

According to the World Health Organization's Global TB Report 2020, TB is one of the top 10 causes of death worldwide and the leading cause of death from a single infectious agent. This places TB in the rank above HIV/AIDS. In 2019, an estimated 10 million people fell ill with TB while 1.4 million died, 208,000 of which are HIV-positive people. Most TB cases were in the WHO regions of Southeast Asia (44 percent), Africa (25 percent) and the Western Pacific (18 percent). Eight countries accounted for two-thirds of the global total: India (26 percent), Indonesia (8.5 percent), China (8.4 percent), Philippines (6 percent), Pakistan (5.7 percent), Nigeria (4.4 percent), Bangladesh (3.6 percent), and South Africa (3.6 percent). In the Philippines, 1 percent of the population or one million Filipinos have active TB. That is the bad news. But what is worse is that many of these Filipinos do not even know that they have tuberculosis.

Out of these one million, more or less, 26,000 Filipinos die from TB annually, which means that about 70-plus Filipinos die each day. What is anomalous about this is the fact

that tuberculosis is a highly curable disease and treatment assistance is available and accessible. And while various life-saving vaccines have already been developed and made available for COVID-19 in just less than a year, there is only one licensed vaccine against tuberculosis: the bacille Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccine. That is 140 years after mycobacterium tuberculosis was discovered, and 100 years, in July this year, after a French infant whose mother had died from the disease became the first person to receive an experimental vaccine against tuberculosis. That BCG which was developed 100 years ago is the same BCG which is still used today against TB. The sad thing is that it has been observed that if the BCG was developed today, it would probably never be used because the use of a vaccine for which nothing or little is known about how it works will not pass the current complex regulatory framework for vaccine development and licensing.

The treatment coverage rate of the Philippines for tuberculosis was only 68 percent in 2019, with 5 percent TB case fatality ratio and where 35 percent of TB patients face catastrophic total costs. The Philippines has a very low score of 30 out of 100 for tuberculosis in the 2016 Healthcare Access and Quality Index for 195 countries and territories and selected subnational locations. The country has made a strong commitment to the vision of a TB-free world where we have pledged during the UN High Level Meeting on TB to treat over two million Filipinos with TB until 2022. Because of this, the Philippines has activated the High-Level National Coordination Committee by virtue of Republic Act No. 10767, otherwise known as the "Comprehensive Tuberculosis Elimination Plan Act," which was authored by this Representation and is now recognized to be one of the most comprehensive TB legislations in the world today.

We are in the middle of scaling-up X-ray screening and rapid molecular testing with 6 to 9 percent screening target and 2 to 3 percent of the Filipino population every year until 2022 will be tested. We are also in the process of calibrating the landmark TB Law by introducing important amendments early on

in response to the country's commitments in the UN High Level Meeting on TB, and I thank every Member of this Chamber for supporting this measure that is now pending in the Senate.

COVID-19, however, is now looming to become an enormous hurdle to TB elimination efforts. Because of the pandemic, the government is hard-pressed to ensure the continuity of essential health services such as those of TB services. There are growing concerns regarding the displacement of critical health programs of the government, particularly the TB elimination program. This is quite unsettling in the face of previous estimates that up to 6.3 million more people will develop TB between now and 2025 and 1.4 million more people are expected to die as cases go undiagnosed and untreated because of the community quarantine or lockdown.

Just a few days ago, Mme. Speaker, new data from the STOP TB Partnership showed that COVID-19-related lockdowns have significantly set back the global effort to end TB by a massive 12 years. According to Dr. Lucica Ditiu, figures from every single one of the 23 high-burden TB countries for 2020 were collated and there was a dramatic drop in people diagnosed and treated for tuberculosis. The Philippines is one of these 23 high-burden TB countries in the world. This situation is a war within a war and we cannot afford to lose on both fronts where so many people all over the globe are dying and suffering. As community quarantines continue to disrupt health programs like TB elimination efforts, those who are TB-infected will continue to spread the infection. This may eventually lead to treatment failure and the emergence of drug-resistant TB, which should be a cause for grave concern.

In the face of these challenges, we need to maintain high-quality, uninterrupted TB care even as we respond to the current pandemic. But that is easier said than done as our financial resources are slowly being depleted by the massive demand for funds in controlling the spread of COVID-19. Our health system, even before the current health crisis, is already overstressed and underfunded. I cannot imagine how it is today. But we are not helpless, Mme.

Speaker, my esteemed colleagues. In 2017, members of this Chamber came together and forged a consensus to end TB in our lifetime by establishing the Philippine TB Caucus under the umbrella of the Asia Pacific TB Caucus, which is currently Co-Chaired by this Representation, and under the overall leadership of the Global TB Caucus (GTBC) where this Representation is a member of its Executive Committee. The Philippine TB Caucus had brought together various agencies of the government and the private sector, civil society organizations and TB advocates who have been working to intensify the national campaign against tuberculosis. The launching of the Philippine TB Caucus several years ago took the number of parliamentarians worldwide who have endorsed the Barcelona Declaration on TB to more than 2,000 at that time, making the Global TB Caucus one of the largest parliamentary networks in the world. The Global TB Caucus has been in the forefront of the fight against TB at the parliamentary level. Today, it has representation in over 150 countries as well as in 44 of the 48 countries on the World Health Organization list of high TB burden, high MDR-TB burden, or TB/HIV burden countries, and in 18 G20 countries.

Mme. Speaker, at this point of our collective endeavor to end TB, everyone in this House must realize that this fight is going to be a political one. Ending TB is a fight that will have to be waged across political divides, between party lines and among state actors, particularly those in parliaments who serve as powerful agents of change. As legislators, we can shape policies that will have an impact in the prevention, detection and control of TB.

I call on everyone today to keep on crafting policies, perhaps in the form of a much larger context of poverty eradication or social amelioration programs or maybe in the form of specific legislative initiatives such as introducing particular line items for TB in the annual budget. We should help sustain TB elimination efforts by engaging health authorities and others who are tasked to implement TB programs in the same manner that we should work hand in hand with the civil society organizations. We must hold

people accountable and utilize our oversight to ensure the full implementation of the TB Law. We cannot leave TB elimination efforts to the Executive branch; we need to be business unusual when it comes to eradicating TB.

As budgetary gatekeepers, we must ensure that TB programs are continuously and adequately funded. Adequate financing is a fundamental problem in our fight against TB, considering that our TB budget is not making headway even with the enactment of Republic Act No. 10767. The National TB Program's (NTP) budget for 2021 is only over P932 million, which is far less than what is actually needed to effectively fight tuberculosis. The proposal during 2016 was P1.3 billion or \$27 million. The final challenge is not only to continuously de-stigmatize TB but to de-stigmatize other infectious diseases as well. We all know that TB symptoms and that of COVID-19 are quite similar inasmuch as both are infectious diseases that primarily attack the lungs. A tuberculosis patient already stigmatized for having symptoms such as fever, cough and difficulty breathing will not only create diagnostic confusion but can experience further stigma as they may also be viewed as having COVID-19 infection. This double stigmatization may prove to be a tall barrier that could hinder more people from seeking immediate medical attention the moment they exhibit such symptoms. We need to do something about this.

Ultimately, sustaining political will to end TB—sustaining the momentum gained from the historic UN High Level Meeting on TB—is intensely critical if we are to be on target. The road to end tuberculosis is certainly paved with roadblocks and that is now even made more difficult because of the pandemic, which is why TB elimination efforts need a breakthrough. Now, more than ever, we need to intensify our efforts, walk the extra mile and persevere even more to continue this fight. The clock is ticking, but we still have time to end tuberculosis. We still have a chance to make it happen.

Maraming salamat po and magandang hapon pong muli sa inyong lahat.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson-Meehan). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that the privilege speech of the Hon. Helen Tan be referred to the Committee on Rules.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson-Meehan). Are there any objections? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved. Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize Rep. Sarah Jane Elago of the Party-List KABATAAN for her privilege speech.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson-Meehan). The Hon. Sarah Jane Elago is recognized.

You may proceed, Hon. Sarah Jane Elago.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. ELAGO

REP. ELAGO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

With the current surge in cases, with today's highest daily tally yet of 8,019 cases, and the announcement of the DOH that the new variants of COVID-19 are now in all areas of the National Capital Region, the prospects of controlling and preventing the spread of COVID-19 remain dim. This would have a far greater impact on our lives and in the future, especially among children and youth who are also suffering from a major learning crisis, and their parents, families and guardians who suffer from the multiple burdens of home schooling their children, additional expenses and insecure economic situation due to loss of jobs and livelihood that also trigger tensions and abuse at home.

The National Union of Students of the Philippines conducted a student consultation with schools all over the country to assess the distance learning which started from August to October, 2020. DepEd and CHED have implemented the distance mode of learning which comprises online and modular classes. In the Bulacan State University, students were asked to choose the type of learning approach: first, is the synchronous learning for those with good Internet connection and gadgets; second, is remote print learning for those

with no Internet connection and for those who want a self-paced study; and the third option is the asynchronous online learning for those who have a gadget but do not have a strong Internet connection, and want to self-study. This mechanism of selecting students for enrollment is also practiced in other universities.

In the Cordillera Region, other alternative methods, such as through text (SMS), have been attempted in which barangay and local government units centrally pick up student requirements; just like what they did in the Benguet State University. There is mobile enrollment or caravan conducted by the Ifugao State University, Abra State Institute of Sciences and Technology, Kalinga State University and Mountain Province State Polytechnic College, where the schools' enrollment teams physically went to their communities, or by the remote conduct of enrollment. In the same region, even in basic education, pre-enrollment online is made automatic and you have to remove yourself from the automatic list if you do not want to continue. It seems alright for DepEd to simplify the process but on one hand, it can also be prone to be used to cover up a possible drop in enrollment statistics.

Six months have passed since the implementation of distance learning, but still, the same woes are experienced by the students and teachers in terms of the lack of gadgets and poor Internet connection, the lack of and delayed delivery of modules, the implementation of guidelines without prior consultation to primary stakeholders of schools. Students and teachers experience mental and overall health deterioration due to the lack of inclusive distance learning opportunities, heavy academic workload on top of the distressing online classes. There were also reports of delayed distribution of modules and even deteriorating quality or content of the modules. There are posts circulating online on the contents of modules distributed with sexist remarks and alarming discriminatory and derogatory labeling of organizations, which are an unfortunate reflection of how distance learning can be also misused for propaganda and spreading false information.

A survey made by the Movement for Safe, Equitable, Quality, and Relevant Education (SEQuRe) with 1,395 teachers, 1,207 parents, and 620 Grades 4 to Grade 12 students as respondents gave a snippet of the distance learning experience among various stakeholders in the last school year: 70.9 percent of teacher respondents are not confident that the competencies set by the Department of Education under distance learning are actually being developed. Among teacher respondents, 4 percent of teachers said that all students were able to keep up with the lessons; 54 percent identified that a definite portion of their class was lagging behind; and 42 percent testified that an indefinite segment of the class could not keep up, suggesting dwindling student participation.

Meanwhile, 53 percent of the student-respondents were not sure if they could learn the competencies set by DepEd for their grade level under distance learning, and only seven in 10 students were confident that they could complete the school year. There was also a fluctuation in online class attendance, and about 87 percent of students raised unstable Internet connection as their main problem, and four in every 10 student-respondents have found errors in the modules that they were using. On the part of the parents and guardians, 56 percent of them reported that distance learning had cost them about P900 and below in the past month alone, while 44 percent expended more than P900, and two-thirds of teachers said that DepEd failed to adequately provide the needs of distance learning. On the matter of tuition and other school fee increases and the collection of unused fees in schools, last year, Mme. Speaker, in the midst of the pandemic and socioeconomic crisis, DepEd approved 654 out of 901 tuition hike applications in June 2020, meanwhile, CHED received 89 TOFI, or Tuition and Other Fee Increase applications but no data has been presented thus far on how many schools were approved by the Commission. For the upcoming academic year, instead of encouraging schools to defer tuition increases and cut fees this coming year, CHED issued the Interim Guidelines as to the Timeline on the Processing of Applications to

Increase Tuition and Other School Fees (TOSF) for the Academic Year 2021-2022.

Saint Louis University in Baguio had a seven-percent tuition increase for freshies law and medical students on top of the additional P1,000-1,500 fee for printed learning modules distributed to students. Holy Angel University and the Lyceum of the Philippines are also in the process of tuition hike application, and De La Salle University is in the process as well of 2.5-percent tuition increase for the next academic year. Others remained unchanged with regard to the price of their school fees while others have increased their fees due to distance learning. Other school fees continue to be charged despite the implementation of distance learning and unused school facilities. Wala pong mga naging adjustments sa mga sinisingil katulad ng Related Learning Experience Fee, ng OJT fee, ng cultural fee, gym fee, ng energy fee, dental fee at laboratory fees. Hindi rin po nagkaroon ng lahatang panig na konsultasyon na kung paano ba magtutulungan ang lahat ng stakeholders, mga learners, ang mga estudyante gayun din ang faculty at education support personnel para magtulak pa ng institutional subsidy na para sa mga eskuwelahan na ito na napakalaki din naman talaga ng naging epekto ng pandemya sa kanilang mga operations. So, kaya naman kinakailangan dito ang intervention ng gobyerno para sa pagbibigay pa rin ng education emergency relief package para sa mga apektadong stakeholders at gayun din sa mga institusyon na nangangailangan ng subsidiya.

While we continue to demand a comprehensive, effective and humane response to COVID-19 crisis, these are the youth's call: to promote our right to education, provide equal opportunities for students to continue education and ensure the safe resumption of physical classes. We cannot have a one-size fits all measure for this. Most frustratingly, due to the failure to control and prevent the spread of COVID-19, these demands are almost the same as our calls in the first months of the lockdown last year, pareho pa rin po ang mga kailangan na diinan.

1. We must fulfill the requisites for the safe and gradual reopening of classes, lalo na po doonsa mga areas na walang kasong COVID-19.

- Prioritize free and safe mass vaccination to teachers and education support personnel
- Implement regular and free mass testing
- Ensure the implementation of minimum health requirements in schools and universities
 - Conduct prior risk assessments in areas where there is limited face-to-face classes
 - Employment of health and sanitation personnel in schools

Provide enough funds for additional classrooms, sanitation rooms, canteens and other necessary school facilities

2. A demand for inclusive learning
- Provide the needs for distance learning or alternative mode of education, such as free gadgets and stable internet connectivity to students and teachers, especially in higher risk areas
 - Emphasize the quality learning that students receive rather than the imposition of heavy academic requirements and grading system

- Promote and implement academic easing in all universities and colleges

3. The promotion of accessible education
- Ensure the implementation of universal access to Quality Tertiary Education Law in our public tertiary schools

- Junk tuition and other fees hikes and stop the collection of unused school fees in distance learning

- Widen the efforts for financial support to students, teachers, and staff in education

- Ensure accessible dormitories, transportation, and other basic services for students and employees, especially towards the resumption of physical classes

4. The provision of assistance to personnel and school employees

- For them to employ more teaching and nonteaching personnel

- Provide wage subsidy for private school teachers and staff and subsidy for small private schools to continue their academic operations and meet minimum health requirements

5. And finally, to uphold democratic rights and the welfare of all education stakeholders

- Ensure genuine representation of students, parents, teaching and nonteaching personnel in committee meetings and planning with regard to the continuing education amid the pandemic

- Their needs for physical, mental, and emotional health and well-being must also be reported

This is why, Mme. Speaker, we reiterate our call for medical solutions, and scientific approach in the pandemic response. We demand transparency, justice, and accountability in the fight for the right to education and the protection of human rights at all times. Nanawagan kami na pakinggan, pakinggan ang mga panawagan ng mga estudyante at kabataan, at tiyakin na may boses sila pagdating sa kalagayan ngayong tayo ay humaharap sa patong-patong na krisis sa kalusugan, sa edukasyon. Maraming salamat, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson-Meehan). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that the privilege speech of Hon. Sarah Elago be referred to the Committee on Rules.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson-Meehan). Are there any objections? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved. Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that the honorable Deputy Speaker Bienvenido M. Abante Jr. be recognized for his privilege speech.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson-Meehan). The Hon. Bienvenido Abante is recognized.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. ABANTE

REP. ABANTE. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, Majority Leader.

Ngayon pong araw na ito, binabati ko muna kayo ng magandang hapon po sa lahat. Ang akin pong privilege speech ay binigyan ko ng pamagat na "Our Brother's Keeper." Sa palagay ko, nandiyan po iyong picture ng pastor na aking tutukuyin po ngayong hapon.

This is the second time this month that I have requested the use of this privilege, a privilege afforded to all the Members of this

Chamber, a privilege we use to speak in behalf of our constituents, in behalf of our kababayans who are voiceless and defenseless, in behalf of those who need champions and advocates who will fight for them. Mme. Speaker, Rev. Dioscoro "Jet" Tan, Jr. is one of them. He needs someone to speak on his behalf because he cannot speak, and he requires someone to fight for him because he demands justice. Ordinarily, Mme. Speaker, Pastor Jet could speak for himself, could very well articulate the importance of the rule of law, and could tell us why as leaders we are responsible for our flock. He would tell those of us privileged to stand and speak at this venue why we are our brother's keeper, and as such we are tasked to do everything within our power to look after the interests of our countrymen.

Pastor Jet could do all this, Mme. Speaker, my colleagues, but he cannot now. He cannot because in the early morning of Wednesday, in Barangay Labangbaybay, Tagapul-an, Samar, while jogging with his wife, Pastor Jet was mercilessly gunned down in front of his wife. Pastor Jet was 55 years old. According to the police report that documents this crime, and I quote: "The victim, while jogging together with his wife and upon reaching the descending and grassy portion of the barangay road, was shot by the suspect with the use of undetermined caliber of firearm, whereby hitting the different parts of his body that resulted in his instantaneous death while said suspect got away right after the incident."

Napakasakit po basahin ito, Mme. Speaker. Napakasakit basahin na may isang pastor na pinatay sa harap ng kaniyang mahal sa buhay, isang pastor na wala lang pong ibang gagawin kundi magpahayag ng kapayapaan sa lahat. If those of us over 600 kilometers away from the scene of the crime were shocked to hear this news, one cannot imagine the shock and pain and anguish felt by Pastor Jet's wife as she saw bullets tear through her husband less than six feet away from her, as she saw her husband murdered in front of her. Napakasakit din po basahin ang huling linya nitong police report, Mme. Speaker, and I quote, "Said suspect got away right after the incident." What makes this incident more painful and tragic, Mme. Speaker, my dear colleagues, is

that the murder of Pastor Jet is not an isolated incident. Again, may I say it again, not an isolated incident.

Just over a week before he was slain, Calbayog City Mayor Ronaldo Aquino was ambushed and killed. Just a month before the death of Pastor Jet, Mia Mascariñas-Green, a lawyer for the NGO Environmental Legal Assistance Center or ELAC, was ambushed while driving her three young children in Tagbilaran City, Bohol. And, earlier this month, nine activists were killed in what is now referred to as “Bloody Sunday.” My goodness! Elected officials, members of the bar, community organizers, men of the cloth—the circumstances surrounding their deaths may differ, Mme. Speaker, but they all shared a similar fate: their lives were cut short in a hail of bullets. Kaya ito po ang tanong ko sa ating lahat ngayon dito: Ganito na ba ka mura ang buhay sa ating bayan? Is this how cheap life is in our country? Uulitin ko po ang huling linya ng police report: “Said suspect got away right after the incident.” Is this what we have come to expect when our kababayans are brutally murdered in our streets?

In Genesis 4:9 of the Bible, the Lord said unto Cain, “Where is Abel, thy brother? And he said, “I know not: Am I my brother’s keeper?” That is the same question we must ask ourselves, Mme. Speaker, in the face of the brutality, mayhem and murder experienced by our countrymen. Whether we share their beliefs or disagree with them, these are our constituents being gunned down in our districts, in our country. These are crimes being committed in our midst, many of which remain unsolved. And we are even called the only Christian country in the Far East. These are crimes being committed by murderers and killers who do not value life, have zero regard for the law and have no fear of God nor man. It certainly appears that they do not fear our men in uniform or our law enforcement agencies, as these killings continue unabated, so much so that we have become desensitized to these crimes of the highest order.

Mme. Speaker, I come in here today on behalf of Pastor Jet and all those whose lives have been violently cut short to demand justice and to urge our law enforcement

officials to take action. Those responsible must be held accountable for their crimes, Mme. Speaker, because if these killers remain free and unpunished, more and more criminals will be emboldened to follow in their bloody footsteps. At some point, my dear colleagues, we must say, enough is enough. We must stand up and say that the bloodshed must end. Abogado, alkalde, aktibista, pulis, pastor—naghihintay pa ba tayo na masama ang “Congressman” sa listahan na ito? Maghihintay pa ba tayo na mabiktima ang ating kaibigan, kamag-anak o katrabaho?

We are, Mme. Speaker, our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers. We must continue to speak for those violently silenced by death, and we must continue to demand justice for all of them. They deserve no less.

Maraming, maraming salamat po, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson-Meehan). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that the privilege speech of the honorable Deputy Speaker Bienvenido Abante be referred to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson-Meehan). Are there any objections? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved. Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move to transmit to the Senate all the bills approved on Third Reading today.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson-Meehan). Are there any objections? (*Silence*) Hearing none, the motion is approved.

CONCURRENCE WITH SENATE AMENDMENTS TO H.B. NO. 7700

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, we are in receipt of a message from the Senate informing us that the Senate passed with amendments House Bill No. 7700, entitled:

“AN ACT REAPPORTIONING THE FIRST LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT OF THE CITY OF CALOOCAN INTO TWO (2) LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS.”

Mme. Speaker, we have been advised that the Committee on Local Government, Sponsor of the said House Bill and the author thereof have no objections to the amendments introduced by the Senate.

In accordance with our rules, I move that we concur with the Senate amendments to House Bill No. 7700.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson-Meehan). There is a motion to concur with the

Senate amendments to House Bill No. 7700. Are there any objections? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

Majority Leader.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we suspend the session until Thursday at 9:00 a.m. of March 25, 2021.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Singson-Meehan). The session is suspended until March 25, 2021, Thursday, at 9:00 a.m.

It was 6:31 p.m.