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BUDGET BRIEFINGS		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Appropriations	<p>Briefing on the proposed FY 2022 budget, plans, programs, and accomplishments of the Departments of National Defense (DND), Science and Technology (DOST), and Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of National Defense 	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Eric Go Yap (Party-List, ACT-CIS), listened to the presentations of the DND, DOST, and DSWD on their respective proposed FY 2022 budget, plans and programs, and major accomplishments.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair, Muntinlupa City Rep. Ruffy Biazon, sat as the presiding officer during the deliberations on the proposed budget of the DND.</p> <p>Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said that the Department of Budget and Management (DBM)-recommended budget for DND and its line agencies is P297.14 billion. This amount will be allocated to the Regular Fund, P221.61 billion (74%), and the Pension and Gratuity Fund, P75.53 billion (26%).</p> <p>In terms of budget allocation by office, the bulk of the P221.61 billion Regular Fund will go to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in the amount of P215.52 billion. The rest will go to the following DND civilian bureaus/agencies: Veterans Memorial Medical Center (VMMC), P2.16 billion; Government Arsenal (GA), P1.36 billion; Office of Civil Defense (OCD), P1.25 billion; Philippine Veterans Affairs Office (PVAO), P533.13 million; and National Defense College of the Philippines (NDCP), P106.61 million. This also includes P629.62 million allocation for the DND Proper.</p> <p>On the other hand, P64.65 billion of the Pension and Gratuity Fund is earmarked for the pension of 147,041 AFP retirees while P10.86 billion is allotted to World War II, Korean, and Vietnam war veterans whose pensions were increased from P5,000 to P20,000 per month pursuant to Republic Act 11164 (or the law increasing the monthly old-age pension of senior veterans).</p> <p>Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate (Party-List, BAYAN MUNA) questioned the DND why it had not maintained its periodic reporting on the detection and identification of intrusions in the West Philippine Sea (WPS). He noted that DND's last report on the matter was in 2017.</p> <p>Lorenzana replied that the monitoring of intrusions in WPS is currently being undertaken by the Task Force on the WPS whose reports indicate the country's posture against both air and maritime intrusions. He, however, said that while the Philippines has succeeded in driving away some vessels intruding in the WPS, some would not budge insisting on their right over the contested areas.</p> <p>Reps. Zarate and Arlene Brosas (Party-List, GABRIELA) asked the DND to explain the causes of the air mishaps involving AFP's C130 plane, which crashed in Sulu, and Black Hawk chopper, which crashed in Tarlac, resulting in the loss of lives of a number of AFP personnel.</p> <p>Lorenzana explained that both incidents were caused by confluence of circumstances, which include defective instruments</p>

<p>Continuation... Appropriations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Science and Technology 	<p>and response of pilots to situations. He said the DND will submit to the Committee a detailed report on these incidents.</p> <p>Rep. Jericho Jonas Nograles (Party-List, PBA) noticed a zero budget allocation for VMMC's capital outlay (CO) in the DND's FY 2022 budget that should fund the needed medical equipment in the VMMC. He noted that the DND proposes to fund the purchase of medical equipment through special provisions in the National Expenditure Program (NEP), particularly from a portion of the income generated by the AFP golf course. He stressed that this source of income is too small for the purchase of equipment needed by the VMMC. Rep. Nograles stressed that funds for CO for the VMMC and the PVAO are very much needed to ensure that adequate medical services are provided to the veterans especially during this pandemic.</p> <p>Agreeing with the observations of Rep. Nograles, VMMC Director Dominador Chiong stated that the VMMC's 25% share in the income of the AFP's golf course amounting to about P2 million per year is insufficient to fund the equipment it needs.</p> <p>Rep. Biazon inquired why there has been no allocation in the CO for military hospitals, like VMMC, for the current and next year's budget. DBM Director Mary Anne dela Vega explained that based on the Congress-initiated changes and amendments (CICA) and the veto message of the President in the current General Appropriations Act (RA 11518), "the DBM is constrained by the fact that all changes, whether increased allocation or otherwise, are subject to the approval by the Office of the President (OP)." Other considerations include the agency's readiness to implement the project and its absorptive capacity in the past years, she added.</p> <p>Several Members raised issues and concerns affecting their respective districts which were responded to by the officials of the AFP who were present during the meeting.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair, Rep. Peter John Calderon (7th District, Cebu), sat as presiding officer during the DOST's budget briefing.</p> <p>DOST Secretary Fortunato dela Peña stated that the DOST's approved budget for 2022 under the NEP is P24.34 billion, which is 3% lower than this year's budget of P25.19 billion. The bulk of DOST's budget will go to maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE), P18.72 billion, and the rest will go to personnel services (PS), P4.5 billion, and CO, P1.08 billion.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Deogracias Victor "DV" Savellano (1st District, Ilocos Sur), Rep. France Castro (Party-List, ACT-TEACHERS), as well as other Members of the Committee, noted the reduction in the DOST's budget and asked why this is so.</p> <p>Dela Peña explained that the 3% decrease is mainly due to a smaller budget for CO. The infrastructure program to be funded under the CO is for the improvement of the DOST's main building to adhere to the requirements under the Building Code.</p> <p>DOST Assistant Secretary Maridon Sahagun added that what was not approved for funding under the 2022 budget were the proposed fixtures inside the DOST's main building and the enhancement of the building under Phase 3. Sahagun said that Phases I and II of the building improvement project are ongoing and are almost nearing completion.</p> <p>Rep. Castro also inquired on the status of DOST's research and</p>
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<p>Continuation... Appropriations</p>		<p>development (R&D) projects, particularly those that will boost the country's fight against COVID-19, and whether there are COVID-19 vaccines being developed locally.</p> <p>DOST's Philippine Council for Health Research and Development (PCHRD) Executive Director Jaime Montoya said that there are ongoing R&D efforts and cooperation among member-countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to address infectious diseases, such as the establishment of the ASEAN-Network for Drugs, Diagnostics, Vaccines, and Traditional Medicines Innovation. He also mentioned the sero-surveillance activities being conducted among the population in Southeast Asian countries which aim to measure the levels of antibodies against a certain infection produced from the different vaccines administered.</p> <p>As to whether vaccines for COVID-19 are being developed locally, DOST Undersecretary Rowena Cristina Guevara said that the Philippines does not have the capability to do this yet. However, she said the DOST is working closely with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) in search of a vaccine originator which can be partnered with a local pharmaceutical industry willing to do the final stage of vaccine manufacturing.</p> <p>Guevarra added that the proposed law creating the Virology Institute of the Philippines (VIP), which was already passed on Third and Final Reading in the House of Representatives, will open opportunities that will allow the country to develop vaccines in the future. Nevertheless, she emphasized that the DOST has already initiated a research on viruses, such as those which can be transferred from animals to humans, with the DBM allotting P284 million for the project. (The VIP, which will be an attached agency of the DOST, is tasked to implement policies, plans and programs for the development of the virology science and technology in the country and the promotion of scientific and technological activities for both the public and private sectors.)</p> <p>On the query of Deputy Speaker Bernadette Herrera-Dy (Party-List, BAGONG HENERASYON) on developments in the clinical trial for Ivermectin as COVID-19 treatment, Montoya said that it will commence on September 15, 2021. Montoya added that the Ethics and Technical Panel of the DOST is still reviewing the methodology that will be used in the clinical trial.</p> <p>Rep. Sarah Elago (Party-List, KABATAAN) asked about the status of the utilization of funds amounting to P1.89 billion for R&D programs of state universities and colleges (SUCs). Guevara said that most of the funds, which were directly released to SUCs, have already been fully utilized. However, some SUCs have not yet fully utilized their R&D funds with some delays in the completion of their projects due to the pandemic.</p> <p>On another query of Rep. Elago relative to the possibility of conducting classes physically, Philippine Science High School System Executive Director Lilia Habacon said that for SY 2021-2022, classes are being conducted through the remote learning modality. Nevertheless, Habacon said that the school may consider limited face-to-face classes by next year depending on the directives of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF).</p> <p>Catanduanes Rep. Hector Sanchez inquired on the status of the unutilized funds amounting to P1.7 billion for DOST's scholarship program, citing the Commission on Audit (COA) 2019 Annual Audit Report.</p>
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Appropriations

- Department of Social Welfare and Development

DOST Science Education Institute Deputy Director Albert Mariño replied that P700 million was already returned to the National Treasury, with the balance of P1 billion following suit after the process of reversion is completed. He explained that the unutilized funds were on account of deferred or terminated scholarship awards due to the scholars' failure to comply with the requirements.

Rep. Sanchez likewise inquired on the steps being undertaken by the DOST to further develop and utilize the abaca fiber to contribute more to the country's economy. He also requested the DOST to conduct studies that will find solutions for the eradication of abaca diseases which decrease abaca yield.

Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development Executive Director Reynaldo Eborá said that there are many uses of abaca foremost of which is for textile manufacturing. He added that there is also an ongoing research on the use of abaca as paper bills. On the eradication of diseases in abaca plants, Eborá said that the Visayas State University is conducting a large-scale study on abaca diseases. He also mentioned that the Bicol and Catanduanes State Universities are likewise conducting researches on the matter.

Several Members of the Committee expressed their support for an increase in the budget of the DOST to enable them to carry out their mandate effectively, especially on the aspect of R&D.

The DOST and its attached agencies were requested to submit a list of their programs and projects which would require additional funding in 2022.

Committee Vice Chair, Rep. Jocelyn Sy Limkaichong (1st District, Negros Oriental), sat as the presiding officer during the budget briefing of the DSWD and its attached agencies.

DSWD Assistant Secretary for Statutory Programs Glenda Relova said that under the FY 2021 NEP, the DSWD and its attached agencies will have a budget of P191.40 billion which is 8.25% higher than the current year's budget of P176.81 billion. A huge portion of the DSWD's proposed budget will go to the DSWD Proper amounting to P189.13 billion and the rest will be distributed to its attached agencies as follows:

- National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) – P1.51 billion;
- National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) – P243.49 million;
- Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor (PCUP) – P199.49 million;
- Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council (JJWC) – P115.70 million;
- National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA) – P74.90 million;
- Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) – P72.97 million; and
- Inter-Country Adoption Board (ICAB) – P57.91 million.

According to Relova, the P189.13 billion budget of the DSWD Proper will be distributed by expense class as follows: MOOE, P179.02 billion; PS, P9.21 billion; financial expenses (FE), P388.43 million; CO, P364.20 million; and retirement and life insurance premiums (RLIP), P146.67 million.

Relova also gave a breakdown of the budget allocations for the DSWD's major programs: Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program

<p>Continuation... Appropriations</p>	<p>(4Ps), P115.67 billion; Social Pension for Indigent Senior Citizens, P23.52 billion; Protective Services for Individuals and Families in Difficult Circumstances, P18.03 billion; Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan-Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services-National Community-Driven Development Program, P8.40 billion; Sustainable Livelihood Program, P4.86 billion; and Supplemental Feeding Program, P4.16 billion.</p> <p>With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, Relova explained that the DSWD shifted its thrust towards providing assistance that would aid in the recovery of the poor and those in crisis situations from the adverse socioeconomic impact of the pandemic. She reported that the DSWD was able to disburse the amount of P99.73 billion and P90.91 billion for the first and second tranche of the Social Amelioration Program (SAP), respectively. She also said that the DSWD was able to disburse P5.13 billion out of the P6 billion budget that was allocated to the DSWD under the Bayanihan to Recover as One Act (Bayanihan 2).</p> <p>Deputy Speakers Rufus Rodriguez (2nd District, Cagayan de Oro City) and Henry Oaminal (2nd District, Misamis Occidental), and Reprs. Teodorico Haresco Jr. (2nd District, Aklan) and Lianda Bolilia (4th District, Batangas) commended the DSWD for the effective implementation of its programs aimed at improving the quality of lives of the vulnerable and disadvantaged sectors of the society especially at this time of the pandemic.</p> <p>Rep. France Castro (Party-List, ACT-TEACHERS) asked which regular programs of the DSWD had budget reductions in order to give way to new DSWD programs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. DSWD Finance and Management Service Director Wayne Belizar replied that the budget for the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation (AICS) Program and the general support fund of the DSWD were reduced to support the SAP.</p> <p>The DSWD was requested by Rep. Castro to submit a detailed report on the effects of the budget reduction to the implementation of the AICS program, the list of new programs of the DSWD in response to the pandemic, as well as a copy of the plans and programs of the NCDA.</p> <p>Rep. Arlene Brosas (Party-List, GABRIELA) inquired about COA's 2020 Audit Report on the DSWD which flagged SAP overpayments amounting to P112.9 million issued to 20,196 beneficiaries who had already received cash and other forms of aid from other government agencies. The COA noted the duplication in SAP distribution in the DSWD's central office and its field offices in Regions 1, 2, 3, 4A, 5, 6, 7 and 13.</p> <p>Belizar acknowledged the overpayment and assured the body that the DSWD would take steps to recover the overpaid amounts. He said the DSWD central office is already investigating the matter and will report to Congress its findings upon the completion of the investigation.</p> <p>Rep. Sharee Ann Tan (2nd District, Samar) also recommended to the DSWD to implement a more stringent screening of 4Ps beneficiaries. She said some beneficiaries are using the cash grants to fund their vices and house expenses when 4Ps funds should be invested in health and education of poor households, particularly of children aged 0-18 years.</p> <p>Due to lack of time, the Committee decided to hold another meeting to continue its deliberation on DSWD's FY 2022 proposed budget.</p>
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Continuation... Appropriations		Rep. Limkaichong enjoined the DSWD regional directors to directly coordinate with the Committee Members the DSWD plans and programs that will be implemented in their respective districts.
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CONFERENCE COMMITTEE MEETING				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/ DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Conference Committee	HB 8080 and SB 1907	Rep. Cabochan and Sen. Lapid	Instituting Services for Learners with Disabilities in Support of Inclusive Education Act	<p>The Conference Committee, co-chaired by Pasig City Rep. Roman Romulo, Chair of the House Committee on Basic Education and Culture, and Sen. Win Gatchalian, Chair of the Senate Committee on Basic Education, Arts, and Culture, will deliberate further on the disagreeing provisions of House Bill 8080 and Senate Bill 1907.</p> <p>Rep. Roman, Sen. Gatchalian, and Sen. Joel Villanueva said that the proposed law is a landmark piece of legislation that will give all learners with disabilities (LWD) quality education. Sen. Gatchalian further said that it will modernize the country's education system by embracing the policy of inclusivity, wherein all learners regardless of status and condition will be accorded with quality education.</p> <p>In today's meeting, the Conference Committee discussed all the disagreeing provisions of HB 8080 and SB 1907. Among the contentious issues that were extensively discussed during the meeting were: whether to adopt the phrase "least restrictive environment" or "reasonable accommodation" in describing the situation where LWDs are accorded the opportunity to be educated alongside non-disabled peers; whether or not to include private schools in the coverage of the proposed law; and whether the proposed Inclusive Learning Resource Centers (ILRCs) will be established in all cities/municipalities or in all school districts.</p> <p>Sen. Risa Hontiveros manifested that she supports the use of the term "reasonable accommodation," which the Senate contingent is pushing, as the standard in meeting the specific education requirements of learners with disability because it is more consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), to which the Philippines is a signatory. She added that it is the term more easily understood by educators, hence will make the implementation of the law more effective.</p> <p>Rep. Roman said that the House of Representatives initially proposed that one of the objectives of the measure is to establish ILRCs for inclusion of LWDs in the formal school system in the least restrictive environment. However, Rep. Roman said that the House would like to propose a new phrase – "most accommodating</p>

<p>Continuation... Conference Committee</p>				<p>environment” – to replace the phrase “least restrictive environment.” Instead of copying the terms used abroad, Rep. Roman averred that the Philippines, as a sovereign nation, can adopt terms suited to the needs of its people.</p> <p>Sen. Pia Cayetano said that by using the phrase ““most accommodating environment,” the proposed law might be construed as “overcommitting” because in reality the State has difficulty providing even the basic needs of the LWDs.</p> <p>This issue was referred to the technical panel tasked by the Conference Committee to study the proposed law.</p> <p>On the inclusion of private schools in the coverage of the proposed law as stated in the Senate version, Rep. Romulo opined that this may run counter to the Constitution.</p> <p>Section 5 (Inclusion Policy for Learners with Disabilities in Public and Private Schools) of SB 1907 provides that “No learner with disability shall be denied admission and inclusion in any public or private early or basic education school in the country to afford such learners with equitable opportunities to educational services.”</p> <p>Rep. Roman explained that in the discussion of the Constitutional Commission on Article XIV, Section 4 (1) of the Constitution, it was clarified that when the Constitution speaks of supervision and regulation of all educational institutions, it does not in any way mean control or dominion over them. Rep. Roman also said that based on the policies of the Department of Education, private schools have some leeway in the admission of students based on reasonable, fair, and equitable admission requirements.</p> <p>Article XIV, Section 4 (1) of the Constitution provides that “The State recognizes the complementary roles of public and private institutions in the educational system and shall exercise reasonable supervision and regulation of all educational institutions.”</p> <p>Rep. Christopher de Venecia (4th District, Pangasinan) expressed concern on the capacity of all private schools to provide inclusive education. He said that cases may be filed against some schools that do not have the capacity to provide education to the LWDs because of Section 5. Rep. De Venecia then suggested that a transitory period be included in the proposed law to allow the private schools to capacitate themselves first.</p> <p>Sen. Gatchalian also said that Section 14 (Progressive Realization of Inclusive Education) of the Senate bill provides a roadmap that will give the private schools enough time to capacitate themselves and transition into an inclusive learning environment.</p>
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Continuation... Conference Committee				<p>Likewise, Sen. Gatchalian explained the rationale behind Section 5. He said that it comes from the desire to reform the education system by promoting and mandating inclusive education as a state policy. However, the State will not leave it entirely to the private schools to capacitate themselves, because the proposed law provides that they can access or tap government resources to help them provide inclusive education.</p> <p>Sen. Cayetano mentioned that the Coordinating Council of Private Educational Associations of the Philippines did not object to the inclusion of private schools in the coverage of the proposed law.</p> <p>Meanwhile, on the establishment of the proposed ILRCs, the Senate version provides that the same will be established in all cities and municipalities.</p> <p>Rep. France Castro (Party-List, ACT-TEACHERS) opined that it would be much better if ILRCs will be established in all school districts in order to cater to more LWDs.</p> <p>The issues on inclusion of private sector in the coverage of the proposed law and the creation of ILRCs in districts were also referred to the technical panel for study.</p> <p>Other House Members present during the Conference Committee meeting were Reps. Manuel Cabochan III (Party-List, MAGDALO) and Ramon Guico III (5th District, Pangasinan).</p>
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COMMITTEE MEETING ON HOUSE MEASURES				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Justice jt. w/ National Defense and Security, and Public Order and Safety	Substitute Bill to HBs 2499, 3141, 3929, 4312, 5972, 7842, 9898, 9902, 9961 & 9969	Reps. Fuentebella, Almario, Vargas, Deputy Speaker Hernandez, Reps. Olivarez, Silverio, Yap (E.), Tambunting, Duterte, and Deputy Speaker Yu	Providing free legal assistance to any officer or enlisted personnel of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) on any charge arising from incidents related to the performance of official duty	<p>The Joint Committee approved the substitute bill subject to amendment. The Joint Committee is co-chaired by Rep. Vicente "Ching" Veloso III (3rd District, Leyte), Chair of the Committee on Justice; Rep. Raul "Boboy" Tupas (5th District, Iloilo), Chair of the Committee on National Defense and Security; and Rep. Narciso Bravo Jr. (1st District, Masbate), Chair of the Committee on Public Order and Safety.</p> <p>At the outset, Rep. Veloso apprised the body that the legislative measure is one of the priority agenda of President Rodrigo Duterte that the latter mentioned during his recent State of the Nation Address. Rep. Veloso likewise noted the exhaustive deliberations on the bills, starting in February 2020, which led to the crafting of the substitute bill.</p> <p>Rep. Tupas underscored the need to provide free legal assistance to the AFP and PNP personnel given their critical role in law</p>

<p>Continuation... Justice jt. w/ National Defense and Security, and Public Order and Safety</p>				<p>enforcement. He said that the proposed law will give the law enforcers the much needed help when faced with charges arising from the performance of their official duty. To ensure that the proposed law will be properly implemented, Rep. Tupas suggested the establishment of clear parameters on how to and who can avail of the free legal assistance.</p> <p>Rep. Bravo said that the hiring of additional 100 lawyers for positions in the legal service of the PNP is a positive development. However, he opined that more legal officers are needed to render adequate legal assistance to PNP personnel throughout the country who are being charged or sued because of incidents related to the performance of their official duty.</p> <p>The respective authors of House Bills 2499, 9902, and 9969 – Rep. Arnie Fuentesbella (4th District, Camarines Sur), Rep. Joy Myra Tambunting (2nd District, Parañaque City), and Deputy Speaker Divina Grace Yu (1st District, Zamboanga del Sur) – presented the merits of the proposed law. They explained that providing free legal assistance to AFP and PNP personnel will allow them to effectively carry out their duties without fear of unwarranted and baseless cases thrown their way. Likewise, the proposed law will give them the option to avail themselves of legal services from private lawyers instead of relying on government lawyers who are already burdened with many cases.</p> <p>Rep. Lorna Silverio (3rd District, Bulacan) requested that her bill, HB 7842, which has a similar subject matter to the bills under consideration, be consolidated with the substitute bill.</p> <p>Rep. Fuentesbella proposed to amend the substitute bill to include the uniformed personnel from the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, Bureau of Fire Protection, and Philippine Coast Guard among those who can avail of free legal assistance for cases filed against them in the exercise of their official duty.</p> <p>Rep. Veloso proposed the deletion of Section 5 of the substitute bill, which pertains to the disqualification from free legal assistance of any officer or enlisted personnel who is found guilty by final judgement of any offense with a penalty of more than 30 days suspension.</p> <p>The Joint Committee adopted the suggestions of Reps. Veloso, Fuentesbella, and Silverio.</p> <p>Among those who expressed support for the proposed law were representatives from the AFP, PNP, Department of Justice, Department of National Defense, and Integrated Bar of the Philippines.</p> <p>On the other hand, Rep. Arlene Brosas (Party-List, GABRIELA) objected to the proposed law,</p>
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Continuation... Justice jt. w/ National Defense and Security, and Public Order and Safety				<p>explaining that it is tantamount to giving a special privilege to uniformed personnel.</p> <p>Public Attorney's Office (PAO) lawyer Analisa Soriano expressed support for the intention of the proposed law. However, she objected to the proposal mandating the PAO to provide legal services to AFP and PNP personnel, considering that majority of the clients that PAO represents are those arrested and charged by either the AFP or the PNP, which may give rise to conflict of interest.</p> <p>Likewise, Office of the Solicitor General (OSG) Assistant Solicitor General Myrna Agno-Canuto stated that in the case of Urbano vs. Chavez, the Supreme Court ruled that OSG cannot represent a public official at any stage in a criminal case. She explained that considering that the OSG is mandated to represent the People of the Philippines in case an appeal is elevated by the accused to a higher court, representing a public official will create a conflict of interest on the part of the OSG.</p>
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TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP MEETINGS ON HOUSE MEASURES				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/ DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Government Enterprises jt. w/ Public Information (Technical Working Group)	HB 1952	Rep. Cabochan	Establishing an independent broadcast system in the country, providing funds therefor	The technical working group (TWG), chaired by Deputy Speaker Prospero Pichay Jr. (1 st District, Surigao del Sur), terminated its discussion on House Bills 1952, 8001 and 8012.
	HBs 8001 & 8012	Rep. Baronda and Deputy Speaker Pichay	Establishing the People's Broadcasting Corporation, abolishing the People's Television Network, Inc.	<p>The Secretariat will draft a substitute bill incorporating therein the suggestions of the resource persons. After which, the substitute bill will be forwarded to the mother Committee for its consideration and approval.</p> <p>In today's meeting, the TWG used HBs 8001 and 8012 as the reference bills. Among the agencies that gave their inputs to further improve the proposed law were the Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO), People's Television Network, Inc. (PTNI), Office of the Government Corporate Counsel (OGCC), and National Telecommunications Commission (NTC).</p> <p>The proposed law aims to establish an independent broadcast system that will replace the existing PTNI and provide adequate funds for its operation and modernization. The bills envision a public broadcasting company that is free from political and commercial interest; and shall provide the public accurate, truthful, and unbiased information.</p> <p>OGCC Assistant Government Corporate Counsel Jose Marie Capili said that the intent of the bills to make the proposed People's Broadcasting Corporation (PBC) an</p>

<p>Continuation... Government Enterprises jt. w/ Public Information (Technical Working Group)</p>				<p>independent broadcast system may not be achieved if the President of the Philippines will have the power to appoint the PBC's Board of Directors as proposed in Section 3 (Creation) of HBs 8001 and 8012.</p> <p>PCOO Undersecretary Kristian Ablan stressed that the independence of the PBC is in the content of its output or the programs that it will produce. Likewise, he said that although the President shall have the power to appoint the members of the PBC Board, the proposed law prescribes the qualifications that should be met by the appointees.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Pichay suggested that private sector representatives should also form part of PBC's Board of Directors to balance the membership of the Board. The members from the private sector shall be nominated by the private organizations that will be identified under the proposed law.</p> <p>People's Television Employees' Association (PTEA) Secretary Jasmine Barrios asked what assurance the proposed law can provide to ensure that the program content will not be influenced by the President. She disclosed that at present, the contents of the PTNI broadcast are based on the priorities of the President.</p> <p>Ablan said that unlike the current charter of the PTNI, the proposed law has a provision that ensures PBC's editorial independence and freedom to choose the content of its television and radio programs.</p> <p>Among the agreements made during the meeting were the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed PBC shall exist for a period of 50 years unless abolished under existing laws or by a subsequent law. • The PBC Board of Directors shall have seven members, all of whom are required to be engaged in the practice of radio and TV operations, journalism, creatives, TV and radio network engineering, broadcast industry, or TV and radio programming for at least 10 years prior to appointment. • The members of the PBC Board shall have a term of three years, renewable for another three years. • The proposed law should include a provision which will state the manner by which members of the PBC Board may be removed for cause.
<p>Transportation (Technical Working Group)</p>	<p>Draft Substitute Bill to HBs 4316 & 4462</p>	<p>Deputy Speaker Herrera-Dy and Rep. Ong (R.)</p>	<p>Enhancing the competitiveness of Philippine trade by rationalizing local shipping charges imposed by international shipping lines and institutionalizing mechanism for the</p>	<p>The technical working group (TWG), chaired by Rep. Edgar Mary Sarmiento (1st District, Samar), will deliberate further on the draft substitute bill in its next meeting.</p>

<p>Continuation... Transportation (Technical Working Group)</p>			<p>efficient movement of goods</p>	<p>At the outset, Rep. Sarmiento explained that the proposed law seeks to address the current situation wherein shipping charges in the Philippines are much higher compared with other countries and that they are being imposed outside the contract.</p> <p>According to Rep. Sarmiento, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) submitted the draft substitute bill which adopted most of the provisions of House Bills 4316 and 4462. He cited some of the new provisions in the draft substitute bill which include the creation of a Philippine Shippers Board (PSB), which shall be in charge of the mechanisms for setting the shipping charges, instead of giving this function to the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA), as proposed in HB 4462. The PSB shall formulate a National Logistics Efficiency Policy and the DTI shall serve as the secretariat of the PSB, Rep. Sarmiento added.</p> <p>Under the draft substitute bill, the PSB will be chaired by the secretary of the Department of Transportation (DOTr) with the DTI secretary as vice chairperson. The members will be composed of the secretaries of the Departments of Finance (DOF), Agriculture (DA), and Public Works and Highways (DPWH), and the heads of MARINA, Bureau of Customs, and Philippine Ports Authority (PPA).</p> <p>Rep. Ronnie Ong (Party-List, ANG PROBINSYANO), author of HB 4462, inquired on the reason for creating the PSB to undertake functions which can be assigned to an existing agency like MARINA, as originally proposed in his bill.</p> <p>DTI Assistant Secretary Mary Jean Pacheco explained that the creation of the PSB as the central policy making body on shipping charges is the holistic way of addressing the issue of exorbitant shipping charges being imposed by international shipping lines. She said the Board will be able to cover as well the logistics service providers which are not under the jurisdiction of the MARINA or the DOTr. She said the mandate of the MARINA is only focused on ensuring the integrity and safety of vessels and the implementation and enforcement of the 1978 International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, as amended, and other related international agreements or covenants. Nevertheless, she apprised the body that under the proposed law, MARINA will still serve as the implementing arm of the PSB.</p> <p>MARINA Director Maximo Bañares Jr. conveyed to the body that while MARINA is honored to be tapped as the implementing arm of the PSB, it may not be able to handle this additional function for such reasons as lack of manpower and capability. He said the primary</p>
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Continuation... Transportation (Technical Working Group)				<p>mandate of MARINA is just to ensure that vessels are safe and to guarantee the competence of seafarers.</p> <p>DOTr Assistant Secretary for Maritime Narciso Vingson Jr. concurred that regulating shipping charges is beyond the capabilities of the MARINA and the DOTr.</p> <p>Rep. Sharon Garin (Party-List, AAMBIS-OWA) recommended that a study be conducted on the possibility of creating a body similar to the PSB but integrating this within the MARINA for efficiency purposes. This will also address the concerns of stakeholders against the creation of the PSB, Rep. Garin said.</p> <p>Rep. Ong agreed with the suggestion of Rep. Garin, adding that MARINA will be better equipped to respond to the requests or complaints of stakeholders in the shipping industry as compared to the DTI, which also handles other industries in the country.</p> <p>Port Users Confederation of the Philippines, Inc. Vice President Julita Lopez and Association of International Shipping Lines, Inc. President Patrick Ronas objected to the creation of the PSB. They argued that this will only add another layer of bureaucracy, particularly in the regulation of shipping charges. They claimed that this would delay the issuance or implementation of appropriate policies to respond to issues in the shipping industry, considering that the members of the proposed PSB are secretaries of national government agencies who are also preoccupied with their own responsibilities as head of their respective agencies.</p> <p>On the other hand, expressing their support for the draft substitute bill were the DOTr, PPA, Chamber of Customs Brokers, Inc., Philippine Ship Agents Association, and Supply Chain Management Association of the Philippines.</p> <p>The resource persons were requested to submit their respective position papers for the TWG's consideration in refining the draft substitute bill.</p>
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AGENCY BRIEFING		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Health	Briefing by the Department of Health (DOH) and the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) on their proposed FY 2022 budget	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Angelina "Helen" Tan, M.D. (4th District, Quezon), listened to the briefing of the DOH and PhilHealth on their proposed FY 2022 budget.</p> <p>At the start of the meeting, Rep. Tan stated that the Committee requested the DOH and PhilHealth to present their respective proposed budgets for FY 2022 ahead of the deliberations on their proposed budget by the Committee on Appropriations so that issues</p>

Continuation...
Health

- Department of Health

- Philippine Health Insurance Corporation

relative to fund utilization will already be threshed out and addressed. She said the Committee on Health intends to help facilitate the approval of the DOH and PhilHealth budgets within the timeline set by House Speaker Lord Allan Jay Velasco (Marinduque).

According to Rep. Tan, based on the message of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte on the National Budget for FY 2022, the latter is guided by three main pillars, one of which is “building resilience amidst the pandemic.” Thus, she underscored the need to strengthen the resilience of the country’s health system along with ensuring health security and universal healthcare, consistent with the health financing policy of the World Health Organization.

Rep. Tan also informed the body that PhilHealth will also provide an update on the availment of COVID-19-related benefit packages based on its circulars.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque III said that the FY 2022 proposed budget of the DOH under the National Expenditure Program (NEP) is P242.22 billion, which is 14.28% higher than its current year’s budget amounting to P211.95 billion. He explained that the budget allocation has been increased for the following programs: Health Facilities Enhancement Program, P19.5 billion; COVID-19 Laboratory Network, P5.1 billion; and Procurement and Supply Chain Service, P1.9 billion, among others.

Out of the P242.22 billion budget, Duque reported that P157.03 billion will be allocated to the DOH Proper and the rest will be distributed to its attached agencies/corporations. According to the Health Secretary, the increase in fiscal space will enable the DOH to address the health systems gaps in the national and regional levels and help capacitate the local government units (LGUs) to not just effectively manage current and future pandemics, but also fulfill the universal healthcare (UHC) aspirations of the government. He said the major thrusts of the DOH for 2022 would be on health system resilience, COVID-19 response initiatives, UHC related programs, and the operations of its Drug Abuse Treatment and Rehabilitation Centers nationwide.

For his part, PhilHealth President and Chief Executive Officer Dante Gierran reported that the FY 2022 proposed budget of PhilHealth under the NEP is P79.99 billion. He explained that the proposed budget will be centered on the three-point action plan of PhilHealth covering digital transformation, anti-fraud measures, and good governance and financial sustainability. He said the objective of the action plan is to implement an efficient and corruption-free National Health Insurance Program (NHIP) geared towards the realization of the UHC goals.

Rep. Tan noted that the DOH’s proposed budget did not include a funding allocation for the establishment of additional molecular laboratories and procurement of equipment for said facilities. She said establishing additional molecular laboratories is crucial, especially in remote areas since access to COVID-19 testing facilities are limited in these areas.

Duque replied that an additional funding of P250 million was allocated instead to the Philippine Genome Centers in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. He explained that there is a need to also strengthen the academic and research infrastructure of the country relative to genomics especially at this time of the pandemic.

Rep. Stella Luz Quimbo (2nd District, Marikina City) asked on the status of the P311.79 million that the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) released last week to cover the payment of the Special Risk Allowances (SRAs) of about 20,000 public and private healthcare workers (HCWs) under the Bayanihan to Recover as One Act (Bayanihan 2).

<p>Continuation... Health</p>		<p>DOH Administrative Service Director Laureano Cruz disclosed that P308.18 million out of the P311.79 million was already transferred to various private hospitals and LGU health facilities and that 1,264 HCWs have so far received their SRAs.</p> <p>On the follow-up question of Rep. Quimbo if the budget for the SRA was included in the 2022 proposed budget of the DOH, Duque replied that the SRA budget was instead lodged in the Bayanihan 3 bill, which is currently pending in the Senate. He explained that the DOH initially proposed the amount of P73.99 billion for its COVID-19 response, of which P50.41 billion was for the SRA, hazard duty pay, and meals, accommodation and transportation, and life insurance of health workers, but the DBM only approved P19.68 billion.</p> <p>Rep. Quimbo expressed concern for the HCWs given that it is not yet sure if the Bayanihan 3 bill will be passed into law. She was also dismayed to learn that the budget for the acquisition of COVID-19 vaccines was placed under the unprogrammed appropriations of the DOH for 2022.</p> <p>Rep. Janette Garin (1st District, Iloilo) shared the same sentiment as unprogrammed appropriations would usually depend on the availability of excess revenue or funding.</p> <p>Duque explained that the DOH initially proposed a P104 billion budget for COVID-19 vaccines for 2022, but the amount was reduced by the DBM to P45.4 billion and was placed under the unprogrammed appropriations to cover the COVID-19 booster shots of an expected 93.80 million fully vaccinated Filipinos.</p> <p>DOH Undersecretary Mario Villaverde added that the vaccines for distribution in 2022 would be purchased through foreign loans to be secured by the national government.</p> <p>Rep. Garin suggested that the DOH consider realigning some line items in the programmed funds so that the budget for the purchase of COVID-19 vaccines for next year will be included under the programmed appropriations of the DOH.</p> <p>On the status of settling the unpaid benefit claims of public and private hospitals by PhilHealth, Gierran cited several factors causing the delay in the processing of claims such as the overwhelming number of claims being filed with their offices averaging 39,000 claims daily; inadequate manpower; and system inefficiency, among others. Nevertheless, he assured the Committee that PhilHealth is already fast-tracking the processing of claims. He also said that as soon as its Board of Directors convene, PhilHealth will issue new or modified circulars pertaining to COVID-19 benefit packages and the Temporary Suspension of Payment of Claims (TSPC) against health care providers (HCPs) which was already lifted by PhilHealth. The TSPC, through PhilHealth Circular 2021-0013, was imposed against HCPs that are subject of investigation based on credible and verifiable report by PhilHealth or other duly authorized government agencies on "apparent and probable presence of fraudulent act, unethical practices and/or abuse of authority."</p> <p>Duque, in his capacity as the Chairman of the Board, committed to tackle the issue of delayed payment of claims upon submission by PhilHealth of its management report to the Board.</p>
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