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COMMITTEE MEETINGS ON HOUSE MEASURES				
COMMITTEE	**MEASURES**		**SUBJECT MATTER**	**ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION**
	NO.	**PRINCIPAL AUTHOR**		
Good Government and Public Accountability jt. w/ Information and Communications Technology	Privilege Speech	Rep. Daza	On the Free-WiFi for All Program allocation and interagency fund transfers between the Department of Information and Communications Technology and the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), with some local government units, including MMDA's bidding of the National Capital Region's fiber optic backbone development	The Joint Committee, co-chaired by San Jose del Monte City Rep. Florida "Rida" Robes, Chair of the Committee on Good Government and Public Accountability, and Navotas City Rep. Tobias Reynald Tiangco, Chair of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, will continue its inquiry into the issues raised in the privilege speech in its next meeting. In her opening remarks, Rep. Robes stated that the purpose of the hearing is to determine whether the transactions of the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) and the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) regarding the implementation of the free Wi-Fi program, as mentioned in the privilege speech, is within the standards of good government and public accountability. She later delineated the issues covered by the hearing as follows: • Whether the interagency fund transfers between DICT and MMDA and other local government units (LGUs) are valid and legal; • Whether the contracts between DICT and MMDA were executed without violating existing laws, rules and regulations; • Whether DICT and MMDA officials committed malfeasance, misfeasance, or nonfeasance in the performance of their duties; and • Whether MMDA officials involved may be held liable for malfeasance, misfeasance, or nonfeasance in allowing overpricing and questionable bidding of projects. Rep. Tiangco added that the hearing aims to ensure that the funds allocated for the Free WiFi for All Program of the government are used properly, citing the importance of this project to the people in terms of interconnectivity. In his opening statement, Rep. Paul Ruiz Daza (1st District, Northern Samar) manifested that his privilege speech delivered in plenary on November 23, 2022 was borne out of frustration by the evident failure of the government to deliver the free public Wi-Fi as promised by the previous administration. Rep. Daza further noted that Congress, through legislation, has earmarked P12.1 billion from

Continuation… Good Government and Public Accountability jt. w/ Information and Communications Technology				2015 to 2021for the establishment of 105,000 free Wi-Fi access hotspots especially in public schools and state universities and colleges, parks, government centers, and other public areas around the country. He reported that based on DICT's information, there are only about 4,000 free Wi-Fi sites that are operational, which is less than five percent of the program target even with such a huge funding. Rep. Daza also noted that other than the DICT's annual budget in the General Appropriations Act (GAA), it is also allotted around P2 billion to P2.5 billion per year out of the spectrum users fee paid by private telecommunications companies (telcos) to the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) pursuant to the Free Internet Access in Public Places Act (RA 10929). Rep. Daza presented to the Joint Committee the chronology of events relative to the transfer of funds amounting to P1.1 billion from the DICT to the MMDA for the NCR (National Capital Region) Fiber Optic Backbone Development and Network Resiliency project. The period covered was from December 14, 2021, during the time of then Acting DICT Secretary Emmanuel Ray Caintic, until November 8, 2022 when the project was awarded by MMDA to the sole bidder, a joint venture company composed of A-Win Enterprises Solutions and Net Pacific, Inc.. According to Rep. Daza, the transaction may prove to have been illegal and questionable for two main reasons. First, a memorandum of agreement (MOA) was signed on April 27, 2022 by and between Caintic and former MMDA Chair Romando Artes for the implementation of the project, despite the opposing legal opinion from the DICT's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Legal Affairs (OASLA) penned by Atty. Alvin Navarro. Second, two checks amounting to P600 million and P500 million covering the approved budget for the contract (ABC) were issued to MMDA just the day following the MOA signing or on April 28, 2022. Rep. Daza likewise noted that suspicious reshuffling of key personnel within the DICT Procurement Service as well as absorption (or secondment) of MMDA officials, Atty. Victor Trinidad and Angelo Detera, into the DICT were all made in January 2022. Trinidad was said to have been appointed as DICT Finance Service Director and Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) Chief, and Detera as Division Chief of DICT Procurement Division. Replying to the issue raised by Rep. Daza on the Commission on Election's (COMELEC) ban on transfer or release of funds for government projects during the election period, DICT Undersecretary Paul Mercado stated that a

Continuation… Good Government and Public Accountability jt. w/ Information and Communications Technology				certification of exemption was issued to the DICT by the COMELEC insofar as the Free Wi-Fi Project was concerned. On the matter of the legal opinion issued by the DICT-OASLA, Navarro mentioned the following findings: • The proposal to make MMDA as the implementing agency for the Free Public Wi-Fi Project in Metro Manila was rendered as *ultra vires* (literally "beyond the powers") based on the case MMDA vs. Biron, already decided by the Supreme Court stating, among others, that fiber-optic cable laying or any ICT-related project is not among the functions of the MMDA; • There is a need to revisit the mandate of the DICT to prioritize its services to unserved and underserved areas; and, • The implementation of the Free Public Wi-Fi Project, which is part of the Philippine Development Plan, should be reviewed as to whether it is still a continuation of or in connection with the National Broadband Plan (NBP) which was commenced way back in 2017. On the query posed by Rep. Tiangco on the scope of the project for public bidding, Trinidad explained that as per the terms of reference (ToR), the bidding was for the construction of a 110-kilometer radius underground communications network and fiber optic cable within Metro Manila. Rep. Tiangco and Rep. Romeo Acop (2nd District, Antipolo City) asked why the DICT could not have conducted the public bidding itself and why it proceeded to download the funds to MMDA despite the adverse legal opinion from the DICT-OASLA. Caintic explained that MMDA was deemed to have the capacity to quickly implement the program, it is mandated to develop Metro Manila, and it already has direct working coordination with all Metro Manila LGUs. Rep. Robes stated that the rules for fund transfers by any agency of government are prescribed under Section 78 (Rules on Modification in the Allotment) of the GAA. This particular section provides that departments, bureaus, and offices of the National Government, including Constitutional Offices enjoying fiscal autonomy and SUCs shall spend what is programmed in their respective appropriations. In exceptional circumstances, agencies may modify the allotment issued within an activity or project subject to the approval of the DBM in the following modifications: from one allotment class to another; from one operating unit to another; and within a special purpose fund.

Continuation… Good Government and Public Accountability jt. w/ Information and Communications Technology				DBM Budget Information Legislative Service Acting Director Perpetual Judea Quiazon affirmed the statement of Rep. Robes of a prerequisite certification that must be issued by the DBM allowing the transfer of allotments from one agency to another. On the other hand, in cases where failure of bidding transpires, Quiazon manifested that the funds may, at any time, be returned to the project proponent. He affirmed that DBM has not approved the interagency fund transfer of DICT. Reacting to the statement of DBM that DICT did not secure any certification for the transfer of programmed funds, Commission on Audit (COA) Supervising Auditor for the DICT Job Aguirre stated that it may be a case of technical malversation. However, he said since COA is not yet in receipt of pertinent documents from the DICT, COA cannot conclusively state that the transaction involved technical malversation. Rep. Robes mentioned that former MMDA Chair and now Department of the Interior and Local Government Secretary Benhur Abalos gave its imprimatur for MMDA to return the fund. MMDA Deputy Chair Frisco San Juan gave assurance that the subject funds will be returned to DICT. The MMDA and DICT were requested to submit to the Committee pertinent documents required by the Members. MMDA Chair Romando Artes and DICT Secretary Ivan Uy will be invited in the next Committee meeting to hear their views on the issues raised.
Government Enterprises and Privatization	HBs 1775 & 2229	Reps. Pimentel and Rillo	Expanding the involuntary separation benefit, amending Section 14-B of RA 11199, otherwise known as the Social Security Act of 2018	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Edwin Olivarez (1st District, Paranaque City), will deliberate further on the four bills in its next meeting. Deputy Speaker Aurelio "Dong" Gonzales (3rd District, Pampanga) sponsored HB 1775, while Rep. Bonifacio Bosita (Party-List, 1-RIDER) sponsored HBs 2229, 3864, and 5433 on behalf of the authors. They both manifested that the explanatory notes attached to the bills be considered as the authors' sponsorship speeches. Social Security System (SSS) Senior Vice President and Chief Actuary Atty. Edgar Cruz expressed SSS' objection to the bills, citing their adverse effect on future pensioners and on SSS. Cruz explained that the proposed legislation would redound to shortening the actuarial life of the SSS which might jeopardize the pension of future retirees. Further, Cruz pointed out that even with just the passage of RA 11199, the benefits due to SSS members as well as the operational expenses incurred by SSS were already significantly higher than the members' contributions and the income generated by the SSS. He also reported
	HB 3864	Rep. Tambunting	Amending Section 14-B of RA 11199 (by granting unemployment insurance to Social Security System (SSS) members who become unemployed regardless of whether they were dismissed or they resigned for whatever reason)	
	HB 5433	Rep. Dionisio	Expanding the benefits of the SSS to provide for unemployment benefits, amending for this purpose RA 8282, otherwise known as the Social Security Act of 1997	

Continuation… Government Enterprises and Privatization				that the unfunded pension liabilities of SSS as of January 1, 2020 already reached P4.36 trillion. Cruz also emphasized that there is a misconception that social security benefits are the sole source of funding by the members in case of contingencies like death, retirement or unemployment. He said that social security only provides for the first layer of support for the members and that it is consistent with the principle of social security adopted by other countries where citizens rely on other layers of support such as private insurance and savings. The SSS was requested to submit to the Committee its position paper on the bills.
	HB 3000	Rep. Go (M.)	Mandating a P2,000.00 across-the-board increase in monthly pension with a corresponding adjustment of the minimum monthly pension under the SSS, amending for the purpose Section 12 of RA 11199	The Committee will deliberate further on HB 3000 and House Joint Resolution (HJR) 1 in its next meeting. Baguio City Rep. Mark Go, author of HB 3000, said that his bill seeks to grant a P2,000 across the board increase in the monthly pension from the SSS. In order to cushion the impact of the pension hike on the actuarial life of the SSS, Rep. Go said that the proposed increase shall be implemented in four tranches over a period of four years from the effectivity of the proposed law. In her sponsorship speech, ACT TEACHERS Party-List Rep. France Castro, author of HJR 1, said that her resolution mandates the implementation of the second tranche of pension increase effective January 1, 2022 pursuant to Executive Order (EO) 54. Issued by former President Rodrigo Duterte on February 22, 2017, EO 54 grants a P2,000 increase in the SSS pension, with the initial P1,000 increase effective retroactively in January 2017, and the second tranche or the additional P1,000 to be implemented in 2022 or earlier. Former House Member and currently Bayan Muna Chair Neri Colmenares expressed support for the proposed measures. He mentioned that during his stint as House Member, he also filed a similar bill that was approved by Congress in 2013 and 2016. He then proposed three solutions to help the SSS improve its fiscal position, namely, 1) increase collection rate and investment efficiency; 2) decrease unnecessary bonuses of SSS officials and operation cost; and 3) as a final resort, for government to allocate, from time to time, a share to the SSS funds through the General Appropriations Act, which is provided in the SSS Law. Commenting on the proposed legislative measures, Cruz maintained that granting a P2,000.00 across-the-board increase in the
	HJR 1	Rep. Castro (F.)	Mandating the implementation of the second tranche of the social security pension increase effective January 1, 2022 to cushion the impact of new taxes and rising prices of goods and services, and to provide social protection for pensioners	

Continuation… Government Enterprises and Privatization				monthly pension would shorten the fund life of the SSS by 12 years and increase the unfunded pension liabilities by P2.92 trillion. Similarly, Cruz stated that implementing the second tranche of the social security pension increase would shorten the fund life of SSS by seven years and increase its unfunded pension liabilities by P1.5 trillion. With regard to the issue on collections, Cruz said that SSS is exerting all efforts to collect unpaid premiums, acknowledging the fact that there are employers who are remiss in paying their employees' premium contributions.
Higher and Technical Education jt. w/ Basic Education and Culture	Substitute Bill to HB 6486 in consolidation with HBs 503, 639, 1692, 2174, 2339, 2628, 2759, 3035, 3045, 3090, 3437, 3450, 3513, 3613, 3637, 4019, 4083, 4105, 4308, 4500, 4590, 4872, 5217, 6078 & 6136	Speaker Romualdez, Reps. Yap (Edvic), Salceda, Deputy Speaker Gonzales (A.) Reps. Tupas, Aumentado, Senior Deputy Speaker Macapagal-Arroyo, Reps. Violago, Gomez, Robes, Golez, Fresnedi , Noel, Acop, Deputy Speaker Singson-Meehan,Reps . Abante, Villafuerte (L.R.), Tambunting, Rillo, Gatchalian, Teves (A.), Cajayon-Uy, Lacson, Rodriguez (R.), and Yap (C.)	Instituting a National Citizens Service Training Program in all public and private tertiary education institutions, repealing for the purpose RA 9163, otherwise known as the National Service Training Program Act of 2001 and appropriating funds therefor	The Joint Committee, co-presided by Baguio City Rep. Mark Go, Chair of the Committee on Higher and Technical Education, and Pasig City Rep. Roman Romulo, Chair of the Committee on Basic Education and Culture, approved subject to style and amendment the Committee Report on the Substitute Bill to House Bill 6486 in consolidation with the other 25 bills. At the outset, Rep. Romulo said that both Committees have conducted several discussions during the 18th Congress pertaining to bills proposing a mandatory Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program. In his sponsorship speech, TINGOG Party-List Rep. Jude Acidre, co-author of HB 6486, said that the bill seeks to implement the constitutional provision recognizing the vital role of the youth in nation-building by establishing a comprehensive framework and system for their participation in public and civic affairs. Through the establishment of a mandatory two-year National Citizens Service Training (NCST) Program and an optional four-year ROTC Program in higher education, Rep. Acidre said the youth will be capacitated with skills essential to rendering personal military or civil service to the State in times of calamities, rebellion, invasion, war, or other national emergencies. Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Director Spocky Farolan said that HB 6486 was crafted by several government agencies, including the Department of National Defense (DND), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and CHED. He apprised the body of some of the features of the proposed NCST Act, among which are the following: • The NCST program shall be mandatory for all students enrolled in any undergraduate degree and those enrolled in at least two-year technical-vocational education and training courses; • The NCST program's curriculum shall focus on developing the necessary and practical knowledge and skills of students for civic duty, emergency preparedness and response, and

Continuation… Higher and Technical Education jt. w/ Basic Education and Culture				territorial defense; • The optional ROTC program for tertiary students is designed to produce officers for the citizen armed force and regular force of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP); • In the implementation of the NCST program and mobilization system, strict monitoring, evaluation, and accountability shall be observed to prevent all forms of abuse and corruption. Expressing their support for HB 6486 were representatives from the AFP, DND, CHED, and National Youth Commission. On the other hand, student leaders representing the National Union of Students of the Philippines, Polytechnic University of the Philippines Student Council, UP Diliman University Student Council, and University of Santo Tomas Central Student Council raised their objections to the bills. Among the reasons they cited for opposing the bills were the long history of violence and corruption associated with the abolished mandatory ROTC program, potential threats to academic freedom and democratic rights of students, and the additional financial burden to students and their parents. The Committee Chairpersons and the CHED gave the assurance that safety measures will be put in place upon the implementation of the proposed NCST program to guarantee the rights of students and to prevent all forms of abuse or violence. KABATAAN Party-List Rep. Raoul Danniel Manuel expressed concern that some of the provisions of HB 6486 still indicate that ROTC will still be a mandatory program in tertiary education. In particular, he noted the inclusion of weapons training in the program, citing Section 8 (b) (Special NCST for Students under Special Circumstances) of the bill, which states that "those whose religious beliefs prohibit the use of firearms in rendering service to the country" shall undergo Special NCST programs instead. Farolan countered that weapons training does not equate to military training. Moreover, he cited Section 4, Article II (Declaration of Principles and State Policies) of the 1987 Constitution, which states that "The prime duty of the Government is to serve and protect the people. The Government may call upon the people to defend the State and, in the fulfillment thereof, all citizens may be required, under conditions provided by law, to render personal military or civil service." He said that through the NCST program, the government can ensure that the people who will undergo the program and later be called to render personal military or civil service will have the basic skills and knowledge

Continuation… Higher and Technical Education jt. w/ Basic Education and Culture				to fulfill such service. Rep. Manuel manifested that his bill, HB 1159, be excluded from the substitute bill, explaining that it primarily seeks to expand the existing National Service Training Program (NSTP) and not to reinstitute the mandatory ROTC program in tertiary educational institutions. The Committee agreed to exclude HB 1159 from the substitute bill as well as exclude Rep. Manuel as co-author of the substitute bill.
Local Government	HCR 3	Rep. Adiong	Urging the immediate creation and convening of the Philippine Congress-Bangsamoro Parliament Forum as provided under Article VI, Section 3 of RA 11054, otherwise known as the Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Rex Gatchalian (1st District, Valenzuela City), adopted House Concurrent Resolution 3. The Secretariat was directed to prepare the corresponding Committee Report. Rep. Yasser Alonto Balindong (2nd District, Lanao del Sur), co-author of HCR 3, cited the importance of immediately convening the Philippine Congress - Bangsamoro Parliament Forum (PCBPF) pursuant to Republic Act 11054 for purposes of coordination of legislative initiatives between Congress and the Bangsamoro Parliament. As stated in the concurrent resolution, there is an urgent need to synchronize the legislative agenda of the National Government with the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) Parliament's priority legislative agenda to ensure the smooth implementation of RA 11054. The resolution also stated that the PCBPF is the most appropriate platform to discuss issues concerning the implementation of the Bangsamoro Organic Law. (The BTA is the acting legislative authority of the Bangsamoro government during the interim period pursuant to RA 11054) Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity (OPAPRU) Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr. expressed his full support to the concurrent resolution. He also reported that the OPAPRU has provided secretariat as well as administrative support to PCBPF during its first meeting held on November 15, 2022 at Sofitel Philippine Plaza Manila, Pasay City. He likewise shared that the PCBPF has agreed to create a technical working group that will study the proposed legislative measures tackled during the forum.
	HBs 5269, 5295, 5435, 5533, 5725, 5929, 5942, 5964, 5965, & 6197	Reps. Bolilia, Miguel, Gorriceta, Romualdez (Y.M.), Hataman, Almonte, and Legarda	Declaring special nonworking holidays in certain parts of the country to commemorate special events	The Committee approved the ten House Bills subject to the comments of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP) and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA). Rep. Gatchalian directed the Secretariat to request the NHCP and NCCA to submit their official position papers on the bills within seven days for the Committee's consideration.
	HB 4749	Rep.	Granting jurisdiction and providing the	The Committee approved HB 4749

Continuation… Local Government		Gatchalian	manner for the conduct of disciplinary and non-disciplinary actions of the *Pederasyon ng mga Sangguniang Kabataan*, amending for the purpose Section 21 of RA 10742, otherwise known as the Sangguniang Kabataan Reform Act of 2015	incorporating therein the comments made by Rep. Wowo Fortes (2nd District, Sorsogon) during the meeting. The Secretariat was directed to prepare the corresponding Committee Report. Rep. Gatchalian, author of HB 4749, said that his bill seeks to clarify the ambiguities in RA 10742 particularly on the jurisdiction and manner of conducting disciplinary and non-disciplinary actions against erring *Pederasyon ng Sangguniang Kabataan* (SK) officials. He added that his bill intends to include "loss of trust and confidence" as one of the grounds for the removal of a federation president. As stated in the explanatory note of the bill, RA 10742 did not confer jurisdiction upon any court, office, or tribunal concerning the removal of any officer of the *Pederasyon.* The law simply delegated to the Commission on Elections, Department of the Interior and Local Government, and National Youth Commission the authority to issue guidelines to govern the manner of election, suspension, and removal of federation officers. Thus, it is the intent of the bill to make the federation officers aware that they shall be held accountable for their actions either through disciplinary or non-disciplinary measures. Rep. Fortes noted that the term "loss of trust and confidence" could be too broad, hence he suggested to expound it further in the bill and provide parameters for the application of "loss of trust and confidence" as ground for removal of a federation president. He expressed his willingness to work with the author on the matter. The Committee Chair replied that he is amenable to the proposal of Rep. Fortes.
Poverty Alleviation	HBs 2422 & 4366	Reps. Lee and Tambunting	Promoting entrepreneurship and livelihood for sustainable development, amending for the purpose RA 11310 or the law institutionalizing the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps)	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Michael Romero, Ph.D. (Party-List, 1-PACMAN), agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to draft a Substitute Bill to House Bills 2422 and 4366. Rep. Samuel Versoza Jr. (Party-List, TUTOK TO WIN) was designated as the TWG Chair. At the outset, Rep. Romero urged the Members of the Committee to work together towards expediting the passage of the two bills. He also mentioned that a similar bill was filed and deliberated on during the 18th Congress. Rep. Rosanna 'Ria' Vergara (3rd District, Nueva Ecija), who sponsored HB 4366 on behalf of the author, manifested that the explanatory note attached to the bill be considered as the author's sponsorship speech. The Committee likewise agreed to adopt the explanatory note of HB 2422 as the author's

Continuation… Poverty Alleviation				sponsorship speech. Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) National Program Manager for 4Ps Director Gemma Gabuya expressed her support for the bills. She said that improving the socio-economic status of 4Ps beneficiaries, totaling 4.4 million household-beneficiaries, through livelihood assistance is one of the priority interventions and conditionalities under the 4Ps. She added that instituting another form of intervention, the grant of electricity subsidy to 4Ps beneficiaries, as proposed in the bills, would all the more help alleviate the plight and improve the living conditions of the poor and marginalized sector. DSWD National Program Manager for Sustainable Development Director Edmund Monteverde added that through DSWD's Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP), target beneficiaries are capacitated to become entrepreneurs. Further, Monteverde said that SLP is implemented through a two-track program, namely: Microenterprise Development Track which supports micro-enterprises in becoming organizationally and economically viable; and the Employment Facilitation Track which assists participants to access appropriate employment opportunities. Department of Finance (DOF) Legislative Liaison Specialist Rowena Pimentel said that the DOF objects to the proposed measures, explaining that the grant of P500 electricity subsidy per household beneficiary is estimated to cost the government around P2.4 billion a year. Pimentel said that currently, the government is operating at a limited fiscal space. Rep. Joseph Stephen 'Caraps' Paduano (Party-List, ABANG LINGKOD) questioned the poverty incidence of 4.4 million household-beneficiaries per year, as reported by DSWD, saying that the figure should have already decreased with the implementation of the 4Ps. In reaction, Rep. Romero instructed the Committee Secretariat to furnish the Members of the Committee a copy of the comprehensive report of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) on the poverty statistics from 2015 to 2021 that showed a significant decrease in poverty incidence in the country through the 4Ps. The DSWD, Department of Labor and Employment, Department of Trade and Industry, and Technical Skills and Development Authority, as well as the Samahan ng Nagkakaisang Pamilyang Pantawid will be invited to join the TWG's deliberations on the bills.
	HBs 443, 500,	Reps. Dalog	Institutionalizing the community-driven	The Committee agreed to create a TWG to

Continuation… Poverty Alleviation	1910, 3008, 3458, 4973, 5410 & 6104	Jr., Yap (Edvic), Bolilia, Rodriguez (R.), Fortes, Delos Santos, Romualdo, and Vargas	development approach as a national strategy for inclusive growth and social protection	draft a substitute bill to the eight measures. Eastern Samar Rep. Maria Fe Abunda was designated to chair the TWG. Mountain Province Rep. Maximo Dalog Jr., author of HB 443, said that his bill seeks to institutionalize the community-driven development approach by enhancing the capacities of the members of the community, which includes the poor, vulnerable, disadvantaged, and marginalized, to effectively participate in the local development process. Reps. Lianda Bolilia (4th District, Batangas) and Wowo Fortes (2nd District, Sorsogon), respective authors of HBs 1910 and 3458, manifested that the explanatory notes of their bills be considered as their sponsorship speeches. On motion of Rep. Fortes, the explanatory notes of HBs 500, 3008, 4973, 5410 and 6104 were also considered as the sponsorship speeches of their respective authors. DSWD Undersecretary for Legislative and Liaison Affairs Rowena Niña Taduran expressed support for the passage of the proposed legislation. The DOF and Department of Budget and Management will be invited to join the TWG.
Senior Citizens (Special Committee)	Substitute Bill to HBs 1704, 2278, 2485, 3137, 3275, 3642, 5041, 5452, 6292 & 6309	Reps. Suansing (H.), Luistro, Bongalon, Ordanes, Escudero, Vargas, Tutor, Dionisio, Tieng, and Aquino-Magsaysay	Providing for universal social pension of senior citizens	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Rodolfo "Ompong" Ordanes (Party-List, Senior Citizens), approved the Substitute Bill to the 10 House Bills. The substitute bill will be referred to the Committee on Appropriations for review of its funding provision.
Social Services	HJR 10	Rep. Manuel	Allocating additional funding for educational assistance under the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation (AICS) Program of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Rosanna "Ria" Vergara (3rd District, Nueva Ecija), adopted House Joint Resolution 10 with amendments. The HJR will be referred to the Committee on Appropriations for review of its funding provision. HJR 10 seeks to increase the beneficiaries of the AICS Educational Assistance Program from 550,000 to 2.5 million to guarantee aid for some two million additional online applicants as well as those students who were not able to apply through the online process. An estimated amount of P5.3 billion is proposed to be allocated for this purpose on top of the P1.5 billion budget of the said program. Rep. Vergara stated that the proposed additional funding for the program will provide relief to students especially with the current

Continuation… Social Services				direction of educational institutions to eventually return to full face-to-face classes. Asked to comment on the intent of HJR 10, DSWD Project Development Officer Rolando Villacorta recommended that the additional budget should be around P6 billion to cover at least two million students with an average assistance of P3,000 per student. Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Undersecretary Wilford Will Wong informed the body that the total remaining funds of the DSWD as of October 31, 2022 is P14 billion, of which P13 billion is allocated for the AICS Program. Thus, he said the P13 billion can be used to augment the funding for the AICS Educational Assistance Program as proposed in HJR 10. The resource persons were requested to submit to the Committee their respective position papers on the measure.
	HBs 1449, 5458 & 6146	Reps. Benitez, Dionisio, and Mariano-Hernandez	Increasing the compensation of social workers in government service, amending for the purpose RA 9433, otherwise known as the Magna Carta for Public Social Workers	The Committee agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to thresh out the issues and concerns raised and to come up with a substitute bill. Rep. Yevgeny Vincente Emano (2nd District, Misamis Oriental) was designated as the TWG Chair. Rep. Vergara paid tribute to all public social workers in the country especially those who have been at the forefront in delivering services to the communities especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Together with the medical practitioners, the military, and the police, she said these social workers have been risking their lives to bring the much needed government aid to the people. Which is why, Rep. Vergara said, it is just fitting to thank them for their sacrifices and invaluable services by increasing their compensation. House Bills 1449, 5458 and 6146 seek to increase the salaries of public social workers and make the salary grade of all entry-level officer positions uniform (at least salary grade 13) for all social workers. On the other hand, HB 6211 seeks to provide a fixed monthly COVID-19 pandemic risk allowance for every month that public social workers have served during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Expressing their support for the bills were the resource persons from the DSWD, Department of Labor and Employment – National Labor Relations Commission, National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), and Civil Service Commission. Although supportive of the bill, NEDA Director IV Girlie Grace Casimiro-Igtiben said NEDA will defer to the comments of the DBM with regard to the financial feasibility of the proposed
	HB 6211	Rep. Vargas	Providing for allowances and benefits for public social workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, appropriating funds therefor	

Continuation… Social Services				measures, considering that there are a total of 9,541 social welfare positions in the government to date. The DBM committed to submit to the Committee its official position paper once it is done studying the fiscal implications of the bills. The resource persons present in the meeting were requested to submit to the Committee their respective position papers on the bills for the TWG's consideration.
	HB 6147	Rep. Mariano-Hernandez	Institutionalizing the Crisis Intervention Program of the DSWD	The Committee agreed to refer HBs 6147 and 6268 to the previously created TWG that was tasked to deliberate on bills seeking to institutionalize the AICS Program.
	HB 6268	Rep. Corvera	Institutionalizing the AICS Program of the DSWD, providing penalties for violation of certain unlawful acts, and appropriating funds therefor	
Trade and Industry	HB 805	Rep. Romero	Amending RA 7394, otherwise known as the Consumer Act of the Philippines, increasing its penalties and sanctions, rationalizing its policies and guidelines	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Mario Vittorio "Marvey" Mariño (5th District, Batangas), agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to draft a substitute bill for the five House Bills. Rep. Emigdio Tanjuatco III (2nd District, Rizal) was designated as TWG Chair. In his opening remarks, Rep. Mariño highlighted that the bills seek to amend certain provisions of RA 7394 or the Consumer Act of the Philippines to keep it attuned to the changing times brought about by technological advancement and the globalized economy that directly affect consumer transactions. The bills, in general, seek to mandate the government to adopt measures/policies that will strengthen the promotion of consumer interest and welfare in relation to business and industry practices as well as the production and distribution of consumer products. Rep. Faustino "Inno" Dy V (6th District, Isabela), author of HB 1139, said that his bill seeks to mandate the use of a health star rating system in labeling consumer food products in the country to help Filipinos make the right choices for the sake of their health, thereby reducing their vulnerability to life-threatening diseases. As stated in the explanatory note of the bill, "health star rating" is a front-of-pack labeling system that allows the consumer to quickly check the nutritional value of the product. The system assigns a star rating from one half to five stars, with more stars indicating a healthier option. Expressing their support for the bills were the resource persons from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Health, Department of Education, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, Philippine Competition Commission, Philippine Retailers Association (PRA),
	HB 847	Rep. Romero	Amending Articles 19 and 39 of RA 7394, increasing its penalties	
	HB 1139	Rep. Dy (F.)	Mandating the use of a health star rating system on the labels of packaged food products, amending for this purpose RA 7394	
	HB 3556	Deputy Speaker Recto	Granting broader protection to consumers, amending for the purpose RA 7394	
	HB 6074	Rep. Rodriguez (R.)	Affording more protection to consumers, amending for the purpose RA 7394	

Continuation… Trade and Industry				Philippine Amalgamated Supermarket Association, Laban Konsyumer, Inc., Nationwide Association of Consumers, Inc., and Nestle Philippines. DTI Undersecretary for Consumer Protection Group Ruth Castelo thanked the Committee and the bills' authors for accommodating the DTI's request to amend, update, and improve the Consumer Act as it has not been revised since its enactment in 1992. She mentioned some recommendations that should also be included in the proposed law, as follows: • Publish the consumer product standards including the technical regulations; • Encourage the strong support of the local government units in the conduct of consumer protection activities and operations; and • Create a distinction between offline and digital/online consumer transactions. Commenting on HB 1139, Nestle Philippines Assistant Vice President for Public Affairs Denya Gracia Uy-Anastacio said it would take research and validation to integrate the current Philippine nutrient profile model into the proposed health star rating system. She suggested the conduct of a consumer research to know the consumers' use and understanding of food labels and to determine the kind of labeling that would be most effective in realizing the public health goal of the bill. Meanwhile, Meneses Pareja, president of the vendors association of the Las Piñas Public Market raised concern over the susceptibility of the health star rating system to corruption. He explained that companies with products given lower health star ratings may resort to illicit activities to improve the ratings and sales of their products.

TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP MEETING ON HOUSE MEASURES				
COMMITTEE	**MEASURES**		**SUBJECT MATTER**	**ACTION TAKEN/ DISCUSSION**
	NO.	**PRINCIPAL AUTHOR**		
Government Reorganization jt w/ Public Works and Highways (Technical Working Group)	HBs 21, 55, 144, 482, 858, 1013, 1014, 2175, 2298, 2523, 2538, 2558, 2690, 2818, 2880, 3082, 3226, 3237, 3302, 3435, 3610, 3670, 3677, 3727, 3788, 3886, 4057, 4326,	Speaker Romualdez, Reps. Salceda, Olivarez, Senior Deputy Speaker Macapagal-Arroyo, Reps. Romero, Herrera, Tupas, Olaso, Vargas, Cruz (A.), Deputy Speaker Recto, Reps. Salo, Tan	Establishing the national framework for water resource management and creating the Department of Water Resources and the Water Regulatory Commission, defining their mandates, powers, and functions, and appropriating funds therefor	The technical working group (TWG), chaired by Rep. Joey Sarte Salceda (2nd District, Albay), will deliberate further on the 39 House Bills in its next meeting. At the outset, Rep. Salceda stated that the TWG will initially use as its working draft a similar bill that was approved on third reading by the House of Representatives during the 18th Congress. However, he requested the Executive Branch, through the Presidential Legislative Liaison Office, to come up with its own version of the proposed law which may then be used as the draft substitute bill in the

Continuation… Government Reorganization jt w/ Public Works and Highways (Technical Working Group)	4535, 4536, 4865, 5177, 5205, 5810, 5877, 6266, 6306, 6311 & 6360	(K.M.), Lee, Atayde, Vergara, Paduano, Rodriguez (R.), Fresnedi, Deputy Speaker Singson-Meehan, Reps. Defensor, Flores, Duterte, Robes, Yap (Edvic), Tambunting, Villarica, Colada, Khonghun, Cua, Villafuerte (L.R.), Roque, Luistro, Violago, Fariñas, Yap (C.), Arrogancia, and Suan		succeeding TWG meetings. Rep. Salceda said this would help expedite the enactment of the proposed law and avoid a presidential veto later on. The proposed measures aim to create the Department of Water Resources (DWR) as the primary national agency responsible for policy formulation, planning, coordination, implementation, and monitoring of the development and management of the country's water resources. In today's meeting, the TWG took note of the positions and recommendations of the resource persons from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Agriculture – Bureau of Soils and Water Management, National Power Corporation (NPC), National Irrigation Administration, Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA), Laguna Lake Development Authority, Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System, Maynilad Water Services, Inc., Manila Water Company, and Philippine Association of Water Districts. Among the recommendations that were discussed during the meeting were the following: • Include sewerage and wastewater treatment within the scope of the DWR's mandate; • Adopt internationally accepted methodologies in the pricing of water and water treatment services; • Exempt water concessionaires from the requirement of securing a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) as these entities already have a franchise wherein their Concession Agreement serves as their permit to deliver water (CPCN is an authorization or permit issued for the operation of public services); and • Retain the LWUA as a specialized financing institution for local water utilities or water districts to aid the majority of water districts that do not have the capacity to secure loans from banks. On the proposal to include sewerage and wastewater treatment under the mandate of the DWR, the DPWH objected to this as this function is currently being performed by the latter through its National Sewerage and Septage Management Program. Transferring this function to another office would only cause delay in the delivery of service, the DPWH representative added. Meanwhile, DENR – Office of the Secretary technical consultant Carlos Primo David noted

Continuation… Government Reorganization jt w/ Public Works and Highways (Technical Working Group)				that forest management and watershed management are closely intertwined with water resources management. Thus, he explained that even if the management of water resources is transferred to the DWR, issues concerning the management of forests, watersheds, and river basins will still have to be discussed with the DENR since these are under its mandate. For her part, NPC Strategic and Business Planning Division Manager Bernadette Rivero expressed her concern on the effect of the proposed law on the management and ownership of dams including the responsibility over the dams' spilling operations (water release) and the funding for the operations of dams. She explained that the funding is not included in the NPC's budget and that it only relies on the allowances provided by the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corporation. Rep. Salceda replied that the NPC will still be involved in the management of the dams, but the DWR shall be the "principal operator and manager" of all the dams in the country. He explained that this is necessary to ensure proper coordination in the spilling operations of dams. He said a major unit under the DWR shall be created to handle the spiling operations. He also gave assurance that, as Chair of the House Committee on Ways and Means, he will see to it that appropriate revenue sources will be identified to ensure funding for the operations of the dams.

AGENCY BRIEFING		
COMMITTEE	**SUBJECT MATTER**	**DISCUSSIONS**
Land Use (Special Committee)	Briefing by the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development, Human Settlements Adjudication Commission, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and Department of Agrarian Reform relative to the proposed National Land Use Act	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Francisco Jose "Bingo" Matugas II CPA, CESO, LLB (1st District, Surigao del Norte), listened to the briefing of the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD), Human Settlements Adjudication Commission (HSAC), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) on the proposed National Land Use Act (NLUA). In his opening remarks, Rep. Matugas stated that 16 House Bills have already been referred to the Committee seeking to establish a national land use policy. He informed the body that during the Committee's previous meeting held on October 27, 2022, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) presented the major provisions of the proposed legislation. Rep. Matugas underscored the importance of enacting a national land use law, noting that there are various government agencies charged with the administration of existing land use policies in the country, which have their own standards, procedures, and guidelines in carrying out their respective mandates. Further, he cited a policy brief released last year by the Congressional Policy and Budget Research Department of the House of Representatives which revealed a lack of coherent policy framework to guide a comprehensive allocation and

Continuation… Land Use (Special Committee)	• Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD)	use of the country's land resources. DHSUD Legal Service Department representative Atty. Cristine Bello and Environmental, Land Use, and Urban Planning and Development Bureau Division Chief Mic Ivan Sumilang presented their agency's comments and recommendations to various provisions of House Bill 4291. (HB 4291, which is under consideration by the Committee, seeks to institute a national land use policy, provide the implementing mechanisms, and appropriate funds therefor.) Bello admitted that the country has several existing land use laws that cover specific sectors or uses, such as ancestral domain, agricultural lands, build-up areas and settlements, coastal zones, forest lands, national parks, mineral lands, tourism and heritage zones, transportation, and infrastructure. She conveyed the DHSUD's support for the adoption of a comprehensive national land use policy to harmonize the aforementioned laws and thereby address conflicting land use policies, which is essential in ensuring the sustainability of land use and development in the country. Meanwhile, Sumilang informed the body that the DHSUD, Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), Department of Budget and Management (DBM), and Department of Finance (DOF) are currently finalizing a joint memorandum circular (JMC) on the updated guidelines on the harmonization of local development planning, land use planning, investment programming, resource mobilization, budgeting, expenditure management, and performance monitoring and coordination in fiscal oversight under the environment of full devolution. According to Sumilang, this JMC will amend DILG-NEDA-DBM-DOF JMC 1, s. 2016 by including land use planning in the rationalization, harmonization, and enhancement of local planning and budgeting processes.
	• Human Settlements Adjudication Commission (HSAC)	HSAC Special Bids and Awards Committee Chair Reuben Zabala presented the history of the Commission starting from its predecessor the Human Settlements Commission (HSC), which was created in 1976, to its current status as HSAC. Zabala narrated that the late President Ferdinand E. Marcos created the HSC by virtue of Presidential Decree (PD) 933 to develop and modernize communities and optimize land use as a resource for public welfare. On June 2, 1978, he said PD 1396 was issued creating the Ministry of Human Settlements (MHS) with a goal to provide every community with basic needs and resources as well as manage urban development, and promote innovative land and community development. He said that under the same law, the HSC was renamed Human Settlements Regulatory Commission (HSRC) and became the regulatory arm of the MHS. Zabala went on to say that when Executive Order (EO) 648 was issued on February 7, 1981, reorganizing, and strengthening the HSRC, it was granted powers and attributes of a quasi-judicial body; conferred jurisdiction over decisions and actions of local and regional planning and zoning bodies; and assumed the regulatory functions of the National Housing Authority in its implementation of PD 957 and other related laws. With the approval of the government's national shelter program in 1986, Zabala said the late President Corazon Aquino issued EO 90 which abolished the MHS; created the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) for policy making and coordination of activities of all housing agencies; and defined the mandates of HSRC making it one of the key shelter agencies and renamed it Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board (HLURB).

Continuation… Land Use (Special Committee)		Upon the enactment of Republic Act 11201, Zabala said the HLURB was reconstituted as the HSAC which shall have exclusive appellate jurisdiction over all cases decided by the Regional Adjudicators and appeals from decisions of local and regional planning and zoning bodies. The Regional Adjudicators shall exercise original and exclusive jurisdiction to hear and decide cases involving the following: subdivisions, condominiums, memorial parks and similar real estate developments; homeowners associations; disputes involving the implementation of Section 18 of RA 7279 (Urban Development and Housing Act of 1992), as amended, and its implementing rules and regulations; and disputes or controversies involving laws and regulations being implemented by the DHSUD except those cases falling within the jurisdiction of other judicial or quasi-judicial body. In reply to the query of Rep. Matugas relative to the process for resolving cases, Zabala explained that a review or appeal pertaining to regulatory orders and resolutions of the regional field officers (Directors) now go directly to the DHSUD Secretary and then to the Office of the President (OP), unlike before when everything went through the Board of Commissioners then elevated either to the Court of Appeals (CA) or the OP. Responding to the query of General Santos City Rep. Loreto Acharon, Zabala stated that, pursuant to RA 11201, all decisions of the Commission, including appeals from quasi-judicial agencies, are now elevated to the CA under Rule 43 of the Revised Rules of Court; and thereafter to the Supreme Court and no longer to the OP.
	• Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)	DENR Assistant Secretary Marcial Amaro highlighted the mandate of the Department as the principal government agency responsible for the preservation, management, and development of the country's environment and natural resources. Amaro stated that the DENR has always been supportive of the enactment of a national land use law ever since it was first proposed many years back. He said that the DENR has worked with the NEDA in the crafting of the proposed NLUA. Amaro informed the body that the official total land area of the Philippines is 30 million hectares, of which 15.8 million ha or 52.7% is classified as forest lands, which include public forest, permanent forest or forest reserves, and forest reservations; and 14.2 million ha or 47.3% is alienable and disposable lands subject to titling and ownership by private individuals. The DENR's specific comments, observations, and recommendations on the relevant provisions of the proposed NLUA were likewise presented by Amaro. He then discussed the mandates of the DENR with respect to the management of the country's land resources. Amaro presented an integrated map on biodiversity which reflected the datasets officially issued by the Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB), comprising of protected areas, caves, inland wetlands, and critical habitats. She mentioned that there are 248 protected areas under the National Integrated Protected Areas System or NIPAS comprising of 7.8 million hectares. As regards the Land Management Bureau's (LMB) mandate, Amaro said it is in charge of the management and disposition of alienable and disposable lands of the public domain. Amaro added that as the steward of the country's mineral resources, the DENR is committed to the promotion of sustainable mineral resources development, aware of its contribution to national economic growth and countryside community development. The DENR also fully

Continuation… Land Use (Special Committee)		recognizes that the development of a responsive policy framework in partnership with stakeholders that will govern mineral exploration and investment decisions and an effective institutional structure, is a fundamental requisite for the sustainable utilization of the country's mineral resources. Rep. Matugas inquired as to what will happen to areas under the Mineral Production Sharing Agreement (MPA) that are not mined. DENR Mines and Geoscience Bureau (MGB) Director Wilfredo Moncano explained that areas under the MPAs that are not mined within the prescribed period shall be relinquished back to the government.
	• Department of Agrarian Reforms (DAR)	DAR Policy and Research Office Assistant Secretary Engineer Joey Sumatra stated that the DAR's comments submitted to the Committee pertain to the previous bills filed, proposing the establishment of the NLUA, and not on HB 4291. He averred that DAR's evaluation "is within the framework of the social justice component and agrarian reform mandate under the Constitution." Sumatra noted that land conversion is the "inverse of agrarian reform." He said that as stated in RA 6657 or the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL), passed on June 15, 1988 implementing the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), apart from providing for the substantive and procedural requirements for land acquisition and distribution, DAR regulates the ownership, disposition, and use of agricultural lands and allows conversion of agricultural lands under certain conditions. Moreover, Sumatra stated that RA 9700 or the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Extension with Reforms (CARPER), passed on August 7, 2009 amended the CARP and ended the issuance and service of notice of coverage in 2014; imposed additional requirements for conversion of agricultural lands; and mandated that irrigated and irrigable lands are non-negotiable for conversion. Further, he pointed out that Section 2 of the same law provides that the conversion of agricultural lands into industrial, commercial or residential lands shall take into account the tillers' rights and the national food security. Furthermore, Sumatra posited that the moment an agricultural land is converted into residential, commercial or industrial use, it ceases to be within the ambit of agrarian reform laws and thus can no longer be subjected to acquisition and distribution under the CARP. He added that such land is also no longer covered by the five-hectare ownership ceiling requirement for agricultural lands, and thus, may be sold, assigned, transferred, or mortgaged without the involvement of DAR. Sumatra confirmed that DAR is the lead agency in the implementation of the CARL, as stated in Executive Order (EO) 129-A, which vested DAR with the responsibility of implementing the CARP, and authorized DAR to establish and promulgate policies, rules and regulations for the implementation of the agrarian reform program. Sumatra recommended that the jurisdiction to hear and decide on cases involving disputes in the conversion of agricultural lands, including cases of illegal land use conversion, should remain with the DAR, and not be assumed by the DHSUD. According to Sumatra, the passage of the proposed NLUA, as it is currently crafted, will contradict the clear and unequivocal commitment of the President to continue the agrarian reform program.
North Luzon Growth Quadrangle	Briefing by the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) and the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) on their respective plans and programs and budget allocation for the repair and rehabilitation of damaged buildings and other	The Committee, chaired Rep. Angelo Marcos Barba (2nd District, Ilocos Norte), listened to the briefing of the OCD and DPWH on their respective plans and programs and budget allocation for the repair and rehabilitation of damaged infrastructure in Regions I, II and CAR.

Continuation… North Luzon Growth Quadrangle	infrastructure caused by the calamities in Regions I and II and the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR)	At the outset, Rep. Barba explained that the meeting was called to get an overview of the regional recovery plans and programs of the different agencies. He said the Committee also intends to determine the budget requirement for the rehabilitation of damaged buildings and other infrastructures brought about by the calamities that hit the three regions. He informed the body that several legislative measures have already been filed to improve the country's disaster response and resilience. Specific proposals include the following: increase the funding of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration and the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology; establish rainwater harvesting facilities; and modernize the country's public health emergency preparedness and response capabilities. Further, he highlighted that the Regional Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Councils of Cordillera and Cagayan Valley have also solicited the assistance of the Committee for the realization of their respective rehabilitation and recovery programs.
	• Office of Civil Defense (OCD)	OCD Rehabilitation and Recovery Management Service Director Harold Cabreros presented the post disaster needs and assessment of calamity-hit areas in North Luzon. He also reported on the status of the rehabilitation and recovery programs in relation to the Magnitude 7 earthquake and Typhoons Quinta, Rolly, and Ulysses and other disasters in 2020. According to Cabreros, the recorded total cost of damages in CAR brought about by the aforementioned calamities reached P3.11 billion and the estimated rehabilitation cost is P4.43 billion. Meanwhile, for Region 1, total cost of damages was P260.57 million and the total rehabilitation cost is P1.17 billion. He explained that the funds for the rehabilitation and repair projects in these regions shall be sourced from the following: 1) National Disaster Risk Reduction Management (NDRRM) Fund; 2) regular agency fund; 3) quick response fund (QRF); 4) local funds; 5) and other non-government sources such as financing from development partners and the private sector. He said the OCD, as the implementing arm of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, is awaiting the submission of documentary requirements from implementing agencies for the funding of their respective rehabilitation projects through the NDRRM fund.
	• Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH)	DPWH Region I Director Ronnel Tan discussed that a budget of P485.50 million was allocated for Region I to fund 40 rehabilitation and recovery projects. Of this budget, the amount of P472.47 million was already released. He said these projects include the repair and rehabilitation of several bridges that were damaged by the earthquake, as well as clearing operations for roads affected by landslides due to the typhoons. However, he said various projects still need to be done to fully realize the rehabilitation and recovery efforts envisioned for the region, which would require an additional funding of about P2.50 billion. Meanwhile, DPWH Region II OIC-Assistant Director Editha Babaran briefed the Committee on the impact of the past major calamities to the region's infrastructures. She reported that the total estimated cost of damages on roads, bridges, and flood control structures is P357.41 million while the total estimated cost of restoration is around P1.01 billion. For CAR, DPWH Regional Director Khadaffy Tanggol said the total cost of damaged infrastructure in CAR covering the Provinces of Abra, Apayao, Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga, Mountain Province, and the City of Baguio, is P2.49 billion. Out of the total P2.72 billion budget requirement of the region to undertake the necessary restoration, the amount of P436.80 million was already released, according to Tanggol. Rep. Joseph "Jojo" Lara (3rd District, Cagayan) conveyed the query of

Continuation… North Luzon Growth Quadrangle		Nueva Vizcaya Rep. Luisa Lloren Cuaresma concerning the process of prioritization of local government rehabilitation projects that will be funded through the NDRRM fund. Cabreros replied that the criteria for identifying the priority projects include the impact of the calamity on the livelihood in the area, the vulnerability of the area to disasters, and whether the municipalities affected belong to the fourth, fifth and sixth classes. Rep. Lara enjoined the agencies concerned to fast-track their rehabilitation efforts and not wait for the damaged infrastructures to be unsalvageable. He added that collaboration among disaster response agencies is key and must therefore be intensified. In reply to the query of Mountain Province Rep. Maximo Dalog Jr. regarding the assistance provided by the National Housing Authority (NHA) to those whose houses were totally damaged by the magnitude 7 earthquake, NHA Region I and CAR 1 District Manager Jefferson Ganado said that the NHA provides a resettlement area for each local government unit affected by the earthquake. Replying to the query of Rep. Allan Ty (Party-List, LPGMA), Cabreros explained that the source of funds for the repair of damaged national roads is through the NDRRM fund, while local roads rehabilitation is charged against the Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management fund. However, he said heavily damaged local roads may still be funded through the NDRRM fund subject to the approval of the President. He also said that all rehabilitation projects involving roads and bridges are submitted to the DPWH for evaluation.
Southern Tagalog Development	Briefing on the situation of areas devastated by severe Tropical Storm Paeng, and the plans and actions of concerned government agencies in the CALABARZON region • Office of Civil Defense (OCD)	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Ruth Mariano-Hernandez (2nd District, Laguna), listened to the briefings by the concerned government agencies on the situation of areas devastated by severe Tropical Storm Paeng and their respective plans and actions in the CALABARZON region. OCD CALABARZON Regional Director Maria Theresa Escolano reported on the cost of damages incurred in the CALABARZON region caused by severe Tropical Storm Paeng: agriculture, P1.7 billion; infrastructures (national), P1.18 billion; infrastructures (local), P592.96 million; and infrastructures (schools), P169 million. She also reported that about 23,021 houses were either totally or partially damaged. Escolano apprised the Committee of its ongoing response and early recovery operations in the region, such as the provision of food and non-food items and other necessities to affected communities and localities; deployment of medical, camp management, and law and order personnel and clearing teams; and provision of mobility and other logistical requirements. According to Escolano, the conduct of post-disaster needs assessment (PDNA) is necessary in order to assess the damage, losses, and needs for recovery in key social infrastructure and productive sectors due to Paeng. The OCD also intends to undertake the following actions: • Conduct of a thorough study to address urban flooding in Cavite and Laguna, with focus on the drainage system; • Improvement and installation of flood early warning system and rain gauges and regular conduct of flood drills in coordination with the Department of Science and Technology; • Strict implementation of easements from rivers as prescribed under Presidential Decree 1067 or the Water Code of the Philippines; • Adoption of Build-Back-Better principle in reconstruction of various structures affected by disasters; and • Work with the local government units (LGUs) and regional

Continuation… Southern Tagalog Development		line agencies for the improvement of waterways and rivers including the conduct of regular dredging and/or desilting.
	• Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH)	DPWH Region IV-A Engineer Denmar Naval reported that the total estimated cost of damaged infrastructure in the region reached P1.16 billion while the total estimated cost for repair and rehabilitation of damaged infrastructure would amount to P2.43 billion. The DPWH, as discussed by Naval, has taken the following steps in anticipation of and in response to the effects of severe Tropical Storm Paeng: • Activated the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Team prior to Paeng's landfall; • Prepositioned quick response assets (QRAs) to 16 district engineering offices (DEOs) and the Region IV-A office; • Deployed equipment and manpower relative to the conduct of clearing operations; • Installed warning signs, safety devices, and informative signs to the affected road sections; and • Assessed/validated the request for Quick Response Fund (QRF) of all infrastructure projects damaged by the typhoon submitted by the DEOs.
	• Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).	DSWD Region IV-A Assistant Regional Director Mylah Gatchalian informed the Committee that a total of 276,428 families were affected by Severe Tropical Storm Paeng in the CALABARZON Region. She reported that the total cost of assistance provided to affected families by the DSWD amounted to P75.21 million. She likewise updated the body on DSWD's continuing response to the needs of about 1,891 displaced families in evacuation centers through the provision of food and non-food items. On the concern raised by Rep. Ramon Jolo Revilla III (1st District, Cavite) regarding the quality of flood control infrastructures in the CALABARZON provinces which he said barely lasted a year, DPWH Assistant Division Chief Michael Angeles gave the assurance that the Department will revisit and redesign the structures to make them more resilient to severe tropical storms and strong typhoons like Paeng. Rep. Mariano-Hernandez inquired on the availability of assistance for those whose livelihoods were severely affected particularly in the agriculture sector, and for those whose houses were partially or totally damaged because of Paeng. In response to this, Gatchalian said that eligible farmer beneficiaries can avail themselves of assistance under the DSWD's Sustainable Livelihood Program while those whose houses were damaged may be granted assistance through its emergency cash transfer program, subject to validation by the concerned LGU. According to Gatchalian, the DSWD is expecting the release of P113 billion next year for the emergency cash transfer.