WHEREAS, on June 13, 2020, development worker Elena Tijamo was reportedly abducted from her home in Brgy. Kampingganon, Bantayan Island, Cebu Province by six (6) suspected state agents. According to rights group Karapatan, Tijamo was abducted at around 11 PM by 4 men and 2 women in civilian clothes and bearing long firearms who broke into her home and took her from her family;

WHEREAS, prior to Tijamo’s abduction, her sister Violeta disclosed hearing reports from neighbors that police officers were asking if Tijamo family members were native to Bantayan island. On June 2020, individuals claiming to be from the DSWD and DILG, reportedly took photos of Elena and her family for a house-to-house survey allegedly for the Emergency Subsidy Program. The Tijamo family later found that the surveyors only visited their residence and that of their nearest neighbor;

WHEREAS, Elena Tijamo, 58 years old, was the Sustainable Agriculture program coordinator of the Farmers Development Center (FARDEC), a non-government organization (NGO) founded in 1989 by religious and lay persons, the organization provides agriculture education and legal aid to farmers in Central Visayas. Tijamo has been with FARDEC since 2005;

WHEREAS, FARDEC has been red-tagged by the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC). On November 2019, FARDEC along with 17 other NGO’s and church groups, was tagged by the Armed Forces of the Philippines as a communist front;

WHEREAS, Tijamo was missing since her abduction on June 13, 2020. Her family was able to contact her intermittently through 5-minute phone calls. Her abductors demanded that news
reports on Tijamo’s abduction be taken down;

WHEREAS, on August 30, 2021, on the International Day of the Disappeared, reports surfaced regarding Tijamo’s death. According to initial reports from rights group Karapatan-Central Visayas, Tijamo was able to contact her brother and informed him that she would be undergoing an operation at a hospital in Mandaluyong. After a few minutes, a certain “Michael” called Tijamo’s brother asking to meet up with him outside the hospital. Upon meeting, Michael reportedly informed Tijamo’s brother that Elena had passed away following an operation for goiter and that the hospital bill had already been paid;

WHEREAS, according to Karapatan-Central Visayas, Tijamo’s body was not released to her brother as her remains were registered under a different name. A man who introduced himself as a certain Neil Reyes, and claimed to be Tijamo’s nephew, brought her remains to the funeral home;

WHEREAS, on September 1, 2021, relatives of development worker Elena Tijamo confirmed that the remains were that of Elena Tijamo, after viewing the remains at St. Peter Memorial Chapel in Quezon City;

WHEREAS, according to rights group Karapatan who assisted Tijamo’s family along with the Commission on Human Rights, in a death certificate issued by an attending physician at the VRP Medical Center in Mandaluyong City, a certain Ava Perez Reyes reportedly died due to cardio pulmonary arrest and aspiration. The said death certificate was handed by a certain Michael to a sibling of Tijamo on August 30, along with Tijamo’s belongings. The sibling said Tijamo called him on August 27 to inform him that she will undergo an operation at the said hospital;

WHEREAS, the circumstances surrounding Elena Tijamo’s abduction in Cebu, disappearance, and sudden death in a hospital all the way in Quezon City, are highly questionable. A thorough and impartial probe on Tijamo’s case is urgently needed on Tijamo’s case;

WHEREAS, it is imperative for members of Congress, as representatives of our people, to defend the rights of our people and check on excesses and violations, especially in this time of crisis. It must bring perpetrators to account to put a stop to the killings and rights violations against its people. Laws and rules should serve the interest of our people, and should not be weaponized to suppress their rights and oppress them;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, that the House of Representatives, through the Committee on Human Rights, issue condemnation and conduct an investigation, in aid of legislation, on the abduction, disappearance, and death of Cebu-based development worker Elena Tijamo.
Adopted,

REP. EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT
Bayan Muna Partylist

REP. CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE
Bayan Muna Partylist

REP. FERDINAND R. GAITE
Bayan Muna Partylist

REP. ARLENE D. BROSAS
GABRIELA Women’s Party

REP. FRANCIS L. CASTRO
ACT Teachers Partylist

REP. SARAH JANE I. ELAGO
Kabataan Partylist