



Committee Daily Bulletin

18th Congress
Third Regular Session

A publication of the Committee Affairs Department

Vol. III No. 81
October 11, 2021

COMMITTEE MEETING ON HOUSE MEASURES

COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Good Government and Public Accountability	HR 2075	Deputy Speaker Herrera-Dy	Inquiry into the qualifications, research methodologies, partnerships, and composition of OCTA Research Philippines	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Michael Edgar Aglipay (Party-List, DIWA), terminated its inquiry relative to House Resolution 2075. The Secretariat was directed to draft the corresponding Committee Report.</p> <p>At the outset, Rep. Aglipay explained the importance of conducting the hearing to exact accountability from research groups providing information on the country's COVID-19 situation, including those composed of fellows from public institutions or recipients of public grants from the government. He stressed that research methodologies should be effective and accurate, and analyzing assumptions should be based on truthful data. At the same time, he said those who use the research analysis of experts and scientists should be more discerning or should exercise good judgment.</p> <p>Rep. Aglipay further said that the Committee does not intend to censor or abridge the freedom of speech of research institutions like the OCTA Research. He believes that responding to the pandemic requires a whole-of-nation approach, which involves the government working in unison with the private sector.</p> <p>Likewise, Rep. Stella Luz Quimbo (2nd District, Marikina City), co-author of HR 2075, said that the country's pandemic response should be based on the best data available and best data analytics that can be utilized. She lamented that while the government has its own data analytics team, it is the OCTA Research's pronouncements and projections that are being reported to the public by the media. She maintained that OCTA's research methodology did not undergo peer review, which is necessary to ensure the quality and accuracy of academic and scientific researches. Moreover, she averred that OCTA has made several inaccurate and irresponsible public statements that adversely affected the economy.</p> <p>Moving forward, Rep. Quimbo suggested that the government should encourage universities to submit their predictions together with the research models, assumptions, and methodologies. After which, the government shall assess which of these predictions or forecasts is the "most reasonable" or it may consolidate all these to arrive at a common forecast for dissemination to the public.</p> <p>The OCTA Research is a polling, research, and consulting firm. It provides independent projections and warnings on the status of the COVID -19</p>

<p>Continuation... Good Government and Public Accountability</p>				<p>pandemic in the country which are being widely used by various media outfits.</p> <p>OCTA Research President Ranjit Rye clarified that OCTA's research methodologies are scientific, rigorous, and open to public scrutiny, adding that OCTA has presented them in various scientific fora. He said that there is no perfect model and that OCTA's researches contribute to the quest for knowledge to better understand the pandemic trends in the country. Rye also informed the Committee that there are other research firms that conduct studies on the COVID-19 situation and not just OCTA. Nevertheless, he reiterates OCTA's support to the government and the rest of the nation in addressing the pandemic.</p> <p>Department of Health (DOH) Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said that the DOH exercises caution in making announcements relative to COVID-19 and validates its data to avoid issuing statements that will cause panic and fear among the people. Vergeire admitted that there are differences between the DOH and OCTA's predictions which cause confusion among the public. She explained, however, that both parties do not have any official relationship that requires them to align their assumptions. Nevertheless, Vergeire stated that the DOH tried reaching out to OCTA as early as middle of 2020 to discuss the matter and find a common ground. She mentioned that the DOH also requested the latter to explain how it formulated its assumptions and arrived at its projections.</p> <p>Rye said that the OCTA fellows are in constant communication with the DOH and that they are willing to collaborate with the Department.</p> <p>The DOH Undersecretary also explained that OCTA uses the Susceptible-Infectious-Recovered (SIR) Model, which is the basic mathematical tool for analyzing infectious disease outbreaks. On the other hand, the DOH FASSSTER team uses the Susceptible-Exposed-Infectious-Recovered (SEIR) Model. Vergeire said that the DOH's model looks into the various factors that affect the spread of the disease, such as the observance of health protocols and vaccination. She added that these factors are not considered in OCTA's projections.</p> <p>FASSSTER Head Dr. Elvira de Lara-Tuprio also presented a comparative analysis between the models used by the DOH and OCTA. According to the DOST website, FASSSTER or the Feasibility Analysis of Syndromic Surveillance Using Spatio-Temporal Epidemiological Modeler For Early Detection of Diseases, was developed by the Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU) through a grant from the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) in 2016, initially to address dengue. The ADMU collaborated with the University of the Philippines Manila (UP) - National Telehealth Center and the DOH-Epidemiology Bureau in developing the technology as a disease surveillance tool for COVID-19. The FASSSTER is now being managed by the DOH.</p>
--	--	--	--	---

<p>Continuation... Good Government and Public Accountability</p>				<p>On the query of Rep. Aglipay, Vergeire agreed that explaining the pronouncements of OCTA has become an added task to the DOH. She stated that the government is not just battling the actual cases of COVID-19, but is also battling “infodemic” or correcting misinformation or disinformation about the pandemic.</p> <p>Deputy Speakers Bernadette "BH" Herrera-Dy (Party-List, BH) and Kristine Singson-Meehan (2nd District, Ilocos Sur), authors of HR 2075, reiterated the importance of collaboration between OCTA Research and DOH in conveying accurate information to the public. Deputy Speaker Herrera-Dy also suggested that DOH and OCTA highlight the recovery rate in the country in publishing their reports.</p> <p>Replying to the query of Deputy Speaker Singson-Meehan, Rye said that OCTA will continue to conduct researches on COVID-19 as well as public opinion research and political surveys. Rye stressed that as a research institution, it has the autonomy to do such undertakings and he sees no conflict of interest in its work.</p> <p>On the other hand, Rep. Aglipay said that OCTA Research has adversely affected the communication strategy of the government with regard to COVID-19 situation in the country. When asked by Rep. Aglipay if OCTA used the pandemic as a marketing tool to gain credibility and be known in the public relations industry, Rye denied this allegation.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Rep. Quimbo and Deputy Speaker Herrera-Dy inquired about the status of the P15 million funding for the UP Diliman’s computational research laboratory, provided under the Bayanihan to Recover as One Act (Bayanihan 2).</p> <p>UP Vice President for Academic Affairs Maria Cynthia Rose Bautista informed the Committee that out of the P15 million, the Department of Budget and Management only released P3.65 million. Thus, Bautista said that UP had to use its funds to commence with the establishment of the computational research laboratory. As of this time, UP has already spent P14.77 million for the laboratory which is not yet operational, Bautista added.</p> <p>Rep. Quimbo noted that the research studies approved by UP as a component of the research laboratory are related to COVID-19 response but are not directly related to generating big data analytics, or the process of examining large data to uncover patterns, correlations, and trends, which was the intention of the Bayanihan 2.</p> <p>Bautista acknowledged the observation of Rep. Quimbo.</p> <p>In addition, Rep. Quimbo opined that had the research laboratory been operated according to the purpose for which it was established, UP could have helped the DOH in generating data necessary to come up with sound decisions during the pandemic.</p>
--	--	--	--	---

Continuation... Good Government and Public Accountability				Under the Bayanihan 2, the amount of P15 million was allocated to UP for the establishment of a computational research laboratory under the UP-Diliman Institute of Mathematics to process big data analysis for COVID-19 and other pandemic research.
---	--	--	--	--

TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP MEETING ON HOUSE MEASURES				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/ DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Energy (Technical Working Group)	HB 10006	Rep. Macapagal Arroyo	Extending the corporate life of and strengthening the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corporation, amending for the purpose RA 9136, otherwise known as the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001	<p>The technical working group (TWG), chaired by Rep. Juan Miguel Macapagal Arroyo (2nd District, Pampanga), terminated its deliberation on House Bill 10006. The bill, as amended, will be presented to the mother Committee for its consideration and approval.</p> <p>Based on the original version of HB 10006, the proposal was to extend the corporate life of the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corporation (PSALM) for another 50 years, from June 26, 2026 to June 26, 2076, in order for the PSALM to manage and fulfill its remaining contractual obligations and fully accomplish its mandate.</p> <p>According to PSALM President and CEO Irene Joy Besido-Garcia, one of the priority undertakings of PSALM is the rehabilitation of the Agus-Pulangi Hydroelectric Power Plant, which is expected to be completed in six years from 2023. She explained that the rehabilitation would entail a loan that would be payable in 30 years. The PSALM will be paying for the loan by itself and will not pass such burden to the national government to avoid any additional increase in the fiscal deficit.</p> <p>Rep. Joey Sarte Salceda (2nd District, Albay) recommended that the corporate life of PSALM be extended only up to 30 years which will still allow it to pay for a 30-year loan for the rehabilitation of the Agus-Pulangi Hydroelectric Power Plant. With an extension of 30 years from the expiration of its corporate life on June 26, 2026, he said PSALM would still have a total of 35 years from today.</p> <p>Expressing their support to extend the corporate life of PSALM for another 30 years were Reps. Presley de Jesus (Party-List, PHILRECA) and Sergio Dagooc (Party-List, APEC).</p> <p>Rep. Arroyo, who is also the author of HB 10006, said he is amenable to the suggestion to extend the corporate life of PSALM for 30 years.</p>

Comments, suggestions and requests for copies may be sent to the Committee Publication Staff, Committee Management Support Service I, 3rd Floor, Ramon V. Mitra, Jr. Bldg., House of Representatives, Constitution Hills, Quezon City, through cmss1.cad@house.gov.ph or at tel. nos. 8932-6118/8931-5001 local 7122. Also available at <http://www.congress.gov.ph>