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COMMITTEE MEETINGS ON HOUSE MEASURES

COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Justice	HB 10115	Rep. Romualdo	Granting Filipino Citizenship to Mr. Zibin "Derek" Liang, with all the rights, privileges and prerogatives appurtenant thereto	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Vicente "Ching" Veloso III (3rd District, Leyte), approved House Bill 10115 and the corresponding Committee Report, subject to style.</p> <p>At the outset, Rep. Veloso noted that the applicant, Zibin "Derek" Liang, has complied with the rules of the Committee on granting Filipino citizenship and submitted the required documents for naturalization. He further stated that pursuant to the same rules, the applicant has been required to attend the meeting to answer queries that may be propounded by the Committee Members with regard to his application for naturalization.</p> <p>Camiguin Rep. Xavier Jesus Romualdo, author of HB 10115, said that his bill seeks to grant Filipino citizenship to Liang who, during his stay in the country, has established deep connection and relationship with the Philippines and its people. He added that Liang wanted to make the ultimate manifestation of his affection for the country by acquiring Philippine citizenship, and thus, become a true Filipino.</p> <p>Department of Justice (DOJ) State Counsel Alden Luna said the DOJ is still finalizing its position paper on HB 10115 and will submit the same once approved by the DOJ Secretary. Nonetheless, he acknowledged the legislative power of Congress to enact laws on naturalization and grant Filipino citizenship to deserving foreigners who have embraced the Filipino culture, as well as, those who have embodied the Filipino values of perseverance and determination.</p> <p>Representatives from the Department of Foreign Affairs-Office of Consular Affairs, Office of the Solicitor General, Bureau of Immigration, and National Bureau of Investigation have no objection to the proposed naturalization of Liang. They manifested that the name of Liang did not appear in any of their watch list or database of persons with derogatory record.</p> <p>Liang gave a brief statement of his personal circumstances and business endeavors in the country. He averred that the Philippines and its people, whom he described as "nice and</p>

Continuation... Justice				friendly,” have given him so much in terms of friendship and business. Thus, he wanted to give back to the country and the Filipino people through his humanitarian activities.
Overseas Workers Administration	HR 1897	Rep. Gonzalez (S.)	Commending the Filipino seafarers on-board MV Fleur N for exhibiting an act of heroism in rescuing 86 refugees drifting for days in the Mediterranean Sea	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Raymond Democrito Mendoza (Party-List, TUCP), approved the Committee Report on House Resolution 1897.
	HR 2009	Rep. Mendoza	Inquiry into the annual deployment cap on healthcare workers	<p>The Committee will continue its inquiry relative to HR 2009.</p> <p>Rep. Mendoza noted that the current cap on the deployment of Filipino healthcare workers (HCWs) abroad is 6,500. He said the Committee wants to know the status of its request with the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) to increase, if not totally remove, the deployment cap. He emphasized that the government should not hinder HCWs from working abroad especially if it cannot provide them better compensation to encourage them to remain in the country.</p> <p>Party-List Reps. Sharon Garin (AAMBIS-OWA) and Jericho Jonas Nograles (PBA) pointed out that the deployment cap policy may run counter to the constitutional provision on the people’s rights to travel and to employment. They added that if HCWs cannot find jobs with decent pay in the country, then they should not be barred from seeking employment elsewhere.</p> <p>IATF representative and Department of Health (DOH) Assistant Secretary Kenneth Ronquillo explained that the purpose of putting a cap on the deployment of HCWs abroad is to ensure that there will be sufficient HCWs to attend to the needs of the Filipino people during this pandemic. He apprised the body that at present, there is a shortage of around 92,000 physicians, 44,000 nurses, 19,000 medical technologists, 14,000 pharmacists, and 17,000 radiologic technicians and radiologic technologists.</p> <p>Filipino Nurses United (FNU) Vice President Leni Nolasco complained that the deployment ban on HCWs is unjustly selective given that the deployment of sea-based and other land-based overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) for foreign employment are currently being allowed by the state. She said this is unfair for nurses who wish to uplift their lives through foreign employment. She also emphasized that there are available nurses in the country who are not being hired or are being hired but are not given adequate compensation by the government.</p> <p>Reacting to the statements of Nolasco, Rep. Jesus “Bong” Suntay (4th District, Quezon</p>

Continuation... Overseas Workers Administration				<p>City) asked the DOH about the number of HCWs it has hired since the start of the pandemic.</p> <p>DOH OIC-Director for Health Human Resource Development Bureau Pretchell Tolentino replied that there are two types of programs for the hiring of HCWs for COVID-19 response. First, is the DOH Human Resource for Health (HRH) 2021 Deployment Program which deploys HCWs to various communities around the country. She said about 23,000 HCWs were hired under this program. Second, is the DOH HRH Emergency Hiring Program which seeks to augment the existing manpower of hospitals. DOH Personnel Administration Division Chief Esperanza Carating said about 16,000 HCWs were hired under this program, including 4,000 nurses with Salary Grade 15.</p> <p>On the appeal to increase the deployment cap, Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Assistant Secretary Dominique Tutay and Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) Administrator Bernard Olalia said this has been duly considered by the DOLE Technical Working Group (TWG) on Mission Critical Skills (MCS). The DOLE Secretary raised the matter during the IATF meetings, however, the majority of the IATF members still voted against increasing the deployment cap, considering the spread of the COVID-19 Delta variant and the shortage of HCWs in the country.</p> <p>The Chair and the Committee Members maintained that the deployment cap on HCWs should be increased from a range of 10,000 to 20,000 per year. The Committee shall write the IATF to formally convey its position on the matter.</p>
	HR 2198	Rep. Garin (S.)	Inquiry into the Bureau of Quarantine's contract with PisoPay for the issuance of international vaccine certificate as proof of vaccination against COVID-19	<p>The Committee will continue its inquiry relative to HR 2198.</p> <p>Rep. Garin, author of HR 2198, said the purpose of her resolution is to find out why PisoPay is charging a high fee of P370.00 for the issuance of the international certificate of vaccination (ICV) which adds to the financial burden of OFWs who are returning to their work abroad.</p> <p>PisoPay is a financial technology company that the DOH Bureau of Quarantine (BOQ) partnered with for the production of the ICV.</p> <p>According to Rep. Garin, out of the P370.00 total ICV fee, P70 goes to PisoPay as the "convenience fee." She said this amount goes way beyond the standard amount for convenience fees saying that other service providers charge a rate of only P30.00. She</p>

<p>Continuation... Overseas Workers Administration</p>			<p>also questioned PisoPay's financial capacity to be BOQ's third-party service provider, thus she requested PisoPay to submit proof of its financial capacity.</p> <p>BOQ Director Roberto Salvador Jr. attested that PisoPay has the financial capacity based on the documents submitted by the latter to the BOQ. He also explained that initially, PisoPay's service was contracted for the issuance of the ICV for yellow fever and polio vaccination with the agreed convenience fee of P50.00. When the BOQ was tasked to issue the ICV covering COVID-19 vaccination, Salvador said the BOQ at first tapped the National Printing Office for the job, but the latter was not able to give an immediate response. He said this forced the BOQ to turn to PisoPay, which asked for an additional convenience fee of P20.00, bringing the total convenience fee to P70.00. As for the P300.00 portion of the total ICV fee, Salvador said this has been the same rate that the BOQ charges for documentation since 2012.</p> <p>However, Rep. Nograles noted that the selection of PisoPay as the third-party service provider of BOQ was not in accordance with the procedure prescribed under the law promoting public-private partnership arrangements.</p> <p>Asked by Rep. Suntay on the timeline of its engagement with BOQ, PisoPay President Ariel Surca narrated that PisoPay started its dealings with BOQ in July 2020 with initial talks on innovating or digitalizing the system of the BOQ. He said after the negotiation and signing of the contract, the BOQ and PisoPay launched the online service for the ICV application (excluding COVID-19 vaccination) in October 2020.</p> <p>In reply to the query of Rep. Nograles, Surca disclosed that PisoPay's 2020 current assets amount to P10.6 million while its current liabilities amount to P11 million.</p> <p>Given the figures, Rep. Nograles contended that PisoPay is not financially capable to enter into contract with the government.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the BOQ Director clarified that the issuance of the ICV is just a temporary undertaking of the BOQ. Salvador said the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) will be implementing the VaxCertPH soon, which will replace the ICV. He said the efforts of the Department of Foreign Affairs in making the VaxCertPH acceptable to various countries is ongoing. He added that VaxCertPH is already compliant with the guidelines and technical specifications of the World Health Organization on vaccine certificates.</p>
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JOINT CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEETING		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
<p>Joint Congressional Oversight Committee on Cooperatives</p>	<p>Issues arising from the implementation of Chapter V of RA 9520, otherwise known as the Philippine Cooperative Code of 2008, specifically on the alleged lack of "preferential treatment" that should be accorded to the cooperative transport sector</p>	<p>The Joint Congressional Oversight Committee on Cooperatives (JCOCC), co-chaired by Rep. Presley de Jesus (Party-List, PHILRECA), Chair of the House Committee on Cooperatives Development, and Senate Majority Leader Juan Miguel "Migz" Zubiri, Chair of the Senate Committee on Cooperatives, will continue its discussion of issues and concerns affecting the transport cooperatives in its next meeting.</p> <p>At the start of the meeting, Senator Zubiri said that the JCOCC will focus its discussion on issues related to the implementation of Chapter V, Article 62, Subsection 9 of Republic Act 9520 or the Philippine Cooperative Code of 2008, specifically on the alleged lack of preferential treatment to transport cooperatives in terms of granting financial assistance and extending related support services as they participate in the government's Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program (PUVMP).</p> <p>Based on Article 62 (Privileges of Cooperatives) of RA 9520, cooperatives registered under this Code shall be accorded certain privileges, including those specified in Subsection 9, which states that: "A public transport service cooperative may be entitled to financing support for the acquisition and/or maintenance of land and sea transport equipment, facilities and parts through the program of the government financial institutions. It shall have the preferential right to the management and operation of public terminals and ports whether land or sea transport where the cooperative operates and on securing a franchise for active or potential routes for the public transport."</p> <p>Sen. Zubiri mentioned that during an event of the National Federation of Transport Cooperatives in Cebu last July, most of the attendees complained about the delay in the issuance of franchises by the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB), as well as the issuance of a Local Public Transport Route Plan (LPTRP) by local government units (LGUs). An LPTRP is a plan detailing the route network, mode, and required number of units per mode for delivering public land transport services.</p> <p>Sen. Zubiri said that under the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Memorandum Circular No. 2018-60,</p>

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the LPTRP is the basis for LTFRB's issuance of franchise to PUVs.

Another problem raised by transport groups, the Senator said, was the difficulty they experience in availing of loans from the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) as it requires the submission of an approved LPTRP before their loan applications can be processed and approved. Hence, he enjoined the concerned government agencies to extend all the necessary assistance to the transport cooperatives to speed up the modernization of their fleets in line with the PUVMP, pointing out that the three-year PUV consolidation process should have been done last April 2021.

Under the PUVMP, transport operators are required to form cooperatives or corporations to become eligible for financial assistance for the upgrading of their fleet, consisting of units that have low-carbon emission, and are safe and efficient.

Rep. De Jesus said that the issues raised by the transport cooperatives could have been avoided if concerned government agencies followed the "preferential treatment" provision under RA 9520. He stressed that the cooperatives sector has been steadily developing, thus the need to put in place appropriate mechanisms to allow it to attain its full potential.

LTFRB Executive Director Kristina Cassion and LTFRB Legal Division OIC-Director Atty. Zona Tamayo walked the Committee through the process for the issuance of a franchise to operate or Certificate of Public Convenience (CPC). They said that once individual PUV operators decide to consolidate their units and form a cooperative, the LTFRB will issue a provisional authority to operate using their existing routes and units. Transport cooperatives may avail themselves of loans from government financial institutions (GFIs) like the DBP and Land Bank of the Philippines to help them modernize their fleet. Once the transport cooperatives have modernized their fleet and complied with other requirements, the LTFRB will issue a CPC.

In addition, Tamayo said that the LPTRP prepared by the concerned LGU needs to be adopted by the local council through the issuance of an ordinance. She, however, stressed that the operation of the transport cooperatives is not hampered by the absence of the LPTRP because they can still ply their existing routes and use their existing units through the provisional authority issued to them by the LTFRB.

On the predicament of the transport cooperatives in obtaining loans due to the required submission of the LPTRP, Cassion said that the LTFRB has requested the DBP to reconsider this requirement, saying that the issuance of LPTRP is a tedious process. Cassion also explained that the delay in the LGUs' issuance of the LPTRP could be attributed to the shift in priorities because of the pandemic as the LGUs focused their attention on preventing the spread of the COVID-19 virus in their localities.

Rep. De Jesus as well as Senators Zubiri and Risa Hontiveros pointed out that making the LPTRP as a prerequisite for the approval of loans will hamper the full implementation of the PUVMP. Sen. Hontiveros called on the DILG, LTFRB, and the transport cooperatives to discuss among themselves the best way to resolve the matter.

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Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA) Director General Jeremiah Belgica suggested that instead of a provisional authority, the LTFRB should already issue a CPC to transport cooperatives. He explained that banks may be reluctant to accept the provisional authority because it is temporary in nature and can be revoked anytime.

DBP Senior Assistant Vice President Rustico Noli Cruz confirmed that DBP is no longer extending loans to transport cooperatives without an approved LPTRP to ensure the viability of the loan program. He stressed the importance of such document, citing Department of Transportation's (DOTr) Department Order 2017-011, which states, among others, that the LPTRP "shall be the minimum requirement prescribed for the issuance of franchises." He recalled a situation in the past when a transport cooperative that was granted a loan suddenly stopped operation because the concerned LGU did not allow the drivers to ply a specific route, thus affecting the payment of the loan.

Nevertheless, Cruz assured that the DBP is supportive of the PUVMP, adding that it has set aside an amount of P10 billion for the program. As of now, Cruz disclosed that a total of P3 billion in loans has already been released by the DBP.

LBP Assistant Vice President Generoso David said that the LBP is still accepting the provisional authority as a supporting document to the approval of loan applications of transport cooperatives. However, he supports the suggestion that a franchise should already be issued to the transport cooperatives instead of a provisional authority to protect the banks and the clients as well.

The LTFRB Executive Director reiterated that the modernization of PUVs is a requirement for the issuance of a franchise to transport cooperatives. She also suggested that cooperative banks may also offer loans to transport cooperatives so that the latter can have other options if the LBP and DBP will not honor the provisional authority.

Sen. Zubiri likewise suggested that the Small Business Corporation (SB Corp), an attached agency of the Department of Trade and Industry, should also offer credit facility to transport cooperatives.

SB Corp's Department Manager for Planning Wally Don Calderon said that at present, the SB Corp does not have a specific loan program for transport cooperatives. If the JCOCC will mandate SB Corp to participate in the implementation of the PUVMP, then the SB Corp will develop a new loan program to cater to the needs of the transport cooperatives. He, however, said that in developing such a program, the SB Corp will still have to exercise prudence in the management of funds entrusted to it.

Members of various transport cooperatives nationwide expressed their sentiments over the non-approval of their loan applications because of the absence of the LPTRP. They added that the provisional authority issued by the LTFRB is not being honored by the bank as well.

Speaking for the transport group in General Santos City, Robert Cang mentioned that under DO 2017-011, the DOTr can intervene to facilitate the issuance of franchises. The Department Order states, in part, that "in case an LGU is not

<p>Continuation... Joint Congressional Oversight Committee on Cooperatives</p>		<p>ready to take on the responsibility for public transport route planning in its domain, or if an approved LPTRP for the city or municipality is not yet available, the Department can determine the routes and services for which franchises shall be issued by LTFRB.”</p> <p>ARTA Director General Belgica said that the ARTA will invite the resource persons in today’s meeting to a dialogue on Monday to thresh out the issue on the LPTRP.</p> <p>Rep. Sabiniano Canama (Party-List, COOP-NATCCO) urged the concerned agencies to resolve the problems confronting the transport cooperatives, especially in the processing of loans to help them modernize their fleets.</p> <p>Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) Chair Joseph Encabo assured the JCOCC that the CDA provides the necessary assistance to all transport groups that intend to form themselves into transport cooperatives.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Rep. De Jesus underscored the importance of designating a Cooperatives Development Officer (CDO) in the municipal, city, and provincial levels as mandated under RA 11535. He said that the CDOs can help address the problems affecting the sector.</p> <p>Sen. Zubiri asked the League of Cooperative Development Officers of the Philippines (LCDOP) President Celia Atienza to apprise the JCOCC of the status of implementation of RA 11535, which was signed into law just last April 9, 2021.</p> <p>Atienza said that a technical working group (TWG) was created to discuss the implementation of RA 11535, particularly on the mandatory designation of CDOs in the municipal, city, and provincial levels. The TWG is composed of representatives from the CDA, DILG, LCDOP, and LGUs. She also reported that the DILG is set to issue a memorandum which will ensure the LGUs’ compliance with the law. At present, out of 81 provinces in the country, 33 have full-fledged cooperative office, Atienza added.</p> <p>Sen. Zubiri requested the CDA to submit to the JCOCC an updated report on the number of LGUs with cooperative offices and appointed CDOs.</p>
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DISCUSSION WITH AGENCIES/ENTITIES		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
<p>Overseas Workers Affairs</p>	<p>Discussion on the case of the five rescued domestic workers from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia</p>	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Raymond Democrito Mendoza (Party-List, TUCP), will continue its discussion on the case of the five Filipino domestic workers who were “rescued” from their employer in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.</p> <p>The Blas F. Ople Policy Center and Training Institute (Ople Center), a non-profit organization advocating migrant workers’ rights and welfare, narrated the events that led to the repatriation of the five abused domestic workers from Riyadh. According to the Center’s head, Susan Ople, the five domestic workers were recruited separately by different recruitment agencies which include ERRX Recruitment Consulting, WiseRecruit Corp., and Leila International Services Inc. She reported that these domestic workers suffered physical abuse and maltreatment from their employer, General Ayed Al Jeaid,</p>

<p>Continuation... Overseas Workers Affairs</p>		<p>who is allegedly an influential figure in Riyadh. She expressed concern for three more domestic workers who are still in the house of Al Jeaid and are also in need of rescue and repatriation.</p> <p>Ople disclosed that during the negotiations for repatriation, the Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO) in Riyadh gave priority to reaching a cash settlement wherein the amount agreed on was not favorable to the domestic workers because it included the payment for plane tickets for their return to the Philippines, thus reducing the amount that should have been paid to the domestic workers. Ople asserted that the government should have paid for the tickets instead.</p> <p>Ms. Analyn Villena, one of the five domestic workers who were rescued, revealed that her recruiter (ERRX) knew of previous cases of abuse and maltreatment committed by Al Jeaid, citing the repatriation of two abused domestic workers who were hired by Al Jeaid before her.</p> <p>ERRX General Manager Erwin Relox admitted that two domestic workers came in to work for Al Jeaid prior to Villena and others. He said the ERRX received complaints from these two domestic workers of delayed salaries and working long hours but there were no mention of physical abuse.</p> <p>For his part, POLO Riyadh Labor Attaché Fidel Macauyag explained that he just recently assumed the position of Labor Attaché to Riyadh this year. He disclosed that upon studying the case involving Al Jeaid, he discovered that the latter has already hired a total of 16 overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) since 2017. Based on the report of POLO Riyadh, several of these OFWs were repatriated by the concerned recruitment agencies but were done secretly or not coursed through the POLO Riyadh. Thus, he said this prompted his office to suspend six recruitment agencies and blacklisted Al Jeaid. He added that this action was also in coordination with the Ministry of Labor and Social Development of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).</p> <p>As for the cash settlement, Macauyag said that during the negotiation between the POLO and the employer, the latter agreed to pay 12,000 riyal for each domestic worker of which 7,000 riyal shall be spent for the plane tickets. On the remaining domestic workers in the employ of Al Jeaid, he said POLO Riyadh already sent a note verbale to the KSA through its Ministry of Labor and Social Development to send these domestic workers back to the Philippines by September 27, otherwise the Philippines will be constrained to issue a ban on the deployment of OFWs to KSA.</p> <p>The Chair asked Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) Administrator Bernard Olalia to dig deeper into this case against Al Jeaid. Olalia agreed that POEA will conduct a fact finding investigation on the matter and will report its findings to the Committee.</p>
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