Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City
EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Third Regular Session
House Resolution No. 2256

Introduced by REPRESENTATIVE JOY MYRA S. TAMBUNTING

RESOLUTION
DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE HOUSE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, REGARDING THE STATUS OF GOVERNMENT’S CONTACT TRACING EFFORTS, WITH THE END IN VIEW OF ADDRESSING THE RAPID SPREAD OF THE COVID-19 VIRUS

WHEREAS, the Philippines has seen a steady increase in cases since late July 2021, due to the presence of a number of COVID-19 variants in the country. For 23 September 2021, there are 17,411 new confirmed cases, and 165,790 total active COVID-19 cases in the country. These active cases compose 6.8 percent of the total 2,434,753 confirmed COVID-19. There are also 177 recorded new deaths increasing the total death toll to 37,405;

WHEREAS, contact tracing has been a pillar of communicable disease control in public health for decades. Exhaustive contact tracing employed along with universal immunization allows for the eradication of diseases and vaccine-preventable infections;

WHEREAS, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, contact tracing has been the primary response of several Asian countries in addressing the COVID-19—leading to a significant reduction of COVID-19 cases in 2020. At present it remains to be one of the most important and effective public health interventions to break the chains of transmission of COVID-19;

WHEREAS, the Philippines’ contact tracing capacities have lagged behind other public health responses. Contact tracing czar Benjamin Magalong in March 2021, cited various challenges to improving contact tracing in the country including the lack of uniform data collection

2 Dr Rabindra Abeyasinghe, WHO Representative to the Philippines
tool among local government units, inadequate number of trained contact tracers, encoding concerns, non-utilization of contact tracing analytical tools, among others;

WHEREAS, the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases, in Resolution No. 85 issued in November 2020, officially ordered the adoption and use of the StaySafe.ph app at both the national and local level. It likewise urged private establishments and local governments using their own apps to track down contacts of COVID-19 patients to integrate their system to StaySafe;

WHEREAS, the StaySafe.ph contact tracing digital application intended to be donated to the government through a Memorandum of Agreement between its developer, Multisys Technologies Corporation, a company supported by the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company, and the Department of Health, once the former was issued its security certification by the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT);

WHEREAS, 9 months after the IATF-EID Reso. No. 85, Department of Health noted that the benefits of the StaySafe.ph application being used for contact tracing have limitations and have “almost no impact.” There are also concerns over the viability of the app in aiding contact tracing as it is unclear if the data collected from the app are integrated to the repository system of the Department of Health. It is further noted that the StaySafe app, to date remains as a digital log book instead of a contact tracing app as intended in Reso. No. 85;

WHEREAS, the Department of Interior and Local Government contradicted the statement of Health Secretary Duque III’s statement regarding the supposed lack of impact of the government’s contact tracing app, citing that the registration in the application which have continued to expand with 6.4 million people (by late August 2021) and that app has recorded 150 confirmed COVID-19 cases who tried to enter some establishments in July;

WHEREAS, as early as March 2021, this chamber has already expressed concerns over the contact tracing capabilities of the country and has adopted House Resolution No. 1536 which urges the IATF-EID to review and modify existing contact tracing systems and establish a unified national contact tracing protocol for a more effective health emergency data monitoring system.;
WHEREAS, in light of these contradicting claims, there is clearly a need to assess the viability and effectiveness of the StaySafe app as a contact tracing app. There is also a need to look into the status of the government’s contact tracing efforts so as to ensure that we are more capable of curbing COVID-19 cases in the event that new COVID-19 variants are found in the country.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, that the House of Representatives direct the appropriate House Committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, regarding the effectiveness of the StaySafe PH application and the status of the national government's contact tracing efforts with the end in view of improving the dismal response of the government to the rapid spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Adopted,

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