A RESOLUTION

STRONGLY URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (DICT) TO IMMEDIATELY ACT ON IMPROVING INTERNET SPEED AND COVERAGE IN THE COUNTRY BY PUTTING TOGETHER QUICK, ACTIONABLE MEASURES AND A DRAFT EXECUTIVE ORDER THAT CAN BE IMMEDIATELY ENDORSED TO AND SIGNED BY THE PRESIDENT TO ADDRESS THIS PRESSING CONCERN

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

WHEREAS, internet access is a basic need of modern life, and is essential for the growth of every sector of the economy;

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown just how powerful the internet can be as a lifeline to the isolated, a force for good, and a driver of change, such as:

- Providing real-time information for decision-making to fight COVID-19.
- Giving citizens the flexibility to work from home (WFH), learn online, use e-commerce platforms, directly link farmers to markets, avail themselves of telehealth services, communicate with friends and family, among other things.
- Giving government and the general public access to applications and technological solutions for mobile banking and digital payments, making social protection program transfers quick, costless, traceable and transparent;
WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the serious inadequacies of the country’s internet infrastructure and how the existing internet networks, especially those in the countryside, are unable to support work-from-home (WFH) schemes or the broad adoption of distance learning, electronic commerce, telehealth and telemedicine.

WHEREAS, a survey by the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) in 2016 shows that Northern Luzon, Palawan, Eastern and Central Visayas, and a significant part of Mindanao remain either unserved or underserved by Internet Service Providers (ISPs). Moreover, employees outside of Metro Manila grapple with slow internet connection that does not meet the requirements of their job. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) recognized the difficulty of students in using online/distance learning because of poor internet connection, while some schools and local governments decided to cancel online classes altogether because of the lack of internet connectivity in homes;

WHEREAS, Open Signal, a mobile network research firm reported that in November 2017, the Philippines ranked 74th out of 77 countries in 4G speed and that the Philippines clocked in an average download speed of just 8.24 Mbps (megabytes per second). This pales in comparison with Singapore, South Korea, and Norway, with average download speeds of 46.64 Mbps, 45.85 Mbps, and 42.03 Mbps, respectively;

WHEREAS, in a 19 March 2020 BusinessWorld report, former DICT Undersecretary Eliseo Rio, Jr. revealed that our tower density is around 6,000 subscribers per tower when the ideal is only supposed to be not more than 1,000;

WHEREAS, this situation needs to change NOW if the Philippines will succeed not only in its fight against COVID-19, but in building a digital economy that will survive and thrive in the “new normal”;

WHEREAS, even without a need for legislative action, the government, through the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), can take a number of steps to significantly improve Internet connectivity in public places, key connection points, and unserved and underserved communities,

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, to urge the DICT to procure, on an emergency basis, the services of internet service providers (ISPs) to install facilities and provide Internet services, using the appropriate type of technology for establishments, such as hospitals, quarantine/isolation

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facilities, health centers, city/municipal halls, and barangay halls, and that internet access to these facilities should be prioritized under the DICT's GovNet program;

**RESOLVED FURTHER,** to express the sense of the House of Representatives that the DICT should now expedite policy and regulatory issuances necessary to promote broadband infrastructure development, as indicated in the National Broadband Plan and the Philippine Development Plan, including but not limited to mandating tower and passive infrastructure sharing, and effecting a more transparent spectrum management framework;

**RESOLVED FURTHER,** that the House of Representatives immediately call on the DICT to review a 1998 Executive Order 467 entitled "Providing for a National Policy on the Operation and Use of International Satellite Communications in the Country" and draft a new Executive Order for a satellite policy that lowers barriers to entry and encourages more investment for a robust and expansive digital infrastructure that goes beyond the urban centers; and specifically allows non-Public Telecommunications Entities (PTEs), such as ISPs and value-added service providers, to connect directly to international satellites for broadband connectivity, especially in the unserved and underserved areas;

**RESOLVED FINALLY,** that the House of Representatives strongly urge the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) to immediately act on improving internet speed and coverage in the country by putting together quick, actionable measures and a draft executive order that can be immediately endorsed to and signed by the President to address this pressing concern.

*Adopted,*

[Signature]

REP. ALFRED VARGAS
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