Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 1689

Introduced by: Hon. Angelina "Helen" D.L. Tan, M.D.

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE USE OF SALIVA TEST FOR COVID-19, WITH THE END IN VIEW OF PROTECTING AND PROMOTING THE RIGHT TO HEALTH OF THE FILIPINOS

WHEREAS, the World Health Organization (WHO) in its Scientific Brief dated 08 April 2020 stated that "In response to the growing COVID-19 pandemic and shortages of laboratory-based molecular testing capacity and reagents, multiple diagnostic test manufacturers have developed and begun selling rapid and easy-to-use devices to facilitate testing outside of laboratory settings. These simple test kits are based either on detection of proteins from the COVID-19 virus in respiratory samples (e.g. sputum, throat swab) or detection, in blood or serum, of human antibodies generated in response to infection";[1]

WHEREAS, although the WHO applauds the efforts of test developers to innovate and respond to the needs of the population, it however, stated that "before these tests can be recommended, they must be validated in the appropriate populations and settings. Inadequate tests may miss patients with active infection or falsely categorize patients as having the disease when they do not, further hampering disease control efforts. At present, based on current evidence, WHO recommends the use of these new point-of-care immunodiagnostic tests only in research settings. They should not be used in any other setting, including for clinical decision-making, until evidence supporting use for specific indications is available";[2]

WHEREAS, the WHO currently recommends "Molecular (e.g. PCR) testing of respiratory tract samples…for the identification and laboratory confirmation of COVID-19 cases";[3]

WHEREAS, while "PCR of upper respiratory specimens is the diagnostic standard for severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 infection, saliva sampling is an easy alternative to nasal and throat swabbing" and "can improve SARS-CoV-2 diagnostic techniques";[4]

WHEREAS, the Department of Health (DOH) has clarified that "the use of saliva as an alternative specimen for RT-PCR testing among Philippine Red Cross (PRC) laboratories is not awaiting review of accuracy by the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM) and has already been approved as of 21 January 2021";[5]

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[1] World health Organization, Advice on the use of point-of-care immunodiagnostic tests for COVID-19, Scientific Brief, 8 April 2020 (https://www.who.int/news-room/commentaries/detail/advice-on-the-use-of-point-of-care-immunodiagnostic-tests-for-covid-19) Accessed on 28 March 2021
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Byrne RL, Kay GA, Kontogianni K, Aljayyoussi G, Brown L, Collins AM, et al. Saliva Alternative to Upper Respiratory Swabs for SARS-CoV-2 Diagnosis. Emerg Infect Dis. 2020;26(11):2769-2770. https://dx.doi.org/10.3201/eid2611.203283 Accessed on 28 March 2021
[5] Right Test for the Right Reason: Updates on New Testing Technologies and Protocols for COVID-19, Press Release, 3 February 2020, On the Use of Saliva as Alternative Specimen for RT-PCR Testing (https://doh.gov.ph/doh-press-release/RIGHT-TEST-FOR-THE-RIGHT-

WHEREAS, following the approval of the DOH, the PRC has started its initial rollout of saliva-based coronavirus testing on 25 January 2021;[6]

WHEREAS, the DOH has announced that "given the novel nature of this innovative specimen collection methodology and to ensure its quality and rigor, the PRC shall conduct regular review of concordance by subjecting 1 out of every 100 saliva samples to a parallel nasopharyngeal (NP) swab for RT-PCR testing, the results of which shall be submitted to the RITM";[7]

WHEREAS, the DOH has declared that "considering the potential of this less invasive specimen collection methodology for wide scale use in the country, the RITM has been also been directed to finish its ongoing validation study of saliva testing, which upon completion shall be the basis in developing relevant guidelines and protocols for the conduct of saliva specimen testing for laboratories outside of PRC";[8]

WHEREAS, pursuant to Article II, Section 15 of the 1987 Constitution that states that "the State shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them", it is of utmost importance for the House of Representatives to exercise its oversight over the validation study of the RITM;

WHEREAS, it is imperative to look into the details of validation study of saliva testing as well as the guidelines and protocols for its use along with the guidelines and protocols for the conduct of saliva testing;

WHEREAS, while studies are ongoing to clarify the effects of new COVID-19 variants on viral fitness, transmissibility, antigenicity, treatment, as well as diagnostic tests, it is vital to evaluate and assess our current diagnostic testing in order to ensure the accuracy of COVID-19 test results;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, as it is hereby resolved by the House of Representatives to direct the Committee on Health to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the use of saliva test for COVID-19, with the end in view of protecting and promoting the right to health of the Filipinos.

Adopted,

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REASON-UPDATES-ON-NEW-TESTING-TECHNOLOGIES-AND-PROTOCOLS-FOR-COVID-19) Accessed on 28 March 2021

[6] Red Cross starts COVID-19 saliva testing on January 25, 2021, Bonz Magsambol, Rappler (https://www.rappler.com/nation/philippine-red-cross-starts-covid-19-saliva-testing-january-25-2021) Accessed on 28 March 2021

[7] Right Test for the Right Reason: Updates on New Testing Technologies and Protocols for COVID-19

[8] Ibid.