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No. 8a

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 9:00 a.m., the session was resumed with Deputy Speaker Bernadette "BH" Herrera-Dy presiding.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). The session is resumed.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). The session is suspended.

It was 9:00 a.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 9:06 a.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). The session is resumed.
Majority Leader.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). The session is suspended.

It was 9:06 a.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 9:07 a.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). The session is resumed.
Majority Leader.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 10153

Continuation

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move for the resumption of the consideration of House Bill No. 10153 contained in Committee Report No. 1230, and please direct the Secretary General to read the title of the Bill.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). The Secretary General is directed to read the title of the Bill.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 10153, entitled: "AN ACT APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR THE OPERATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES FROM JANUARY ONE TO DECEMBER THIRTY-ONE, TWO THOUSAND AND TWENTY-TWO."

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Majority Leader.

CAREER EXECUTIVE SERVICE BOARD

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we open the period of sponsorship and debate on the proposed budget of the Career Executive Service Board.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Hearing no objection, the motion is approved.

Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, to sponsor the office of the Career Executive Service Board, may we recognize Honorable Gonzaga, the Vice Chair of the Committee on Appropriations, to sponsor the budget of the Career Executive Service Board.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Honorable Gonzaga is recognized.

REP. GONZAGA. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Good morning.

REP. BOLILIA. Before we proceed, Mme. Speaker, may I request that we acknowledge the presence of the following guests from the Career Executive Service Board: Maria Marcy Cosare-Ballesteros, the Executive Director; Darius R. Maya, OIC, Director III/Chief of Eligibility and Rank Appointment Division; Jocelyn P. Lachica, OIC, Director III/Chief of Finance and Administrative Division; Kirk Matthew V. Alfante, Planning Officer; and Cristina P. Maya, Budget Officer.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Welcome to the House of Representatives. Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. May we recognize the honorable Minority Leader, Congressman Paduano, for his manifestation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Hon. Stephen Paduano is recognized.

REP. PADUANO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, Majority Floor Leader.

Good morning, everyone. Mme. Speaker, there being no other member from the Minority who wishes to ask questions, I move to terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Career Executive Service Board.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, on the part of the Majority, we join the Minority on its motion to close the period of sponsorship and debate on the proposed budget of the Career Executive Service Board.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Hearing no objection, the period of sponsorship and debate on the budget of the Career Executive Service Board is now terminated. Majority Leader.

ANTI-RED TAPE AUTHORITY

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we open the period of sponsorship and debate on the proposed budget of the Anti-Red Tape Authority.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Hearing no objection, the period of sponsorship and debate on the budget of ARTA is now open.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize Honorable Gonzaga, Vice Chair of the Committee on Appropriations, to sponsor the proposed budget of the Anti-Red Tape Authority.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Honorable Gonzaga is recognized.

REP. GONZAGA. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Good morning and we are ready.

REP. BOLILIA. Before we proceed, Mme. Speaker, I wish that we acknowledge the presence of the following: Director General, Atty. Jeremiah Belgica; Deputy Director General for Admin and Finance, BGen. Carlos F. Quita (Ret.); Deputy Director General for Operations, Atty. Ernesto V. Perez; Deputy Director General for Legal, Atty. Eduardo Bringas; Dir. Rabindranath P. Quilala; and DC Gilbert Castro.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Welcome to my dear friend, Jeremiah

Belgica, and the rest of ARTA family. Welcome to the House of Representatives.

Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the honorable Minority Leader Joseph Stephen Paduano for his manifestation.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Hon. Stephen Paduano is now recognized.

MANIFESTATION OF REP. PADUANO

REP. PADUANO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, Majority Floor Leader. Mme. Speaker, before I move for the termination of the period of sponsorship and debate on the budget of ARTA, Mme. Speaker, I just like to manifest and convey the manifestation being delivered by Deputy Speaker Bernadette Herrera-Dy and of course, our esteemed Deputy Speaker of BUHAY Party-List, Cong. Lito Atienza, for the increase of the budget of the said agency, Mme. Speaker.

Now, Mme. Speaker, there being no member from the Minority who wishes to ask questions, I move to terminate the deliberation and debate on the budget of the Anti-Red Tape Authority.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, on the part of the Majority, we join the Minority in its motion to terminate the period of sponsorship and debate on the proposed budget of the Anti-Red Tape Authority.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Hearing no objection, the period of sponsorship and debate on the budget of the Anti-Red Tape Authority is now terminated, taking note of the manifestation of DS Lito Atienza.

Yes, Majority Leader.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move for a few minutes' suspension.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). The session is suspended.

It was 9:13 a.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 9:16 a.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). The session is resumed.

Majority Leader.

PHILIPPINES SPORTS COMMISSION

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we open the period of sponsorship and debate on the proposed budget of the Philippine Sports Commission.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Hearing no objection, the period of sponsorship and debate on the budget of the Philippine Sports Commission is now open.

Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize Hon. Ruwel S. Gonzaga, Vice Chair of the Committee on Appropriations, to sponsor the budget of the Philippine Sports Commission.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Honorable Gonzaga is recognized.

REP. GONZAGA. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. We are ready.

REP. BOLILIA. Before we proceed, Mme. Speaker, may we acknowledge the presence of the Chairperson of the Philippine Sports Commission, Chairperson William Ramirez, Dir. Marc Edward Velasco, Mr. Lauro Domingo and Mr. Erik Jean Mayores.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Of course, welcome to our Philippine Sports Commission Chair, Butch Ramirez. Hi Tito and to the rest of the PSC family. Welcome to the House of Representatives.

Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, may we recognize Hon. Bambol Tolentino of Cavite to interpellate the Sponsor on the proposed budget of the PSC.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). The honorable Deputy Speaker Bambol Tolentino is now recognized.

MANIFESTATION OF REP. TOLENTINO

REP. TOLENTINO. Good morning. Yes, good morning, Mme. Speaker.

Good morning, my dear colleague and the Sponsor of this budget for the Philippine Sports Commission.

Para po mabilis, I will not interpellate but because I know the budget given to the Philippine Sports Commission, the PSC, by the DBM—it is amounting to P175 million. Yes, Mme. Presiding Officer, this Representation fully understands and is aware of the budget needed by the PSC, the Philippine Sports Commission, as the agency that funds the sports of our nation as mandated in its charter when it was created and thus stated in our Constitution. But it also happened that this Representation is also the President of the Philippine Olympic Committee who is in charge of all athletes under its different NSA, the National Sports Association. The POC is also the owner of all international events sanctioned by the International Olympic Committee.

With that, we submit to the PSC the needed budget for those major international competitions because we determine through our National Sports Association the number of athletes who will compete, including the officials of those competitions, including qualifying tournaments to earn points to qualify for the Olympics, and we send quality athletes, not as tourists, but we give honor and glory to our country. Mme. Speaker, the DBM was correct by giving in NEP P175 million for the PSC. Yes, they know how

much they will give but they are also correct because the DBM knows if there is a balance from the 2021 budget or unspent or savings due to non-activities because of the pandemic. Besides, the DBM knows that PAGCOR will remit monthly to the PSC as another source, the figures of which, I do not know.

Mme. Speaker, hindi naman po siguro akalain ng DBM na after 97 years, mabe-break na po natin ang history na magkaka-gold na po at multi-medal pa. When the budget was prepared, hindi pa po nangyayari iyon—iyong kaganapang iyon sa Olympics na nagbigay ng karangalan sa bansa lalo na po sa gitna tayo ng pandemya. Hindi rin po kami tinanong, with due respect to the PSC—hindi rin po kami tinanong ng PSC kung magkano ang pangangailangan as part of planning, as part of budget process which that system should be corrected for the record, Mme. Speaker, and also part of our oversight function of our institution.

To make the story short, Mme. Speaker, this Representation is just protecting and making sure that our qualified national athletes can compete next year in full force on those five major events that happen only every four years plus the Southeast Asian Games in Vietnam where we are the defending overall champion. These are the Winter Olympics Games in February in Beijing; the 6th Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games in Thailand—March; the World Games, by invitation only in Alabama, in July; and the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou, China in September; plus the 5th Asian Youth Games in Shantou, China in December.

The total budget, Mme. Speaker, needed for these, including the training, is around P650 million, Mme. Speaker. Hindi po gaanong kalakihan. Maaari pong ibawas na lang kung hindi na gagamitin ang face shields, marami pong pagkukunan. Hindi ko po pinakikialaman, Mme. Speaker, what other budget is needed by the PSC.

Mme. Speaker, my concern is the budget needed by our athletes in these major competitions. This Representation is also willing to put a provision as an oversight function, that all cancelled competitions as stated will be treated as savings and returned to the DBM or National Treasury if that will be so, Mme. Speaker.

So, Mme. Speaker, with this manifestation, I know that P175 million only is given to the PSC. We badly need this P650 million for those five major events including the – plus the SEA Games and I promise – we promise that we will give another honor. Magbibigay lang po kami ng karangalan para sa bansa. Hindi po masyadong kalakihan ang inaapila ko, then, Mme. Speaker. Hoping that this will be treated and included in the period of amendments and if not, hopefully there will be cluster Bicam and if not again, hopefully in the Bicam. Mahirap na pong makalimutan ang pangangailangan ng ating atleta na nagbibigay ng karangalan sa ating bansa.

Maraming salamat po and good day, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the honorable Minority Leader Joseph Stephen Paduano for his manifestation.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). The honorable Minority Leader Paduano is now recognized.

REP. PADUANO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Thank you, Majority Floor Leader.

Mme. Speaker, before I formally terminate the deliberation on the budget, I would like to convey for and on behalf of the Minority, we join the manifestation of Deputy Speaker Bambol Tolentino for the increase of the budget of the Philippine Sports Commission. With that, Mme. Speaker, there being no other member from the Minority who wishes to ask questions, I move to terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Philippine Sports Commission.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, on the part of the Majority, we join the Minority in its

motion to terminate the period of sponsorship and debate on the budget of the Philippine Sports Commission.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Hearing no objection, the period of sponsorship and debate on the budget of the Philippine Sports Commission is now terminated. Taking note of the manifestation of Deputy Speaker Bambol Tolentino – well-deserved for the Philippine Sports Commission. Congratulations!

Majority Leader.

THE JUDICIARY

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we now proceed to open the period of sponsorship and debate on the proposed budget of the Judiciary and please recognize Hon. Ruwel S. Gonzaga, Vice Chair of the Committee on Appropriations, to sponsor the proposed budget.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Hearing no objection, the period of sponsorship and debate on the budget of the Judiciary is now open. We recognize Honorable Gonzaga.

REP. GONZAGA. Good morning, Ma'am. We are ready.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Before we proceed, Mme. Speaker, may we acknowledge the presence of our guests in the plenary hall: Court Administrator Jose Midas P. Marquez; Deputy Court Administrator Raul B. Villanueva; and via Zoom, Supreme Court Associate Justice Rodil V. Zalameda; Supreme Court Associate Justice Samuel H. Gaerlan; Supreme Court Associate Justice Jhosep Y. Lopez; Court of Appeals Presiding Justice Remedios A. Salazar-Fernando; Court of Appeals Associate Justice Edwin D. Sorongon; Sandiganbayan Presiding Justice Amparo M. Cabotaje-Tang; Sandiganbayan Associate Justice Karl B.

Miranda; Sandiganbayan Associate Justice Geraldine Faith A. Econg; Sandiganbayan Associate Justice Sarah Jane T. Fernandez; and Court of Tax Appeals Presiding Justice Roman G. Del Rosario.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Welcome to the House of Representatives, the Judiciary family.

Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize Rep. Carlos Isagani T. Zarate of Party-List BAYAN MUNA to interpellate the Sponsor.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Hon. Carlos Zarate of BAYAN MUNA is hereby recognized.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Magandang umaga po sa iyo at sa ating mga kasamahan diyan sa plenaryo. Magandang umaga sa ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor at sa buong pamilya po ng Judiciary.

Mme. Speaker, I will go directly to my points and interpellation.

Will the good Sponsor yield to some questions related to the budget of the Judiciary, as well as other matters related thereto?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Well, thank you, Mr. Sponsor.

Noong budget briefing po ng Judiciary ay nakita naman uli natin itong trend na tinapyasan ang budget ng Judiciary.

My first question, Mr. Sponsor. Ayon sa ating Saligang Batas, ano po ba ang kahulugan ng may financial autonomy ang Judiciary, as well as the other constitutional bodies, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. Yes. Sa 2022 NEP, may decrease iyong proposed budget from—I think, there is a decrease of sort of P45 billion to P44 billion, so under our Constitution, the previous budget of the Supreme Court or the Judiciary

shall not be decreased. Sa nangyari ngayon, sa 2022, it is very clear that there is really a decrease, so, sa briefing natin noong nakaraan, ang daming mga Congress persons na talagang gustong iangat uli iyong budget ng Judiciary.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat po sa tugon ninyo, kagalang-galang na Sponsor.

Clearly, this is not in accordance—the reduction of the budget ng Korte Suprema as an independent, co-equal in fact, branch of the government, is not in accordance with what is laid down in our Constitution, na mayroon silang fiscal autonomy.

Kaya po, makikita natin doon sa budget, sa Supreme Court proper, for example, iyong budget niya for 2021 ay nasa P39.77 billion. Sa susunod na taon, ang nasa NEP, ay nasa P36.76 billion na lamang, tinapyasan. Ang Presidential Electoral Tribunal, from P158 million ginawang P146 million; ang Court of Appeals, from P3.53 billion ginawang P3.4 billion; ang Sandiganbayan from P1.31 billion ginawang P1.12 billion; ang Court of Tax Appeals—P541.14 million ginawang—ito lang yata ang may increase na nakita ko, ginawang P549.69 million. But, total sa 2021 budget, it is already P45.31 billion na ginawa na lamang P44.98 billion.

Now, from the good Sponsor, dahil kayo na po ang mag-i-Sponsor nito, what is the assurance that the good Sponsor can make in this Plenary that this budget, na tinapyas po ng DBM, will be restored at least to the level, if not increase, as proposed by the Judiciary for 2022—level of 2021, I mean, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. During the budget briefing of the Judiciary, the Judiciary asked for a Motion for Reconsideration and they are asking for P7.47 billion on top of the P44 billion na nakalaan doon sa NEP. Iyong sinasabi mo na na-slash lahat na, sa CTA, CA, Sandiganbayan, iyon po ang covered ng Motion for Reconsideration ng Judiciary sa P7.47 billion.

During the briefing, lahat ng Miyembro, including your bloc, including your Party-List, were asking for the increase of the budget of the Judiciary as not to violate the provision of the Constitution at saka iyong fiscal autonomy

na sinasabi mo. So, we are of the principle na we have to accommodate the increase of the Judiciary as not to violate our—the fundamental law of the land, the Constitution.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, good Sponsor. We appreciate hearing that from the good Sponsor. Dahil nga po, doon talaga sa subject for Motion for Reconsideration ng Judiciary, kasama na nga diyan iyong mga hazard pay for lower court judges, that are designated also as judges-at-large, iyong Magna Carta for our Social Workers na naglilingkod sa ating mga korte and other expenses.

I will go to a more very relevant item. May I know from the good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, is there a budget—natapyasan na, pero ang gusto kong maitanong ngayon, mayroon po bang budget sa susunod na taon ang Korte Suprema para po doon sa ating mga COVID-19 intervention? For example, nitong mga nakaraang mga araw po, halos napakarami pong mga Halls of Justice na kailangang i-lockdown dahil ang atin pong mga court personnel, even some of the judges, ay nagkaroon ng COVID. Siguro ang isang kadahilanan dito ay talagang kulang sa testing, iyong contact tracing at iba pang related na insidente kaya kumakalat ang COVID-19 even dito po sa mga Bulwagan ng Katarungan, na kung saan nandoon ang ating mga korte.

So, may I know from the good Sponsor, from the slashed budget of the Supreme Court, is there an item or is there a program, activity or project related to this?

REP. GONZAGA. For 2022, the Supreme Court, the Judiciary has allotted for the following: sa Supreme Court of the Philippines and the lower courts, kahit na doon sa NEP na P44 billion, and the Judiciary was able to allot P960,235,000 for the COVID-related expenditures. Sa Court of Tax Appeals, mayroon din naman. So, I will be sending you the list of COVID-related expenses or allotments or budgets for 2022 for the Supreme Court of the Philippines and the lower courts as well as the CTA. So, mayroon po naman iyong nakalaan na budget para sa problema natin sa COVID with regard to the Judiciary.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

At iyon nga po ang nakababahala, dahil po iyong binanggit po ninyo, halimbawa po sa Supreme Court and lower courts, Supreme Court proper and lower courts. Iyon pong binanggit ninyo na P960 million na iyan is still subject for a Motion for Reconsideration. Kaya, mariin ko pong minumungkahi sa Kapulungang ito na talagang dapat i-reconsider iyong pondong iyan dahil nakapaloob diyan, halimbawa, iyong budget for the lower courts, 'no, supply and hazard pay due to COVID-19. In fact, noong budget briefing, noong tinanong ko ang details niyan ni hindi pa nga naisama diyan iyong provision for—talagang—kahit hindi linggo-linggo kundi, at least, periodic or regular testing for our court personnel na nasa frontline din. We have to consider that they are also in the frontline in the delivery of justice in our country, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. Yes, there is a provision for that in the MOOE, but this is still subject for a Motion for Reconsideration. Can the good Sponsor confirm that this is a part of the Motion for Reconsideration submitted by the Supreme Court?

REP. GONZAGA. Yes, we confirm that this budget, as I have mentioned earlier, ay kasali po sa Motion for Reconsideration ng Judiciary which in total P7.47 billion. So, tayo naman doon sa budget briefing, lahat naman tayo nagsang-ayon na we have to support the Motion for Reconsideration of the Judiciary.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

I have to really hammer that point dahil po mayroon akong mga kaibigan na nagtatrabaho sa korte, even as we speak now, tinamaan sila ng COVID, 'no, and in fact, they have to spend on their own para po magkaroon lang ng—magpa-test. At napakahalaga po ng usapin na ito. Of course, I am saying this not only for the Judiciary, but to other government agencies as well kung saan napapasabak po ang ating mga kawani sa pang-araw-araw na hamon nitong COVID-19.

Now, at the proper time, good Sponsor, with your support, of course, kayo ang

mangunguna diyan, this Representation will propose amendments for the restoration of the slashed budget of the DBM as contained – of the Judiciary na napaloob po doon sa kanilang Motion for Reconsideration. In fact, I also would like to put it on record that we also support several of their special provisions na gusto nilang mapasama sa budget ng Judiciary na hindi rin na-consider ng DBM sa NEP.

Now, Mr. good Sponsor, may I go now to some items that I think are also important.

During the budget deliberation last year, tayo rin ang nagkatalakayan nito dito sa Plenaryo at ngayon budget na naman, maaalala ko po isa sa ating pinag-usapan ay iyong panukala po natin na magkaroon na sana ng improvement o susog dito sa rules on the Writ of Amparo and Writ of Habeas Data as protective writs para po sa karapatan ng ating mga mamamayan. And I can still remember that the Court Administrator, Justice Midas, assured this Representation, as well as the Plenary that this is forthcoming – how to strengthen these writs, protective writs.

May I now know, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, ano na po ang nangyari rito pagkatapos ng isang taon?

REP. GONZAGA. Sa mga writs na iyan, Habeas Data, Amparo, Kalikasan, including Kalayaan.

REP. ZARATE. Yes, bagong proposal po iyong Writ of Kalayaan, Mr. Sponsor.

REP. GONZAGA. May ginagawa naman iyong Judiciary and technical working group, and they are tinkering about it and tinkering on it, and at the same time, lalabas na po iyong bagong Revised Rules ng Criminal Procedure. So, iyong concern niyo po ay ina-address na rin ng Judiciary.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you. I appreciate to hear that, Mr. Sponsor. May I just know the timeline, dahil po habang nag-uusap tayo ngayon, bawat segundo, bawat minuto at bawat araw ay napakahalaga po ang mga protective writs na ito. Sabi nga natin, sa panahon ng mga kagipitan at kaguluhan, ang Hudikatura ang huling takbuhan ng ating

mga mamamayan para maproteksiyunan ang kanilang mga karapatang pantao.

So, napakahalaga po na, if I may hammer the point na kagyat itong matugunan kasi isang taon na po natin itong napag-uusapan, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GONZAGA. Yes, Sir. The Judiciary is seriously studying on it and hopefully, they will come with a concrete answer to your concern, Sir.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, for that. Well, of course, we have to put it on record that we appreciate the moves of the Supreme Court, the Judiciary, especially the Supreme Court, in responding to the calls of our people to respond to the widespread human rights violations.

I already put it on record sa budget briefing, iyong paglabas noong mga sinasabing warrants from the search warrants factory that resulted in wide – reckless, if I may say, issuances of warrants na nagresulta sa pagkamatay ng maraming mga ordinaryong sibilyan at pagkakulong.

But eventually, halimbawa, nitong bago nakulong ng mahigit isang taon iyong isang teacher ay pinakawalan rin ng korte dahil walang napatunayan na pagkakasala. But, then again, sa panahon ng pandemya sila ay nakulong dahil dito sa, inordinate, if I may say again, issuances of the search warrant. And we laud the Supreme Court for coming up with actions on these, including coming up with Rules on the Use of Body-Worn Cameras in the Execution of Warrants by law enforcement agencies in the conduct of their operations.

So, we will await the good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, these amendments and the new Rules of Court that will address and protect the rights of our people. The so-called judicial activism is welcome if it benefits our people, especially our ordinary people in this time na nagkaroon po ng malawakang paglabag sa karapatang pantao.

Now, of late, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, mayroon na naman po tayong kapatid sa propesyon, sa legal community na pinaslang nitong mga nakaraang mga araw, si Atty.

Juan Macababba. Siya po ang Vice Chair ng Union of Peoples Lawyers in Mindanao and isang public interest lawyer. He is, I think 58, or sa talaan ng NUPL, but 65, sa talaan ng ibang mga independent human rights group na abogado na pinaslang sa—since July 1 of 2016. Kasama na rin dito ang ibang mga huwes, mga piskal, at iba pang mga miyembro ng legal community.

May I just know for the record, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, ano po ang ginagawa ng Korte Suprema sa napakaraming pagpaslang na ito sa mga miyembro ng legal community, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. GONZAGA. Sa lahat naman ng pinaslang na mga sinasabi mo na ganyan, it has been reported to the Judiciary and the Judiciary is monitoring, and of course, they are studying how to curb the incidents like that. So, alam naman natin na kapag may abogadong pinatay talagang may imbestigasyon iyan.

For example, personal-related problem or work-related problem so, we have to await the investigations conducted by the appropriate agencies on that matter. Kasi, hindi naman lahat na killings ay sasabihin natin associated sa, work-related ba. Lahat naman, like for example, sa atin bago lang may pinatay na isang abogada doon sa Davao City. Ang sabi nila work-related, ang sabi naman nila drug-related. Lahat naman inoostodyohan iyan. So, I think, the Supreme Court is segregating, ano ba itong work-related at saka non-work-related? So, kaya lang—lalabas din iyan, so, we have to await with the investigation conducted by the appropriate agency, particularly the PNP, on that matter.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, we appreciate your reply, but, of course, we understand the limitation of the Judiciary and the Supreme Court. Ang ipinupunto lang ng Kinatawang ito, we appreciate, these past months, a very rare occasion, the Supreme Court issued a statement, strong statement condemning these killings involving lawyers, judges and prosecutors. Sa parte po naman ng Kinatawang ito, whether that is work-related,

marami diyan talaga ay work-related, pero ang pagpaslang ay hindi po katanggap-tanggap sa isang demokratikong pamayanan na katulad natin.

So, ang gusto po nating marinig sana ay other than issuing statements and waiting for the conduct of the investigation, whether or not there is a more proactive action despite its limitation na magagawa ng Korte Suprema sa using ito, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GONZAGA. Kaya nga iyong sinabi mo kanina, we have to ensure na mapalakas natin iyong lahat ng writs na sinasabi mo. Kasi when a lawyer or a judge or a prosecutor is threatened, like for example, threatened iyong life, liberty or security nila, we have judicial remedy naman, we have extra—kaya nga sasabihin na natin, extra-legal remedy, iyong sinasabi mong Writ of Amparo, na we have to be the—supposed to be a person, a victim of a threat from a public officer or a private individual, she or he can avail naman of the writs na—appropriate writs na sinasabi mo, like for example, threat of his or her life, security or liberty, then, mayroon namang remedy diyan sa—under sa batas natin, na Writ of Amparo.

So, lahat naman, sine-secure ng Judiciary na kung may problema, kaagad may legal remedy kaagad iyon. So, we are—the Judiciary is seriously supporting iyong lahat ng concerns mo, Sir.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, good Sponsor, sa aking kaibigan na Sponsor at Mme. Speaker.

Now, on to my second to the last concern, of late, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, from the run-up to the 49th commemoration of the declaration of Martial Law last September 21 ay napakarami pong mga naratibo at these are revisionist narratives na ipinapakalat sa social media, sa traditional media, na sinasabing sa panahon ng diktadurang Marcos ay walang nangyaring pagnanakaw, walang plunder na nangyari at walang human rights violations na nangyari o paglabag sa karapatang pantao sa ating mga mamamayan sa loob ng 20 dekada na namamayagpag ang diktador na si Marcos.

Now, just for the record, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, mayroon po bang naging

desiyon ang Korte Suprema patungkol doon sa plundered wealth ng pamilyang Marcos at ng mga cronies niya na nagpatotoo na mayroon ngang mga ninakaw na yaman ang pamilyang Marcos at ang mga cronies nito, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. Well, iyon naman sa lahat ng lumalabas sa social media na walang plunder, walang nakawan na nangyari sa panahon ni Marcos, I think basically, it will differ on opinions. Like, for example, kung sino iyong mga supporters ni Presidente Marcos, of course, what do you expect from them, sasabihin nila na ganoon? So, it matters on perspectives, hindi na natin puwedeng pigilan iyan because they have the right to their freedom of expression or opinion, so, kaya kailangang inirerespeto natin din iyan, pero iba naman iyong lumalabas sa mga kaso na—and it has been ruled by the Supreme Court, kaya nga may PCGG tayo, may nakolekta na ill-gotten wealth, so it has to be weighed. Hindi naman puwedeng pigilan natin iyong opinyon ng isang grupo na nagmamahal sa dating Pangulo, o isang pang grupo na anti naman sa dating Pangulo. So, we have to weigh on it. Kaya lang, alam na natin iyan, you being a lawyer, me being a lawyer, may PCGG. Kaya for me, and for the Judiciary, we have to respect freedom of expression. So, opinyon nila iyan, so, we have to respect on that.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

Sa totoo lang po, hindi ko naman po pinagbabawalan, 'no. Totoo naman po ginagarantiyahan sa ating Saligang Batas ang karapatang magpahayag, kaya nga po tinatanong ko sa Hudikatura, for the record, dahil ang may o the official repository of, whether or not, may plunder na nangyari ay kung ano iyon naisampang kaso at napagdesisyunan ng Korte Suprema, being the final arbiter on these issues, 'no. Kaya iyon po ang tinanong ko. Halimbawa, will the good Sponsor, for the record, state that in the *Republic vs. Sandiganbayan*, na nilabas noong July 15, 2003, penned by the former Chief Justice, the late Renato Corona—sinabi

rito na kailangang i-forfeit ang mga nakaw na yaman ng pamilyang Marcos, 'no, in favor of the Republic, 'no, US\$658 million dollars ang finorfeit? At ito nga, tama po kayo, ito iyong nakaw na yaman na na-recover ng Presidential Commission on Good Government.

Will the good Sponsor confirm that, officially, for the record, na mayroon ngang na-forfeit na yaman, nakaw na yaman ang pamilyang Marcos?

REP. GONZAGA. Yes, we confirm on that. The Sandiganbayan ruled the forfeiture of the ill-gotten wealth of the former President. It was—tama ka, it was ruled by the Supreme Court sa panahon ni late Chief Justice Corona. Kaya nga sinasabi ko, kung jurisprudence ang pagtitingnan natin, kumpleto iyan, naging subject ng study nating lahat iyan sa mga students of the law, nakikita natin iyan lahat na mga jurisprudence na where the Supreme Court, the Sandiganbayan, or even the PCGG took action on that, and positively may nakukuha sila. Kaya nga ang sinasabi ko kanina, iyong mga media, mga opinyon ng mga supporters ng dating Pangulo, na they have to express their own opinion na walang kasalanan, walang plunder, that is their own right. Kaya we have to put in line on that matter, iyong alam natin na tama, iyong alam natin na with complete list of jurisprudence and evidence e, iyong sinasabi nila, kaya nga media—sa social platform, sinasabi nila ganyan. So, may point here is iyong opinyon nila, hindi na natin napipigilan iyan, pero alam natin kung ano ang nangyayari.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. At least, for the record, dahil sabi ninyo nga po, bilang mga abogado alam natin iyan, pero sa publiko po na nakikinig sa atin ngayon, nawa'y maliwanagan sila dahil opisyal, tama po kayo, opisyal na talaan iyan, opisyal na record, na mayroong nangyaring plunder at ito ay pinatutuhanan ng mga desisyon ng Korte Suprema, pagnanakaw, 'no—naibalik iyan, na-recover—at mayroon din mga paglabag sa karapatang pantao. And, in fact, I was thankful na mayroong mga law students, law students or lawyers na nag-compile ng mga decisions ng Korte Suprema

para lang itong tangka na burahin ang mga pagkakasala ng diktadura sa panahon ng Martial Law ay mapigilan at ma-correct itong revisionist narratives na ito. For example, sinabi nila, itong nasa likod ko po, 'no, kung nakikita ninyo, nababasa ninyo, these are judicial decisions of atrocities committed by Marcos, and abuse of power and corruption. There is this case in "M," *Marcos vs. Manglapus*, G.R. No. 88211, decided on 15 September 1989; there is this *Aberca vs. Ver; Mijares et al. vs. Ranada; Cojuangco Jr. vs. The Republic; Ocampo vs. Enriquez; Sison vs. Marcos*, this is a decision, I think, in Hawaii court; *Heirs of Licaros vs. Sandiganbayan*; in re *Habeas Corpus* in 1990; *Republic of the Philippines vs. Sandiganbayan; Biraogo vs. Philippine Truth Commission*; Estate of Marcos Human Rights Litigation in Hawaii; *Marcos vs. Republic; David vs. Arroyo; Imelda Marcos vs. Republic; Chavez vs. Presidential Commission on Good Government; Tabuena vs. Sandiganbayan; Associated Bank vs. Spouses Montano; Disini vs. Sandiganbayan; Olaguer vs. Military Commission; Marcos vs. The Republic; Republic vs. Sandiganbayan; Ursua vs. The Republic; The Republic vs. Sandiganbayan; and Agapita Trajano vs. Marcos*, among others.

So, again, I stated this for the record para po iyong nangyayari ngayon na pilit na gustong burahin ng ating kasaysayan, itong mga paglabag sa karapatang pantao, ang mga pagnanakaw sa yaman ng bayan na nangyari halos limang dekada ay atin pong maiwasto.

At sa admisyon kanina ng ating good Sponsor, there are indeed, decisions of the Supreme Court na nagpatotoo na nangyari ito. Hindi ito haka-haka lamang. Hindi ito kinuha lamang sa hangin. Ito po ay totoo. At ito po ang nagresulta sa maraming mga kababayan natin na namatay, nakulong, na-torture sa panahon ng diktadurang Marcos.

At in fact, despite the passage of a law recognizing human rights violations victims and giving them compensation, marami pa rin po na mga biktima ng batas militar na hanggang ngayon ay hindi nakakakuha ng hustisya. So, maraming salamat for that admission, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, that, indeed, there were decisions to this effect.

Now, on to my last point, Mr. Sponsor, with your kind indulgence. We laud the

initiative of the Supreme Court to democratize and to—what is this, the conduct of the Bar operations. Hindi na ito centralized ngayon. It will be conducted in different parts of the country.

May I know, just for the record, what is now the status of our preparations for the 2021 Bar Exams, which, for the first time in the history, will be conducted simultaneously in different parts of the country, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. Okay, the conduct of the Bar Examinations—so far we have 11,000 applicants, Bar applicants, and the conduct of the examinations is through online, on different venues. So, iyon po ang preparation ng Judiciary with regard to bar operations—Bar Examinations 2021.

REP. ZARATE. May I be clarified. This will be conducted online, and will not be conducted face-to-face, meaning the Bar examinees will not got to a particular school to answer Bar Exam questions. Is that the process, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. The Bar examinees will go to testing sites. So, sa buong Pilipinas we have 20 testing sites. So, hindi—Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. So, lahat iyan 20 testing sites. So, hindi siya nagiging face-to-face, kung hindi bago iyong normal na ginagawa ng Judiciary ngayon with regard to Bar Examinations. So, 20 testing sites. So, kung sino iyong taga-Mindanao, there will be testing sites there; kung sino iyong Visayas, mayroon silang testing sites; in Luzon, mayroong testing sites. So, unlike before na all of them nasa Maynila, and there will be only one testing site—testing venue or examination venue. One month stay noong sa atin, four Sundays 'yan. So, ngayon bago. So, for Luzon, the Bar examinees will have their own testing sites; for Bar examinees in Mindanao, they have also their testing sites; and for Visayas, they have their own testing sites. So, we have 18—lahat ng regions mayroong testing sites. So, kung Region XI, Bar examinees coming from Region XI, there will be a testing site there. Kung Region XII ka, mayroon din

silá. So, hindi mahihirapan iyong mga Bar examinees with this kind of program of the Supreme Court.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, good Sponsor. I, again, appreciate that dahil ito po ay magpapagaan sa ating mga Bar examinees. But, I am just a bit concerned about the logistical requirements in conducting this kind of Bar Examinations. How – gaano na po ang level of preparation ng Supreme Court? For example, you mentioned, online ito. Doon sa mga testing sites, ibig sabihin, kailangan natin ng stable internet connectivity.

Third, how about iyong mga – because this will be simultaneously conducted in different parts of the country, previously centralized ang Bar Exam, for example at University of Santo Tomas, the Supreme Court ay hiniram nila iyong mga personnel, for example, ng ibang agencies like the NBI para maging watcher or proctor dito sa exams na ito, how will this be conducted in this kind of simultaneous Bar Exams, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. GONZAGA. The Judiciary has already conducted a mock Bar Examinations. So, wala naman pong problema. So, tapos na iyong mga concerns mo na iyan, It has been addressed by the Supreme Court, and rest assured na sa concern mo ay naa-attend to naman ng Judiciary, Sir.

REP. ZARATE. Okay. Thank you, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

In fact, I know for a fact that mayroong mga volunteers na tutulong dito from the different parts of the country, from the IBP, from the lawyers, even law students, to make this first Bar Exams to be conducted simultaneously, online and sa panahon ngayon ng pandemic.

Last concern ko na lang, ito ni-raise lang din, of course, you do not need to divulge the specifics but, how do we prevent, for example, during the centralized Bar Exams ay nagkakaroon ng mga leakages, leaks sa mga questions? So, is this also a matter that is seriously taken into consideration by the Supreme Court, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. The Supreme Court has

assured us na lahat naman na, iyong sinasabi mong leakages, ay hindi mangyayari iyan kasi may security features lahat iyan. So, lahat naman ng puwedeng mangyari like, for example, iyong how are we going to prevent leakages ay naa-address na iyan at saka tinitingnan nilang mabuti iyan. So, hopefully, iyong 2021 Bar Examinations will be a very successful one.

At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Herrera-Dy relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Camille A. Villar.

REP. ZARATE. Okay. Thank you, good Sponsor.

I also wish the Judiciary of the Supreme Court that, indeed, sana maging matagumpay itong gaganapin na Bar Exams because, remember, last year ay hindi tayo nagkaroon ng Bar Exams because of the pandemic and this innovation, hopefully, will be a response dito nga sa ating sitwasyon ngayon. Nasa pandemya tayo at maiiwasan din na ang ating mga Bar examinees will be victimized by this COVID-19 pandemic.

I will now end my interpellation, good Sponsor. I truly appreciate your responses. And, again, at the proper time, this Representation, as well as my other colleagues in the Minority and the Makabayan bloc, will propose amendments to restore the slashed budget of the Supreme Court, as well as support the special provisions that will truly give spirit doon sa tinatawag nating fiscal autonomy ng Hudikatura at iba pang mga constitutional bodies, including the Office of the Ombudsman and the Commission on Audit.

But, we hope and urge the Judiciary, the Supreme Court, to fast track the amendments that I already mentioned related to protective writs that will protect the interests and rights of our people, especially during this time.

Maraming salamat po. Magandang umaga sa ating lahat, good Sponsor and Mme. Speaker.

REP. GONZAGA. Thank you very much, Congressman Zarate.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). Thank you, Honorable Zarate. Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize Rep. Sergio Dagooc of APEC Party-List for his interpellation.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). The honorable Rep. Sergio Dagooc is now recognized for his interpellation.

REP. DAGOOC. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Magandang umaga po sa lahat, mga kasamahan ko na nasa plenaryo, lalong-lalo na po sa kaibigan kong kababayan ko sa Mindanao na nag-sponsor ng budget ng Judiciary.

Before I proceed with my konting katanungan, I would like to support also, for the record, as I have manifested in the budget briefing, the restoration of the slashed proposed budget from the original proposed budget of the Judiciary because of constitutionality and the importance of this government—branch of government in a democratic country like ours.

Now, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, puwede po bang matanong sa kagalang-galang na Court Administrator, magkano po ba iyong budget na inilaan sa last players para po sa mga utilities, pambayad sa utilities like water, telephone and electricity, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor?

REP. GONZAGA. Titingnan po namin, Sir. Sandali po.

So, for the last seven years, ito po iyong supplies nila: for 2021, supplies and materials and expenses, we had P1.6—P1,624,000,000; sa gasoline and oil, P227 million; utility expenses, P421,000,000.

Sa 2020, pareho po, exact figure.

Sa 2019, P1 million—sa supplies and materials, P1.5 billion; sa utility expenses, P319 million. Vis-à-vis with the NEP of 2022, sa supplies and materials, P1.6 billion; gasoline and oil, P2.2 million; utility expenses, P421 million, so up.

Sa 2021 and 2022, pareho po iyong hinihingi ng Judiciary or pareho po iyong

binigay ng DBM doon sa approved 2021 for utility expenses and for supplies and materials expenses.

REP. DAGOOC. Thank, you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, distinguished Sponsor, doon sa kasagutan on specific data.

Alam po ba, Mme. Speaker, G. Sponsor, ng ating kagalang-galang na Administrador ng Korte Suprema—actually, distinguished Sponsor, while he was still the Spokesman of the Supreme Court, ina-idolize ko talaga si Administrator Marquez? Totoo po iyan dahil maganda po siyang magpaliwanag.

May I ask, distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, if the good Administrator is privy about the unpaid electric bills from 1994 to present, August, umaabot na po ng P32 million ang mga hindi nabayaran po. As a matter of fact, nakiusap na po kami kay Administrator Marquez pero mukhang walang nangyari, so baka po matanong natin kung alam niya iyong ganitong sitwasyon. May budget naman po.

REP. GONZAGA. The good Administrator—Supreme Court Administrator is privy to what you have said, and last September 23, 2021 may meeting po iyong APEC with the good Administrator, so alam niya po iyong problemang tinutukoy mo. So, lahat naman po ay may budget sa mga problemang sinasabi mo.

REP. DAGOOC. Maraming salamat naman po for the candid answer na nag-usap na po kami, Mme. Speaker, G. Sponsor. But with the figure, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, that I have said this is the latest, dito nga sa SIARELCO, he can validate with the Clerk of Court na talagang personal ko na na pera ang pinambayad ko to be candid also sa marami nang taon—hindi pa po ako Representative ng APEC Party-List kasi ang mga ibang consumers magrereklamo bakit kami lang ang puputulan, alam naman namin iyong korte hindi nakakabayad. So, ang ginawa ko na lang to be fair, dahil minimal naman po iyong amount ng billing dito—P7,000, P10,000, kinuha ko na lang po sa sahod ko. Hanggang ngayon po marami pa pong binayaran ko na hindi ako na-reimburse. So, ang hinihingi

ko na lang, may I appeal, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, to the good Court Administrator, na baka po he can commit na ma-settle ito within this year kasi ayaw ko na po makipag-usap doon sa personnel na in-assign niya. I personally called that personnel. Minsan po, with all due respect to the Court Administrator, medyo hindi po maganda makipag-usap.

Ginawa na po namin, nagbigay na kami ng bank account, na-email na po namin directly sa kanya as agreed during our meeting. Wala pa rin pong nangyari. So, may I just appeal, Mme. Speaker, G. Sponsor, to the good Court Administrator for a commitment if he can commit to settle that. Iyon lang po ang issue ko dito, Mme. Speaker, G. Sponsor.

REP. GONZAGA. Yes, Sir. The good Administrator will personally look into it and hopefully your point, your problems will be solved this year, Mme. Speaker.

REP. DAGOOC. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, and maraming salamat po Administrator Midas sa tulong na ma-settle natin iyan. Iyon lang po ang concern ko.

Thank you po.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). Majority Leader.

REP. GONZAGA. Thank you.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize Rep. Sarah Elago of KABATAAN Party-List for her manifestation.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). Honorable Elago is recognized.

REP. ELAGO. Mme. Speaker, there being no other member of the Minority who wishes to interpellate, I move to terminate the period of sponsorship and debate on the budget of the Judiciary.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, on the part of the Majority, we join the Minority in its motion to terminate the period of sponsorship and debate on the proposed budget of the Judiciary.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

Majority Leader.

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we open the period of sponsorship and debate on the proposed budget of the Civil Service Commission and that Hon. Ruwel S. Gonzaga be recognized to sponsor the said budget.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved. Honorable Gonzaga is recognized to sponsor the measure.

REP. GONZAGA. Yes, Ma'am, we are ready.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, we would like to acknowledge the presence of our guests from the Civil Service Commission in the plenary hall: Asst. Commissioner Ariel G. Ronquillo; and via Zoom, we have Chairperson Alicia dela Rosa-Bala; Comm. Aileen Lourdes Lizada; and Asst. Comm. Rodolfo B. Encajonado.

For the Career Executive Service Board, we have via Zoom, Exec. Dir. Maria Marcy Cosare-Ballesteros.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). The officials of the Civil Service Commission, welcome to the House of Representatives.

Majority Leader.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. BOLILIA. Few minutes' suspension, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). The session is suspended.

It was 10:17 a.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 10:17 a.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). The session is resumed.

Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize Rep. France L. Castro of Party-List ACT TEACHERS to interpellate the Sponsor.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). Hon. France Castro from the Party-List ACT TEACHERS is hereby recognized.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you po sa ating Sponsor. Magandang umaga po sa ating lahat at sa pamilya po ng Civil Service Commission. Magandang umaga po.

Doon po sa huling briefing natin, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, ng Civil Service, nag-inquire po ako doon sa service credit, overtime pay na in-incur noong ating mga guro doon sa nakaraang 2020 to 2021 budget, yes, budget ng Civil – ng ano, 2020-2021 school year. Natanggap po namin iyong sulat ng Department of Education kaugnay noong paglililaw dito sa sinisingil nga po ng mga teachers natin doon sa overtime pay or service credits.

So, ayon po sa kanila, ayon po sa DepEd, Mr. Sponsor, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, ay wala daw pong babayaranang OT. At sinasabi dito na ang more than 80 plus na days na pinagsilbi po ang ating mga teachers doon sa last school year 2021 ay hindi po siya mako-consider na OT, pero maglalabas po ng guidelines about service credits.

So, puwede po bang malaman ang opinyon ng ating Komisyon kaugnay nito, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. Ma'am, will you please repeat your question.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you. Sige po. Your Honor, noong nakaraang budget briefing, Your Honor, isa sa major na ni-raise ko sa Civil Service Commission ay iyong pagtitiyak ng guidelines kaugnay noong overtime pay service credits o whatever compensation that the teachers deserve doon po sa kanilang more than 80 days na sobra-sobra doon sa kanilang service during the last school year 2020-2021. But to my dismay, iyong letter po ng DepEd noong September 23, sinasabi po na hindi sila makakapag-claim ng overtime pay. Ginagawa pa rin daw nila iyong guidelines nila doon sa service credits kasi may maximum na service credits in a year, 15 days, at ito daw po ay gagawa ng guidelines para madagdagan.

Medyo dismayado po ako doon sa letter at doon sa desisyon ng DepEd kaugnay nitong usapin na ito noong sobra-sobrang pinaglingkod ang mga teachers natin sa last school year. So, accordingly, sinasabi po sa letter na wala daw po talaga matatanggap na overtime pay dahil daw po ito iyong 25 percent noong daily rate ng teacher kapag ito ay sumobra sa six hours, so, iyon naman ang nasa magna carta. Pero ano po iyong comment dito ng Civil Service Commission, Your Honor, kaugnay nitong napakahalagang issue ng ating mga guro?

REP. GONZAGA. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Yes, during the budget deliberation, you have raised the same question and the CSC is providing me results of your inquiry. Ang nangyari pala, this is more of the concern of DepEd and the DBM. Kasi iyong problema is with regard to computation pero ang ginawa ng CSC, the CSC ay siya po ang nag-facilitate ng meeting ng DepEd at saka ng DBM with the CSC. Now, during the meeting, it has been resolved that DepEd will revise a guideline or formulate a guideline para naman ma-address iyong sinasabi mong vacation leave ng mga teachers. So, hopefully, DepEd will issue a formulated guideline to address the problem that you have raised this morning.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, iyon na po ba ang sagot ng Civil Service Commission? Dahil po based naman po doon sa napag-usapan or dialogue with the Civil Service Commission, DepEd, at saka iyong ating mga guro po, so, sinasabi naman na mayroong excess talaga doon sa work. Supposedly, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, maximum of 220 days po iyong dapat na—maximum na days—official time po ng mga teachers natin—220 days. Okay, so, sabi dito. “Based on the foregoing, we are unable to see how the regular eight-hour work days when teachers were required to report to work in excess of 220 days be treated as overtime.” And, sinasabi din dito sa kanilang sulat ay iyong teachers daw po were paid during these days or vacation through commensurate Proportional Vacation Pay dahil tingin po ng Kinatawang Ito, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, na iba po iyong PVP doon sa usapin ng sobrasobrang oras ng pagtatrabaho.

So, iyon po iyong ating belief na sana naman mabigyan po ng karampatang compensation iyong mga teachers natin. At ngayon, medyo binitin pa nga ng DepEd itong guidelines daw nila doon sa service credits, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GONZAGA. Mme. Speaker, yes. Sa totoo lang, nahihirapan kami. The CSC is nahihirapan to address your question because—of course, the CSC is the central personnel agency of the government—of the government agencies with regard to employment. Pero dito kasi we are talking about the benefits of the teachers, which is more of the concern of DepEd. Kaya nga, we are—we have to refer this matter to DepEd kasi ang pagkakaalam namin, there is a letter addressed to you dated September 23 of this year. So, the only role of the CSC here is to facilitate a meeting between the DBM and DepEd. The agency concerned is DepEd and this agency will be the one to compute all the necessary factors with regard to the leave credits or benefits that you are asking for. So, Ma’am, totoo lang, we have to refer this matter to DepEd or we have to seek advice from DepEd kung ano ang dapat nating—ano ang dapat na isasagot namin po sa inyo. As of this

moment, nahihirapan po kaming isagot kung ito ba iyong sinasabi mong computation ay tama or kulang iyong sinasabing computation.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. So, puwede po bang malaman sa Civil Service iyong definition nila ng overtime pay, service credits and PVP para po sa general information, ano, at makita natin dito—at siyempre, malaman din naman ng teachers iyong, ano, kung paano mag-a-act dito sa usapin na ito, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor? Kasi ang DepEd, parang teachers pa ang pinagde-define nila ng overtime. Ano ba talaga iyong definition ng overtime sa Civil Service, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor?

REP. GONZAGA. The latest po, Ma’am, is there has been a sort of ruling of the DBM and DepEd na they are not—the teachers are not entitled to—they are not entitled to the overtime pay that you have raised. So, I do not see the role of the CSC on this matter kasi naman iyong computation talaga galing sa DepEd in coordination with the DBM.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Hindi ninyo nakikita na, ano, na puwedeng bayaran ang teachers ng overtime pay according to the definition of Civil Service Commission. So, hindi entitled? Iyon po ba iyong sagot natin, Your Honor? Parang hindi po ako—hindi po ako—I do not believe na hindi entitled iyong mga teachers doon sa overtime pay. Generally, ano po ba ang overtime sa mga government employees?

Remember, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, ang mga teachers po bawal magkasakit. During the normal times, iyong pong April and May ay bakasyon iyan ng mga teachers natin. Bakasyon ng ating mga teacher iyan. Kapag nag-absent sila between June to—within 10 months ng pagtuturo nila o ng service nila ay kaltas agad iyan sa suweldo o kaya naman kung may PVP ay kaltas din sa PVP. So, iyon po iyong pinoproblema natin, ano, dahil nagtuloy-tuloy itong DepEd sa pag-ano ng mga serbisyo ng mga guro natin mula June 1 hanggang October 4, okay. Although sinasabi dito ng DepEd na bayad naman daw po iyong mga teachers natin doon sa—during that time.

Pero hindi po siya – pinaghalo po iyong definition ng PVP, iyong service credit at saka iyong overtime pay kaya kailangan malinawan natin iyan sa mother organization na related, na siya talagang puwedeng mag-define noong mga termino na ito dahil ang gulo na po e. Iyong computation ng DepEd ay pinaghalo-halo na nila itong mga benefits na ito ng ating mga kaguruan, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GONZAGA. Yes, Ma'am. Mme. Speaker, there has been, the ruling of DepEd and if you – if the teachers, or if you are not satisfied with the ruling of DepEd and if you want to see the participation of the CSC or the Civil Service Commission, then I would have an advice that if the teachers or group of teachers are not satisfied with the ruling of DepEd, then you have to file your review with the CSC. Iyon po ang proseso.

Kasi, like for example, kung ang CSC po ang magre-review ng guidelines or ruling ng government agency with regard to the benefits that you have mentioned, and then ang CSC rin ang magsasabi na ito ang tama, ipre-preempt po natin iyong ruling ng CSC. And the CSC is not a one-man person, e Commission ho ito. So, kailangan ho natin i-appeal iyong, sort of an adverse ruling ng DepEd, na with regard to the teachers' benefits doon sa CSC.

Right now, sasabihin po ng CSC na wala pa ho siyang kumpletong jurisdiction on the matter that you have raised this moment.

Thank you.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Thank you very much, Your Honor.

So that gives me some sort of relief kahit papaano pero gusto ko pa rin pong malaman, generally, ano po ba iyong definition ng Civil Service Commission doon the overtime pay, service credit at saka itong PVP? So, may I hear from, Your Honor, through the Civil Service Commission, the official na mga definition po nitong mga terms na ito, for the record, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GONZAGA. Iyong DepEd po, may in-issue po siyang Department Memorandum No. 56, Series of 2021, dated August 16, 2021

on the Computation of Public School Teachers' Proportional Vacation Pay for School Year 2020 to 2021.

Kung hindi po ito sang-ayon, iyong computation po ng Proportional Vacation Pay as issued by the DepEd, kung hindi po sang-ayon ito sa kagustuhan or not acceptable to the group of teachers, may I advise na sila po ang magpa-file ng appeal doon sa CSC para magiging issue ito na puwedeng ma-rule ng CSC.

As of this moment, hindi po namin masagot kasi hindi pa siya right na i-rule ng CSC. Iyon po ang posisyon ng CSC as of this moment.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. So, we will come to that later, kung ano po iyong aksiyon na puwedeng magawa, ma-advise natin doon sa ating mga kaguruan. Hindi lang po ito group of teachers, ito po ay – ang beneficiaries po nito at affected po dito ay iyong more than 800 teachers po na mga teachers natin sa public schools. Kaya po bino-voice out lang natin iyong sinasabi nila na, tungkol dito sa pagke-claim nila noong kanilang overtime pay or additional service credits, et cetera, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

So, alam po natin kapag overtime pay, sa mga government employees, it is the work extended ng isang employee sa more than eight hours na pagtuturo nila, sa government employees at mayroon itong karampatang mga guidelines.

On the same manner, mayroon itong karampatang mga guidelines.

On the same manner din po, ganoon din po ang mga teachers, although nasa Magna Carta iyan na iyong overtime pay ay more than doon sa six hours of actual classroom teaching. Pero ang nangyari po, 25 percent monthly, 25 percent of their monthly basic pay doon sa sumosobra po na six hours of classroom teaching. Pero, ngayon po hindi ba pandemic? Ibang panahon ito at nakita naman natin iyong sakripisyo noong ating mga teachers bago pa mag-October 4, at sa papalit-palit na desisyon ng Department of Education from June 1 naging August 25, naging October 5, et cetera, iyong naging pasok, pero iyong mga teachers tuloy-tuloy pa rin po iyong kanilang ano, 'no,

sinasabi na nga nila more than eight hours na nga iyong mga ipinagtrabaho nila – paggawa ng module, pagdi-distribute, at iba't iba pa na mga gawain, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker. So, ito po iyong sinasabi natin na dapat tumbasan din, hindi ba, ng ating mga – ng gobyerno, ng karampatang compensation.

Ngayon po ay magdiriwang tayo ng National Teachers' Month – October 5, World Teachers' Day, sana mabigyan naman natin ng ano, 'no, ng karampatang kompensasyon, sa pamamagitan nito mapagpupugayan natin iyong role ng mga teachers natin dito sa pandemya.

So, iyon na lang po iyong ating mahihiling sa Sponsor. So, ano po ba ang mako-commit ng Sponsor para matulungan naman natin iyong ating mga teachers na masingil ang DepEd, ang gobyerno natin doon sa kanilang sakripisyo, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor?

REP. GONZAGA. Yes, Ma'am.

Ang CSC naman po ay isang institusyon na pro-people, hindi naman ito institusyon na biased. Kaya, iyong problema ho talaga ng teachers, if I may, ay mayroong mga meetings na finacilitate iyong CSC with the DBM and the Alliance of Concerned Teachers, including your Representative, and of course, lumabas po na may ruling iyong DBM, ang sinasabi nila, "Vacation leave credits cannot be granted on regular days served in excess of 220 days from June 1, 2020 to September 30, 2020." Kaya nga lumalabas dito ngayon na may guideline or may Department Order No. 56, series of 2021, iyong DepEd, ang sinasabi naman na "With regard to computation of public school teachers' Proportional Vacation Pay for School Year 2020 to 2021, and it has been noted that the number of days served for School Year 2021 includes the period of June 1, 2020 to July 10, 2021 as part of the basis for the computation of the Proportional Vacation Pay of the teachers." Kaya nga kung ano iyong problemang hindi sang-ayon sa kagustuhan ng Alliance of Concerned Teachers, kinakailangan natin na – we have to make an appeal to the appropriate agency which is the CSC.

Ngayon po, iyong hinihingi ninyong ruling, sasabihin ko po sa inyo, it is really

premature, kasi kung we have to answer you positively or negatively, it is as if we are pre-empting the decision of the CSC on the matter. So, kinakailangan nating ipaabot iyong concern ninyo doon po sa appropriate agency who has the power and jurisdiction to hear your concerns. As of this moment, we cannot really answer you in the negative or in the affirmative because it is not the power vested in me or in us, in this appro – as of this moment. Kinakailangan nating ipaabot talaga iyan.

So, we can guarantee you, Ma'am. We can assure you na iyong CSC po will facilitate all necessary measures para matugunan po iyong mga concerns ninyo.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. So, last ano na lang ito, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker. So, since the Civil Service Commission already had the copy of DepEd Memo No. 56 and letter dated September 23, 2021 of the Department of Education, can you assure me that the Civil Service Commission could possibly review in advance po itong mga legality or whatever review na magagawa po dito sa pinalabas po ng DepEd? So that when we get to the ano, kung magkakaroon man ng dialogue to be facilitated by DepEd, ay mayroon na rin pong advance na study o pag-aaral po ang Civil Service Commission tungkol dito, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GONZAGA. Yes po, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Salamat po doon sa positive na sagot po ng ating Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. Siguro, iyong last na lang po natin na ire-raise na issue kung may time pa po ano, iyong tungkol po dito sa ano, doon po sa right to organization or right to form unions noong ating mga teachers.

Nabanggit ko na rin po ito yata, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, iyong mga harassment, disaffiliation noong mga – facilitated by the military and police sa iba't ibang mga schools and conducting profiling din doon sa mga union members and leaders sa iba't ibang mga ano, sa iba't ibang mga schools and regions.

So, may we know what is the – ano po iyong ginagawa ng ating Civil Service Commission

kaugnay po nito? Actually, ni-raise na po rin natin later – ng last time pero, parang hindi rin po ako satisfied e doon sa sagot ng Civil Service Commission kasi sila naman talaga iyong dapat na nagpo-protekta dito sa right noong mga government employees natin, sa right to form unions and self-organization, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GONZAGA. The right to form a union is—even if it is not really a benefit, but it is a right under the Constitution or a fundamental of the land para naman sa government employees at saka sa private sector. Here, we are talking about teachers, they are government employees. So, under the Constitution, they have all the rights to form, to unionize, in what we call collective negotiation agreement.

So, ito namang CSC alam ho natin na they are protecting the right of the organization to form a union, the right of the teachers for a union. In fact, mayroon silang guidelines about union busting. May guidelines sila lahat na hindi puwedeng buwagin ang ano man pong inilagay na pribilehiyo o isang right under the law or under the Constitution.

So, rest assured, Ma'am, the CSC is protecting all the rights enshrined in our Constitution or even in our special laws.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). So, thank you, Your Honor. Naniniwala po ako doon sa sinabi ninyo kaya nga po ang mga teachers ay nag-form ng union. So, hindi lang po mga teachers ang harassed, mga government employees din, iyong mga hina-harass, pino-profile, pinapa-disaffiliate, okay, dahil daw ano, particular, Alliance of Concerned Teachers and COURAGE daw po ay mga CTG, member ng mga CTG.

So, more than a year ko na po ito e, bago pa po magpandemya ay, even the Chair of the Civil Service Commission, idinulog na po natin ito pero parang mum yata, mum or hindi, or pipi, ang ating Civil Service kaugnay nito. Wala man lang ginawang *motu proprio* investigation or whatever, doon sa idinulog kaya parang, ang Civil Service Commission hindi nararamdaman—ang mga teachers hindi nararamdaman ang proteksiyon nila

from the Civil Service Commission lalong-lalo na itong right nila to self-organization.

So, iyon po, Mr. Sponsor, so tingin po ng mga teachers, parang hindi po sila nakakaramdam ng pagkalinga doon sa Civil Service Commission, dahil ni-raise na po natin ito, pero parang wala po kaming nakitang aksiyon ng Civil Service Commission, kahit na sa PSLMC, na siya ring nagpo-protekta dito sa right to self-organization and to form a union.

So, ano po ang masasabi ng ating Sponsor dito, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. Doon naman po sa sinasabi ninyo, Mme. Speaker, na walang proteksiyon na nakikita o nafi-feel ng mga teachers, it is just a matter of putting into right perspective, like for example, kung may union busting, may nagha-harass sa kanila to form a union, pine-prevent sila na ma—to unionize or to associate among themselves, ay ang tama pong ahensiya na sumbungan po natin ay hindi po iyong direct na Civil Service Commission. Mayroon po tayong ginagawang Public Sector Labor-Management Council, inter-agency po ito, like for example, miyembro ng DOJ, miyembro iyong CSC, at saka sino pang appropriate agency, ay doon ho tayo magsumbong.

So, kung may complaint po tayo, Mme. Speaker, at saka hindi ho nailagay sa tamang proseso iyong complaint ay parang balewala din iyon. So, ibig sabihin, kung may complaint tayo with regard to union busting or harassment ng isang government enforcer with regard to the association or unionism ng mga teachers, hindi po dapat nating ifa-file iyong complaint sa CSC, doon pa ho tayo sa Public Sector Labor-Management Council.

So, iyon lang po ang gagawin natin, we have to follow the processes of the government, otherwise, wala hong mangyari sa complaint natin kung saan-saan lang natin ifa-file iyong complaint natin. So, may I advise that in the event there is a harassment to the group of teachers or sinong government employees na iyan, to unionize, ang sumbungan ho natin, iyong PSLMC, siguro ho kahit i-copy furnish lang natin iyong CSC or even the DOJ.

Thank you, Ma'am.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Sorry po, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, kasi na-mute po ako. So, iyon nga po iyong sinasabi natin, nakita naman natin doon sa function ng Civil Service Commission, iyong kanilang proteksiyon doon sa right of the government employees to organize. So, parang sa sinasabi niyo po, parang inutil ba ang Civil Service Commission doon sa sinasabi nating mga harassment at hindi nila puwedeng aksiyunan ito kahit na mag *motu proprio* investigation dahil ito po ay idinulog na namin nang personal? Dinulog na ito, personal, noong mga organization. So, ganoon po pala, pero alam niyo po ba iyong composition ng PSLMC? Disgusted din po ang Representasyon na ito dahil doon sa sinasabi po na PSLMC, ito po iyong – alam niyo po ba ang mga member dito, mga Secretaries ng mga department, and you know, Executive Order No. 70, the whole-of-the-nation approach na ginagawa?

So, parang sa sinasabi n'yo po, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, walang matatakbuhan ang ating mga government employees. Kasi kung ang Civil Service Commission ay tahimik, ang PSLMC naman ay kabilang dito sa Executive Order No. 70 at whole-of-the-nation approach ang inaano nila, ang ginagamit nila laban sa mga nag-oorganisa ng unyon. Ang tingin natin sa sinabi niyo po, Your Honor, walang mapupuntahan ang ating mga government employees, partikular iyong teachers.

So, ano po ang mako-comment natin dito, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). May we remind Honorable Castro – please wind up as your time has already expired.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Yes, Mme. Speaker, I am winding up. That would be the last question.

REP. GONZAGA. Yes, Ma'am. The CSC has answered all the queries and concerns of the concerned teachers or government employees with regard to harassment on unionism. Wala naman pong nakabinbin o nabitin na issues na hindi naaksiyunan ng CSC. So, rest assured, Ma'am, kung mayroon man, the CSC will act on it, or refer it to the

appropriate agency who has the power to hear and decide on the matter. So, kung mayroon pa mang mga question o mga reklamo na kung alam niyo na hindi pa naaksiyunan, nabigyan ng aksiyon ng CSC, please do call our attention para naman po mabigyan kaagad ng madaliang aksiyon.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, Your Honor.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). Majority Leader.

REP. ROMUALDO. Mme. Speaker, the next colleague of ours who wishes to interpellate the Sponsor is the Gentleman from Party-List BAYAN MUNA. I move that we recognize Rep. Ferdinand Gaité.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). Honorable Gaité is now recognized for his interpellation.

REP. GAITE. Salamat po, Mme. Speaker.

Salamat po sa ating mga kasamahan, sa ating mga distinguished na mga Members ng House of Representatives, sa ating pamilya sa Civil Service Commission headed by Chairperson Bala, at siyempre sa ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor ng budget ng CSC at CESB.

Will the good Sponsor yield to some questions, regarding the programs and budget of the CSC and the CESB, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. Yes, po, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Thank you po. Tulad ng alam naman natin, hindi po inured o exempted ang ating mga civil servants sa panahon nitong pandemya. At alam naman natin na marami sa kanila ay tinuturing ngang frontliners din lalo na ang ating mga health workers sa public sector but of course, even those na hindi directly na nasa health services ay maituturing nating nasa front line din, iyong ating mga social workers, iyong mga empleyado sa mga LGUs na hindi puwedeng magtrabaho, hindi puwedeng mag-work-from-home, at

napakarami pang iba. Kaya't hindi katakataka na mataas din ang bilang ng tinamaan ng pandemic ng COVID-19 batay sa datos mismo ng CSC. At iyan iyong interpellation nga po na ni-raised ko noong nakaraan. Ngunit ang mas malubhang epekto po ng sakit ay iyong isang mas matinding sakit, iyong tanggalan.

Sabi po noong nakaraang budget hearing ng CSC, there was already, based on their inventory of government human resource, mayroon na pong bagong nailabas, medyo na-delay lang daw pero hindi pa naka-post sa website, kasi iyong huling naka-post po, kung hindi ako nagkakamali ay as of August 2020, pero may bago na po 'ata daw na data. Ngunit doon sa nabanggit noong nakaraan, noong September 7, I believe, sinabi ninyo po na bumaba ang bilang ng mga JOs or job orders, at COS or contract of service, kung ihahambing noong taong 2020. At itinanong ko po doon sa – during the hearing, was this because of the impact of the pandemic? Pero as I understand and I would like to add, on April 22 of 2020, the Department of Budget and Management, because of the effect of the public health emergency, issued a circular, Circular No. 580. And a part of this circular ay ganito po ang nakasulat sa ... “discontinuance of the following: hiring of job orders, except those as frontliners during this state of public health emergency.” This budget circular by the DBM was – ito po iyong isa sa mga cost-cutting measures in view of the public health emergency. Ngunit tulad ng nabanggit, ang isang dinis-continue ay iyong hiring ng mga health workers – ng ating mga job orders and contract of service.

Maitanong ko po, puwede ho bang makuha ho ulit iyong data kasi hiningi ko po ito, pero apparently wala pa rin po yata akong kopya, if I am not mistaken? Tsine-check ko iyong aking e-mail, wala pa ho akong nakuha. Anyway, puwede ho bang makuha ulit iyong figure ng job orders, pre-pandemic and after the pandemic, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. Mme. Speaker, the figure po ng JOs at saka COS 2020, ito po iyong JO 2020, 449,748; iyong COS po, 132,630; a total of 582,378 in 2020. Ito po sa 20 – no, no, it is current, current pala itong sinabi ko.

REP. GAITE. Sige po.

REP. GONZAGA. Five hundred eighty-two thousand, three hundred seventy-eight.

Sa 2022 po – 2020 po, ang total JOs and COS is 653,985. So, pre-pandemic po, wala pa pong – I will – we will get in touch with you with regard to pre-pandemic figures, JOs and COS. So, iyon po ang 2020 at saka 2021, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Salamat po.

So, kahit dito pa lang ho, hindi lang natin alam kung ano iyong 2020 figure, if that is end-year or mid-year kasi naalala ko, August dati iyong ginagamit nilang parang timeframe. But nevertheless, kahit sa figures na ito, bumaba na nga iyong figures, from 653,000 naging 582. So, ano ito, more or less mga 70,000 ang ibinaba. So, I would presume na malaki pa iyong ibinaba, if you will get, probably, the 2019 figure.

So, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, ang tanong ko nga po, did the policy regarding the sinasabing discontinuance, tila iyon ang nasakripisyo, iyong mga job orders at contract of service? At sila iyong unang natanggal, na sa halip na matulungan sana natin sila, na karamihan nga sa kanila ay matatagal na sa serbisyo, kailangan pa rin naman talaga natin sila. At ang pagkaalala ko, maraming functions sana na naibigay sa mga job orders and contract of service. Example po iyong contact tracing na problema, mapahanggang ngayon, iyong ibang trabaho sa pag-assist sa iba't ibang aspeto ng testing, dahil hindi naman kailangan, lalo na iyong pag-develop ng database ng monitoring at iba pa. Kailangan pa rin natin iyong uri ng ganyang trabaho, bagama't maaaring hindi iyon ang dati nilang trabaho. Pero sa tingin ko, kaya naman ma-train, wala naman yatang napakaraming mga empleyado na may ganyang kakayanan pero may kapasidad na ito ay mabigyan ng bagong skills para magawa iyong minamandato ng panahon, iyong paano makakatulong sa – ang mga kawani ng mga job orders and contract of service, sa usapin ng pagsugpo sa problema ng COVID-19.

So, tama po ba na sa halip na bigyan natin sila ng pagkakataon na magpatuloy pa rin,

bagama't kahit as JOs o COS, sila iyong unang nasasakripisyo, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. Yes, we agree on your point na sila iyong nasasakripisyo, sila ang dapat tulungan, sila ang bigyan ng ayuda. Pero, ito naman po, tama ka rin naman na bumaba iyong number of JOs and COS, from 653,000 to 582,000 in 2021.

Pero, iyong CSC po wala pong jurisdiction iyong CSC doon po sa Job Orders at saka sa Contract of Service. Ang may jurisdiction po nito ay ito pong DBM at saka COA. So, kung mayroon ho tayong ia-address na concern with regard to JOs and the COS, I think, it has to be addressed to the proper agencies, which are COA and the DBM.

So, we are not naman, hindi naman namin inilalayo iyong sarili, iyong CSC, from the issues concerned that you have raised pero, kapag tatanungin mo kami ano iyong gagawin ng CSC with regard to the JOs and the COS and then kung may isasagot kami sa inyo, it is a kind of usurpation kasi wala naman hong power and jurisdiction iyong Departamentong CSC doon naman sa JOs at saka COS.

Kung sasabihin namin na ito ang dapat gawin, it is as if that we have jurisdiction over them. So, kinakailangan po itugon iyong mga concerns at saka mga grievance ng JOs at COS doon po sa tamang ahensiya na may hurisdiksiyon po sa kanila.

Thank you.

REP. GAITE. Salamat po sa pagsagot, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

Bakit po kaya nawalan ng jurisdiction? While, in fact, previous joint circulars in 2017, there was a COA-CSC-DBM Joint Circular, I believe, it was No. 1, pertaining to the hiring of job orders and contract of service, kasama po ang CSC. And, again, this was revised, I believe, in, I think 2018 or 2019, similar issuance.

However, napansin ko nga, in the last 2020 circular, nawala nga ang CSC. Ngayon, iyong circular pertaining to the hiring of Job Orders and Contract of Service ay napunta na lamang sa DBM. Doon sa Circular na inilabas, wala na ang CSC; COA na lamang at DBM.

Puwede ho bang magtanong bakit wala nang jurisdiction ang CSC, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. Well, sa JOs at COS naman, Mme. Speaker, iklaro naman po, walang employer-employee relationship iyan. They are hired because of a piecemeal base or they are hired because of a specific contract with the term limit. So, wala pong employer-employee relationship iyan. So, sa batas po natin, CSC po ay kino-cover lang po nila iyong klarong employer-employee relationship.

Besides that, ang sinasabi po ng DBM, it has been an advice of the DBM to the CSC na sa JOs at saka COS, ang may jurisdiction po iyong DBM.

So, iyon po ang, at this moment, ito po ang – iyong system natin ngayon or the process, kapag JOs ka or COS ka, well, your jurisdiction belongs to the DBM; kapag government employee ka na may employer-employee relationship, then, if you have problems, concerns, then you have to address the concern to the CSC. Iyon po ang batas po natin sa kasalukuyan.

In addition to that, Mme. Speaker, this has been asked by the good Congressman, the figure of the JOs and the COS for 2019 is 669,347.

REP. GAITE. Pakiulit na lang po. Para sa anong taon po iyan, 2019? Tama po ba?

REP. GONZAGA. Yes. Pre-pandemic po, Mme. Speaker. So, ...

REP. GAITE. Six hundred eighty...

REP. GONZAGA. Six hundred sixty-nine ...

REP. GAITE. Six hundred sixty-nine ...

REP. GONZAGA. Six hundred sixty-nine thousand, three hundred forty-seven (669,347).

REP. GAITE. So, apparently, Mr. Sponsor, pababa nga talaga iyong bilang at pre-pandemic and as of now. So, iyon lang po iyong obserbasyon ng Kinatawag ito.

But balik po tayo doon sa usapin ng pagkakaroon ng employee-employer relationship. And I have, sorry, Mr. Sponsor, I had belabored this issue, dahil nga po naniniwala po kami that there is an employee-employer relationship dahil nga po doon sa sinasabi ng Korte Suprema sa usapin ng four-fold test. Na-establish na nga po ng jurisprudence na kung may apat na mga usapin hinggil sa iyong kategorya para maituring na employee-employer relationship.

Una, iyong power to hire. Pangalawa, sino iyong may power to—kung may power to hire, may power to fire. Ibig sabihin, pag dismiss, mayroon ring payment of wages. Ngunit tulad nga ang alam sigurado ng ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor iyong sino iyong may direct control over the—iyong control, provision, kung sino ang nagtatakda ng dapat gawin, siya iyong—mayroong na-establish na employee-employer relationship between the management and the “Job Order or Contract of Service” who we believe should be considered employees.

Nevertheless, kami ay naniniwala sa kabaligtaran dahil naniniwala kami mayroon pero through the myth of the contracts that they signed which indicate na wala silang employee-employer relationship despite the fact that the contract is between the employee themselves and management, walang agency o walang contractor, walang service provider, then we should consider them as employees, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. Ano ang tingin niyo po doon sa puntong ina-assert po ng Kinatawang ito?

REP. GONZAGA. Well, Mme. Speaker, that is one side of the coin. Sort of saying there are two schools of thought and you belong to one, your opinion belongs to one school of thought. So, ito namang sa kabila, ito naman iyong katunggali na sinasabi mo. So, hindi naman refuting you pero it is just a matter of delineating your argument from my argument. So, under naman sa, like for example LGUs, local government units, lahat naman po ng government units puwede naman silang kumuha ng JOs at saka COS. So, they are governed by the DBM at saka COA. So, lahat na mga benepisyo kinukuha sa MOOEs ng mga LGUs na iyan even the

national government agencies, iyon na din ang ginagawa, pero may kontrata sila. Pag expire na ang kontrata ng COS ay tanggal sila. Pag JOs naman, nase-serve mo iyong purpose ng JOs, tanggal sila. So, if they have an employer-employee relationship ay hindi sila matatanggal kasi covered sila ng security of tenure. Matatanggal lang sila by an authorized cause or just cause. E diperensiya sila e. So, kung diperensiya sila, ay hindi sila pareho, o kung hindi sila pareho, wala iyong element of employer-employee relationship.

So, at any rate, puwede naman ako ang mali, Mme. Speaker. Hindi ko naman sasabihing kayo ang mali pero sasabihin ko na lang there are two schools of thought on that matter. Kung sino man iyong tama sa atin, kung may mali man ako rito, please forgive me. Thank you.

REP. GAITE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor, but I just like to mention that this is not just from my own opinion, but tulad ng nabanggit ko, ito po ay Supreme Court ruling na po at jurisprudence na po iyong four-fold test, and I believe na even the contract indicating na wala silang employee-employer relationship, kung ia-apply natin itong four-fold test, they do, Mr. Sponsor, kaya po in terms of application, I believe, mas tama ang pagtingin na dapat ituring silang empleyado at dapat nga nasa ilalim din sila ng CSC.

Nevertheless, dahil ganito nga iyong sitwasyon, we did file, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, House Bill No. 248, ito nga pong Security of Tenure of our Non-Regular Personnel in Government and we do hope na ito ay maipasa sa pinakamaagang panahon para pakinabangan noong daang libo na non-regular workers sa gobyerno ngayon.

Pero ang isang balakid at ito’y madalas na i-raise, kaya daw hindi daw ma-employ o maging regular sila, wala silang eligibility. Ito po iyong examination na nire-require. Other than, of course, mayroon pang ibang qualification standards under the eligibility, ito po iyong problema sa educational attainment, iyong work experience, tapos ito nga po iyong eligibility.

Matanong ko po, ano ho ba—batay sa datos na nakuha namin, ang Civil Service

Exam passing grade is at 80 percent. For comparison lang nagbabago-bago po, 'no, sa Bar Examinations, pero noong nakaraang 2019, it was just—it was much lower, it was pegged at 74 percent, pero tama po hindi ba minsan nagbabago po ito taon-taon? Pero ito iyong nababahala kami, ang percentage ng Bar passers in 2020 for the exam that was taken in 2019 was 27 percent, pero noong 2019 it was a bit higher at 27.36 percent for those who took the Bar at the exams in 2018.

But most recent figure that we got as of August 2019, kung nag-take ng CSC Career Service test noong 2019, only 11.62 percent or 29,733 of the examinees, out of a total of 255,778 takers, passed the Civil Service Examination. I would believe this will be the total for the Sub-Pro and Pro. Puwede ho bang ipaliwanag bakit napakataas ng standards o pamantayan ng CSC? Na baka itong mga pumasa sa Bar ay pag-tineyke—ah, hindi mayroon palang R.A. No. 1080 na automatic na kung ikaw ay Bar passer, automatically you are also considered Civil Service eligible.

But for the—for just ano lang, possibly ang tingin ko lang kung kukunin, at hindi pa magku-qualify, hindi pa nakukuha noong Bar passer iyong exams sa CSC baka, natakot ako baka bumagsak rin iyong ating mga would-be lawyers, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. So, bakit ho ba napakataas ng pamantayan ng CSC? Tama po iyong binabanggit, ang CSC ay central personnel agency of the government. They have to hire based on merit and fitness, but why such a high bar of passing in the CSC examination, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. Well, actually iyon naman talaga ang problema ng local government e, mga national agency, kaya nga sa nakikita natin, Mme. Speaker. Sa kahit na anong opisina sa mga ahensiya, ang tinatanong ng mga Congressmen, Congress persons, Congress men and women, ang tinatanong nila, o bakit ang taas ng unfilled positions ninyo? Aba'y hingi kayo nang hingi, mataas iyong unfilled position ninyo. Ang lagi namang sagot ng mga sponsor ang sinasabi nila ay walang nagka-qualify. Ay kaya nga tama iyong tinutukoy mo, like for example iyong sinasabi mo na out of 255,000

examinees, ang pumasa lang 22,000 or 11.6 percent passed the examination in 2019, pero iyon naman talaga ang standard ng CSC. Now, what are we going to do with it? So, we have to submit this issue to the Commission and it is up to the Commission to restudy, reevaluate or reassess kung ano ang karapat-dapat na magiging bagong circular, bagong ruling o bagong batas na para diyan, para matugunan iyong problemang iyan.

So, tinitingnan kung saan ba talaga ang kulang, iyong depekto. May depekto ba iyong batas, like for example, iyong sinasabi mong 80 percent o ang depekto ba doon ba sa mga examinees na talagang hindi nila kaya iyong exam. So, ire-reassess iyan ng CSC. So, rest assured na iyong lahat ng sinasabi mo ay maa-address ng CSC iyan.

On the other hand, Mme. Speaker, iyong sinasabi mong mayroong employer-employee relationship iyong JOs saka COS, which has been ruled by the Supreme Court, ang sagot ko naman diyan, it has been overruled already. It has been overruled in 2016 in the case of *TransCo vs. COA*. So, sinasabi naman ng Supreme Court, and that is the latest, walang employer-employee relationship iyong JOs saka COS.

Thank you po, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Thank you for that information. But from my appreciation also this was explicit doon sa case na ito and I think the application would not have a general application on the established jurisprudence. Nevertheless, Mme. Speaker, iyon po iyong isang tanong ko patungkol nga doon sa—matagal na ho ito, hindi ho ito bago. Ang tagal na ho, for the longest time, na napakababa ng passing percentage sa CSCE o Civil Service Examinations. Nasa ganitong range lang, nasa 11 percent lang or even lower as I understand.

Kaya mayroon po kaming nakita na at least in the interregnum, in the interim, mayroon ho palang parang preference rating system sa ilang mga partikular na mga positions o items sa gobyerno. Example, pag beterano ka pala o anak ka ng beterano, may preference rating eligibility ka na plus 10 points. Ano po ang ibig sabihin noon? Sa ilalim ng Executive Order No. 132, kung kayo po ay beterano, anak ng

beterano, kung kayo ay nag-fail sa exam, ang nakuha n'yo lang po ay 70, may plus 10 points ka, magiging 80 ka, pasado ka na.

Sa ating—isa pa, ang napansin ko rin ang CSC ay naglabas ng Resolution No. 90-083 for Electronic Data Processing Specialist Eligibility and similarly, may ganoong sistema ng additional points. Para sa mga honor students in foreign universities naglabas ng circular ang CSC pertaining to additional points for takers from such a category. At gayundin sa ating mga skills, mayroon pang iyong Memorandum Circular No. 11, Series of 1996, may Skills Eligibility Category II na inilabas.

Ang punto ko po, sa halip na padaanin natin sa butas ng karayom iyong ating mga takers ng Civil Service Exams, may mga paraan pala para matulungan. Well for one, pagbaba noong kumbaga si Obiena ay hinerdel niya iyong napakataas na pole vault, baka puwede nating ibaba ng kaunti, isa iyon.

Ikalawa, puwede rin na depende sa katangian ng trabaho, example po, iyong matatagal na sa serbisyo sa gobyerno, iyong nakapaglingkod na ng several months or several years in the service, hindi ba puwedeng kaya ng CSC na bigyan ng kaukulang premium or dagdag na points doon sa depende sa tagal mo sa serbisyo para naman bunga na nga rin ng work experience, sabi kasi dapat based on merit and fitness. So, fit na siya dahil mayroon na siyang work experience na masasabi sa pagseserbisyo. Hindi po ba dapat tinitingnan natin iyan na premium na puwede iyang gamitin na paraan para ma-hurdle nila iyong apparently napakahirap o napakataas na standards na sine-set ng CSC, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. Mme. Speaker, yes, there are laws on that matter. Ayun nga sinasabi ni Congressman Gaité na may mga paraan pala na isang employee na naging COS o Job Order na magiging eligible siya. So, like for example, iyong sinasabi niya na veteran's preference na kapag anak ka ng beterano, iyong grado mo 70 ay may 10 points addition ka, so, puwede iyon. Isang paraan iyon at saka isang paraan naman iyong may batas ba na kapag honor graduate iyong

isang tao, iyong isang bata tapos mag-a-apply siya, puwede din iyon—PD 907—Honor's Graduate Eligibility?

Iyon naman pong sinasabing, say for example, iyong COS na for 15 years and then ang tagal mo na sa serbisyo tapos hindi ba ma-consider iyon na magiging add-on o magiging puwede siyang may benefits doon sa pagiging mahaba niya or iyong length of service niya sa gobyerno. Iyon iyong sinabi kong length of service ay talagang kapag kinakailangan niyang i-legislate, kailangan ng bagong batas iyan para magiging part of eligibility na kapag andiyan ka na for 15 years, 10 years, may additional points ka tapos subject ka na magiging eligible ka under the CSC na guidelines.

So, lahat po ay tinutugon ng CSC. Lahat po naman pinag-aaralan ng CSC para maitaas po iyong porsiyento sa mga examinees na puwedeng pumasa sa exam ng CSC. So, the CSC is not sleeping on the matter. We have the assurance on the good Congressman kung puwedeng magawan ng paraan, CSC ba o dito sa loob ng plenaryo sa Kamara ay gawan natin ng paraan para matugunan iyong problema sa kulang ng numero na magpi-fill up sa vacancy ng government units.

REP. GAITE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. At salamat po doon sa sinasabi ninyo pong assurance that the CSC will look into the matter especially doon sa usapin nga na kung paano bibigyan ng karagdagang—sabihin na nating premium nga, 'no—doon sa—lalo na iyong matatagal na sa serbisyo dahil naniniwala po ako na liban siyempre doon sa educational attainment, sa kanyang mga nakuhang mga pagsasanay o trainings, ang isang mayor na factor talaga ay iyong, of course, iyong eligibility, pero sana po bigyan ng premium iyong work experience dahil madalas nga marami tayong—hindi ko naman nilalahat, marami tayong new graduates pero dahil first timer sila sa isang workgroup arrangement, hindi necessarily automatically may skill sila para makapag-adopt unlike iyong mga matatagal na service at kapag sinabi kong matagal, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, hindi po isang buwan, tatlong buwan, limang buwan, anim na buwan ay

magtanong po kayo at alam ninyo sigurado ito dahil maraming sanay sa government. Mayroon diyan five years, 10 years, 20 years. Natapos na ang kanilang serbisyo sa gobyerno, hindi pa rin sila regular. Nananatili silang either Job Order, Contract of Service, contractual worker, casual worker who have no employee-employer relationship and therefore, do not qualify to receive many of the benefits na ibinibigay sa ating mga regular na empleyado and first and foremost ay usapin ng kasiguruhan sa trabaho. Kaya salamat po na sana i-consider ito, especially iyong number of—iyong tagal sa pagseserbisyo mismo sa loob ng gobyerno para magkaroon sila ng kaunting dagdag na benepisyo na premium kung sila’y kukuha ng Civil Service Examination.

Ang mga susunod po na mga katanungan ay specific ito sa mga ilang agencies at doon sa—sorry, may isa pa palang tanong. Patungkol rin ito doon sa kasiguruhan sa trabaho ng mga manggagawa. Kung mamarapatin ng ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor, hindi po ba ngayon ay by 2022, ipatutupad na iyong *Mandanas-Garcia* ruling regarding the increase in the share of the—total share of the pie doon sa revenues ng pamahalaan at isasama na ngayon iyong collection mula sa Bureau of Customs and other government agencies? Ito na nga po iyong dating IRA na ngayon ay tinawag na National Tax Allotment. At pero dito—dahil dito ay naglabas ang Pangulo ng Executive Order No. 138 na magpapatupad ng “full devolution” ng mga empleyado. Natanong ko na ito pero sa DBM noong ito’y pinatupad noong unang beses nang ipinatupad iyong R.A. No. 7160 o iyong Local Government Code way back in 1991. Tinanong ko rito na, ilan ba ang mga empleyado ang negatively or adversely affected o natanggal noong nagkaroon ng devolution noong 1991, 1992 noong ipinatupad nga po ito? At ngayon, nagtatanong ako kung may mga pag-aaral hinggil dito, ang sagot sa akin ng DBM, “wala.” Kayo ba sa CSC mayroon ring study kung ano ang impact noong debolusyon noong 1992 at ngayon tinutulak sa ilalim ng Executive Order No. 138 na, again, as quoted by—as stated in the E.O., iyong full devolution? Maraming agencies ang affected dito. I count

them about 22 or 24 agencies. So, hindi pa full ang sina-submit iyong Devolution Transition Plan as required by the Executive Order, pero mayroon na ba kayong ideya ano ang impact nito? Maganda rin i-contrapose natin doon sa nangyari noong 1991, actually, 1992 na doon sa implementasyon ng Local Government Code noong panahon na iyon, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). With your kind indulgence, honorable Representative Gaité, please wind down your interpellation, as your time has now expired.

REP. GAITE. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Yes, po, magwa-wind down na po ako.

REP. GONZAGA. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Doon po sa sinasabi mo noong Executive Order No. 138 ay klaro po iyon na in relation to the *Mandanas* ruling ay klaro po na ang DBM na iyong may jurisdictions sa CO—mas pinaklaro doon iyong jurisdiction ng JOs at saka COs. Pero, nevertheless, hindi naman lalayo iyong CSC. May role naman siya under Executive Order No. 138. Doon sa Section 5 ng Executive Order, nakasaad doon na ang CSC may render technical assistance to agencies in crafting their Devolution Transition Plan. So, the CSC lang naman will have a collaboration with the DBM and the DILG, kasi po ang DBM and the DILG, sila po iyong lead agencies in the implementation of the *Mandanas* ruling. Kaya nga may lumabas na Circular Number—Joint Memorandum Circular No. 2021-1 na nagiging—CSC has the collaboration or is in collaboration with the DBM and the DILG on the implementation of the *Mandanas* ruling. So, thank you po, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Thank you po, at sana po iyong request ko nga po, if you can give this Representation a comparative—probably,—I am trying to look at the website, hindi ko na makita iyong figures noong IGHR ninyo from that period para makita lang, at least, tulad noong kanina tinatanong ko, ano iyong impact sa JOs at COS because of the pandemic. Hiningi ko po kung mayroon kayong study regarding the number of employees in

national government agencies affected by the devolution. Hindi ko lang alam kung during that time mayroon nang IGHR. Nevertheless, sana po mabigyan ang Kinatawang ito para makapagsagawa rin kaming sariling pag-aaral.

May mga ilang katanungan pa ho sana ako, ito'y mga specific na, pero isa-submit na lang namin. Iyong usapin sa kaso ng DSWD na may mga dinismiss na mga officials, lalo na ng union officials, si—iyong Presidente ng SWEAP Central Office na si Germaine Trittle P. Leonin na hinatulan ng dismissal from service, at ang malala pa, penalties of forfeiture of retirement benefits, cancellation of eligibility, at perpetual disqualification from public service na ang kaso lamang ay undertime, for failure to render 40 hours a week. E sabi ko, ang tingin ko ay kalabisan ito at isusumite namin ito.

There was also a recent report dito sa Lapu-Lapu City, iyong office nila, iyong Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office, ay hindi na raw ni-renew ang kontrata ng kanilang mga kasamahan dahil hindi bakunado. Medyo nag-aalala po ako dito, as a matter of policy. Ano ho ba iyong policy ng CSC? Do we discriminate against those who were not vaccinated at hindi na ni-renew iyong kanilang mga kontrata? Ito ay nakuha lang namin sa *GMA News*. So, puwede bang maglinaw, ano ho ba ang policy ng CSC regarding iyong “no vaccination, no work,” Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor?

REP. GONZAGA. Mme. Speaker, yes, tungkol naman sa “no vaccination, no work,” ang stand po ng CSC diyan, kung mayroon mang ganyan, for example, there are employees dismissed by the local government units because of such ground, “no vaccination, no work.” The employees may or they can appeal to the CSC for that matter. Klaro naman iyan, wala pa namang batas na kung wala kang bakuna ay tatanggalin ka sa trabaho, wala pa naman iyan. So, rest assured the CSC will entertain issues like that.

REP. GAITE. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor. Salamat po sa pagkakataon na ma-clarify sa mga ilang

questions and we hope that the CSC, doon sa mga points na ni-raise, will look into the concerns of our Job Orders and Contract of Service in case na isa-submit po namin sa inyo regarding the excessive penalty of the officers of the DSWD Central Office President and ito pong concern na ito regarding the “No Vaccination, No Work Policy.”

Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor. Thank you to our colleagues in the Civil Service Commission.

REP. GONZAGA. Thank you, Congressman Gaite.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, please recognize Hon. Sarah Elago for her manifestation.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). Honorable Elago is now recognized for her interpellation—manifestation, sorry.

REP. ELAGO. Mme. Speaker, there being no other member of the Minority who wishes to interpellate, I therefore move to terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Civil Service Commission.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. On the part of the Majority, we join the Minority in its motion to terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the proposed budget of the Civil Service Commission.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) Hearing none, the period for interpellation and debate on the proposed budget of the Civil Service Commission is now terminated.

Majority Leader.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we now open the period of sponsorship and debate on the proposed budget of the Department of Justice, including its attached agencies, and that Hon. Ruwel Peter Gonzaga be recognized to sponsor the said proposed budget.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved. Honorable Gonzaga is recognized to sponsor the proposed budget of the DOJ.

REP. GONZAGA. Mme. Speaker, good morning. We are ready.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, before we proceed with the consideration of the proposed budget of the Department of Justice, may we please acknowledge the presence of the following officials of the DOJ: Sec. Menardo Guevarra; Usec. Adrian Ferdinand Sugay; Usec. Juliana G. Sunga; Prosecutor Gen. Benedicto A. Malcontento; Chief State Prosecutor George O. Ortha II; OIC Dir. Eric B. Distor of the National Bureau of Investigation; Comm. Jaime H. Morente, Bureau of Immigration; Government Corporate Counsel Elpidio J. Vega of the Office of the Government Corporate Counsel; OIC-Administrator Julito M. Diray, Parole and Probation Administration; OIC-Chairman John A. Agbayani, Presidential Commission on Good Government; Exec. Dir. Irene D.T. Alogoc, Office for Alternative Dispute Resolution; Dep. Dir. Gabriel P. Chaclag, Bureau of Corrections; Dep. Administrator Atty. Robert Nomar Leyretana, Land Registration Authority; Asst. Solicitor Gen. Sharon E. Millan-Decano; Atty. Ana Lisa Soriano, Public Attorney's Office; and staff, Mr. Angelo Lopez of the Office of the Secretary.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). We acknowledge the presence of the heads and officials from the DOJ, led by

Secretary Guevarra. Welcome to the House of Representatives.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, in addition, attending with us through Zoom are: Usec. Emmeline Aglipay-Villar, Usec. Deo L. Marco, Asec. Adonis P. Sulit, Asec. Margaret V. Castillo-Padilla, Asec. Neal Vincent M. Bainto, Asec. Ma. Nerissa M. Carpio, Asec. Nicholas Felix Ty, Asec. Majken Anika Gran-Ong, Chief Public Attorney, Dr. Persida Rueda-Acosta, Usec. Geraldo Q. Bantag, and Administrator Renato D. Bermejo of the LRA.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). We acknowledge the presence of the other officials through Zoom. Welcome to the House of Representatives.

Majority Leader.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, to interpellate the Sponsor of the proposed budget of the Department of Justice, please recognize Hon. Arlene D. Brosas of GABRIELA Party-List.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). Honorable Brosas is now recognized to interpellate the Sponsor.

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Maraming salamat, Mme. Speaker.

Will the Sponsor yield to a few questions, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. My question is on women in CIWs. Mme. Speaker, ilan po ang congestion rate ng seven facilities under the Bureau of Corrections?

REP. GONZAGA. Pardon, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, my question is, ilan po ang congestion rate ng seven facilities under the Bureau of Corrections?

REP. GONZAGA. We have – the congestion rate, you are talking about the

congestion rate, so, we have the National Bilibid Prison or the NBP, we have 28,605 as of this moment. The Correctional Institution for Women, we have 3,327. So, you are asking about the Correctional Institution for Women, so we have 3,327, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. We have 3,327 percent.

REP. GONZAGA. No.

REP. BROSAS. Congestion rate.

REP. GONZAGA. Yes.

REP. BROSAS. According to Supt. Virginia Mangawit, as of March 1, 2021, the largest women's prison is the Correctional Institution for Women, iyong CIW po in Mandaluyong City. It has a total population of 3,364 when it only has a capacity of 1,500. Napakalayo po, 3,364. Tapos 1,500 lang.

Now, ang congestion rate po doon ay 125 percent, mahigit kalahati ang taas sa capacity nito. Sa ngayon po, ilan ang total population dito sa CIW? Ilan din iyong total population of women sa iba pang facilities under BuCor? Do you have that data, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. GONZAGA. Mme. Speaker, sa CIW po in Mandaluyong, as of June 30, 2021, PDLs total is 3,327. Ang capacity po ng CIW is 1,008 kaya po may congestion rate siya na 230 percent.

So, sa iba namang facilities, we will get back to you kapag makuha na namin, makuha ko na iyong figure kung ano po iyong numbers ng mga kababaihan na nandoon sa loob sa ibang mga preso, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Mas mataas pa pala ayon sa inyo, 230 percent ang congestion rate.

Now, Mme. Speaker, base sa datos na edad 40 hanggang 59 – Mme. Speaker, before I continue siguro – actually nag-agree po ako na ano, nag-a-agree po ako na isubmit na lang iyong mga ilang datos na hinihiling ko on the population at saka iyong ibang facilities pala under BuCor ano.

REP. GONZAGA. Yes, Ma'am. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Next po, base sa datos, edad 40 hanggang 59 ang pinakamaraming bilang sa CIW. May total po ito na, siguro nandiyan na rin sa inyong, kung ilan iyong total. Dito po sa datos ko ay 1,798. Ang edad 22 hanggang 39 ay may total na 1,021. Karamihan sa mga naka-detain ay mga nanay, tama po ba?

REP. GONZAGA. Tama po, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, sa ibang age range din, gusto nating makuha at sa mga ibang naka-detain sa ibang facilities. Mayroon po ba kayong datos ng ganoon, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. GONZAGA. As of now, wala po. Pero, bibigyan po namin kayo when we have it, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Yes. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor. Ilan po dito sa CIW po na hawak ninyo, ilan po dito iyong pregnant women? Tapos ilan iyong may sakit?

REP. GONZAGA. With regard to pregnant women na – zero. Sa may sakit, we will see to it na makuha namin iyong details with regard to mga babae na may sakit doon sa preso.

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor. Pakihabol na lang po iyong mga data na iyan especially iyong may sakit. Now, I will go to my question, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor. Kasi, according to the DOH, iyong pregnant women naman talaga iyong pinaka-vulnerable to Coronavirus, Mme. Speaker. Tapos, speaking of CIW, I understand, wala namang ibinigay ang gobyerno sa ngayon na COVID-19 na vaccination, tama po ba?

REP. GONZAGA. So, there are 3,000 plus vaccines given to the CIW or 80 percent of the women in the facility had been vaccinated already, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Okay, 80 percent ang vaccinated na. Mme. Speaker, ganoon din

iyong mga may edad, iyong mga may edad ba iyong nauna na nabigyan ng vaccine?

REP. GONZAGA. We will get the exact details on who got it first, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, tanong ko lang, kasi ang most vulnerable naman sa atin iyong pregnant woman saka iyong mga may edad, ano pong ginagawa ng DOJ at BuCor hinggil sa programang ito?

REP. GONZAGA. So, iyong mga may edad na na nandoon sa CIW, sila po iyong inatupag ng Departamento para doon sa computation ng good conduct and – GCTA. Sila po iyong unang nabigyan ng mga benepisyong sa loob po.

So, sa concern po natin sa mga may sakit, sa mga ano pa iyong – kasi wala namang pregnant women doon, so, lahat ng mga matatanda na preso, may sakit, sila po ang unang inaatupag ng Departamento. Sila po iyong nakakuha ng prayoridad doon po, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, mayroon kasing previous article on that, mayroong unnamed woman na nagsabi na ang physical distancing was impossible there. Tapos iyong clean drinking water ay binibili ng P1 kada isang cup, and iyong face masks were not – were only available for the elderly. Tapos, may – actually, baka wala – kasi sabi n'yo po zero, pero itong nagsalita na ito ay she gave birth there. She was only given two days to nurse the baby, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor.

So, ano po ba iyong ginagawa ngayon, kasi 'di ba kanina nga sinabi n'yo, 230 percent iyong congestion rate, tapos napakasikip noon tapos may bayad pa iyong tubig, tapos iyong face mask hindi available?

Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, ano po iyong mga ginagawa ngayon ng BuCor kaugnay diyan at ng DOJ?

REP. GONZAGA. Iyon namang problema, Mme. Speaker, sa tubig, hindi lang naman ngayon iyan, noon pa, ina-address na iyan sa Departamento, lalo na sa BuCor, na walang ganoon na pangyayari.

Iyon naman pong sa face mask, marami

naman pong face mask na ibinibigay iyong BuCor doon sa prison natin. So, kung mayroon man sa ngayon na bumibili ng tubig or walang face mask, the BuCor is ready to address that problem, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Yes, please, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, kung bumibili pa ng tubig iyong mga nasa loob ng kulungan, kawawa naman sila. Do you agree na dapat libre ito pati iyong face mask po? Do you agree na dapat libre ito para sa kanila, Mme. Speaker, G. Sponsor?

REP. GONZAGA. Yes, Mme. Speaker. We will see to it that the problem on water, at the same time, the problem on face masks will be addressed immediately by the BuCor.

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, G. Sponsor. Again, Mme. Speaker, iyong sa panganganak po na after two days – it was only two days na binigyan iyong prisoner na makapag-nurse ng baby niya.

Is this a – parang ano, ito ba talaga ay ginagawa ng DOJ? Do you have any guidelines kaugnay sa mga nursing the baby ng prisoner?

I understand, sinasabi niyo po na wala kayo ngayon, zero. Tama ano? Pero mayroon po ba kayong guidelines kaugnay diyan? Iyong hanggang kailan tumatagal ang baby, or when they give birth doon sa prison, hanggang ilang panahon lang nandoon talaga ang ano para mag-nurse? Tapos ano ang ginagawa doon sa nanay or sa magulang, ganyan?

REP. GONZAGA. Mayroon naman po sa operations, BuCor operations manual, mayroon naman po iyong maa-address kaagad iyong problema na sinasabi mo. For example, iyong babae o iyong preso na nanganak, or babae na nanganak ay kasali na iyan sa manual of operations ng BuCor. So, kung sakali man na darating ang panahon na iyan, na may isang female or isang preso na manganganak at saka doon sa pag-aaruga ng kanyang baby, the BuCor officials here give you assurance that they will see to it na in the future mas maaalagaan pa iyong mga babae at saka iyong mga bata na diyan sa loob ng facility ipapanganak.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, G. Sponsor, iyan din po iyong sinagot sa akin last year noong ako ay nagtanong tungkol sa paghiwalay ng anak ni baby River — anak ni Reina Mae Nasino, si Baby River. Iyan po iyong tinanong ko. Ngayon, nadagdagan pa po iyan. In fact, ang case pa po na sumunod diyan, iyong kay Nona Espinosa at ang kanyang baby na si Baby Carlen.

So, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, tanong lang po, may breastfeeding station ba sa mga facilities na ito? At ilang araw po specifically ibinibigay sa kababaihan upang magpa-breastfeed?

REP. GONZAGA. With regard to your first statement na may namatay na baby, we have to check the information, because under BuCor, or under the DOJ, wala naman pong isang babae na nanganak, namatay iyong mama saka nabuhay iyong anak. It could have been baka sa ibang facility po iyong may ganoon na trahedya. On the...

REP. BROSAS. Correction, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor. Iyong nanay po ay buhay, nakakulong. Iyong anak po ang namatay.

REP. GONZAGA. Sorry, but...

REP. BROSAS. They were given — oo, they were given a short period of time para magpa-breastfeed pero eventually namatay po iyong bata kasi po hiniwalay. Now, I was asking kasi last year, last year po ito, e, noong tinanong ko din sa DOJ, and they actually promised noong time na iyon na titingnan nila iyong case, but eventually — hindi pa nga po patay iyong bata noong time na iyon. E ang hinahabol po noong time na iyon ay magkaroon ng furlough para ng sa ganoon ay mabigyan ng time iyong nanay para doon sa bata na nasa ospital dahil kailangang-kailangan niya ng pag-aaruga, na actually, nagfi-50/50 iyong bata na iyon, and she was not given any opportunity at that time. Hindi pinayagan iyong furlough niya. So, nakakalungkot po ito, Mme. Speaker, G. Sponsor, pero kailangan ko rin pong i-take up ulit again — again, ngayon. Kasi namatay na iyong baby ni Reina Mae Nasino na kinasuhan ng gawa-gawang kaso ng Estado na ito, and

she is still lounging in prison, tapos nasundan pa ulit ng kaso noong kay Nona Espinosa, and with Baby Carlen na inihiwalay rin sa kanya.

Alam ninyo naman po, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, according to the World Health Organization or WHO, exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months is the best for the baby's health. Walang puso po ang gobyerno kung hindi isasa-alang-alang ang kalusugan ng isang bata. Naninindigan po kami sa GABRIELA Women's Party na hindi dapat mangyari ito sa lahat ng kababaihan na naka-detain. Sa gitna po lalo ng pandemya, napakaimportante na pahalagahan natin ang kalusugan, lalo na ng mga kababaihang buntis, may edad o di kaya bulnerable sa iba't ibang sakit. Mahalaga po na magbigay ang gobyerno ng maayos na pasilidad para sa kanila, Mme. Speaker, G. Sponsor.

REP. GONZAGA. Mme. Speaker, iyong sinasabi nating na breastfeeding facility under BuCor ay lahat na facility na under the BuCor or under the DOJ ay mayroon naman pong breastfeeding facility as of this moment.

Iyon namang sinasabi nating may namatay na bata at saka nabuhay iyong mama, we have to correct the facts that it happened not under the DOJ or under the BuCor pero sa ibang facility po somewhere in Metro Manila. And I think, it is under the BJMP. So, we will have — kindly double-check your facts. We will double-check our facts kung BJMP ba iyon. Pero sa posisyon po ng DOJ, wala pong nangyayari, last year, two years ago or this year na may bata na namatay dahil — na walang facility — walang breastfeeding facility po, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, G. Sponsor, sinagot ako last time niyan, naalala ko pa, kaugnay diyan kay Reina Mae Nasino. Pero, nevertheless, Mme. Speaker, ilan po iyong breastfeeding facilities na mayroon or station or facilities na mayroon ang ano? At ang tanong ko po diyan specifically ilan iyong ibinibigay sa mga kababaihan para magpa-breastfeed?

REP. GONZAGA. Sa lahat na CIW facilities in Metro — in Luzon or in Metro Manila,

Mandaluyong and CIW facility in Davao, lahat po ay may breastfeeding facility po, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor. Lahat po iyan, pero ilan po iyong total?

REP. GONZAGA. So, iyong breastfeeding facility ng Mandaluyong, mayroon pong, isa. At saka mayroon po sa CIW Davao, isa din po.

REP. BROSAS. So, dalawa lang.

REP. GONZAGA. Kasi dalawa lang po din, Mme. Speaker, iyong CIW sa atin, sa Davao at saka Mandaluyong po, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, G. Sponsor.

Kung dalawa lang, ilan po iyong ibinibigay na time para sa kababaihan para magpa-breastfeed po sila?

REP. GONZAGA. So, wala, Mme. Speaker, wala pong limit ng time iyong ibinibigay sa isang nanay. The—as of this moment, wala po naman bagong panganak doon sa Davao at saka dito sa Mandaluyong, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Okay, thank you, Mme. Speaker, G. Sponsor.

I stand corrected nga dito sa ano, malamang, dito kay Reina Mae Nasino at saka kay Nona Espinosa because malamang sa DILG po ito dapat, ano at saka sa BJMP. Because I was not given so much time para mag-interpellate sa DILG kagabi. Pati po itong usapin na ito hindi ko na nasabi sa kanila. Napakaimportante din po nito sa usapin ng katarungan at saka pangangailangan ng ating mga kababaihan, lalo na sa mga prison facilities sa ating bansa.

Well, hopefully—hopefully ma-take up pa ito o masabi pa ito sa BJMP, Mme. Speaker, G. Sponsor.

Nevertheless, pupunta na po ako sa next question ko, Mme. Speaker, G. Sponsor. This is about, medyo current po ito na isyu. The DOJ is taking over the preliminary

investigation of the death of artist Bree Jonson, tama po ba? Ano na po ang update dito?

REP. GONZAGA. Yes, Mme. Speaker, the preliminary investigation of Bree Jonson is ongoing.

REP. BROSAS. Ano po ang update?

REP. GONZAGA. Of course, there is a preliminary investigation, Mme. Speaker. So, nandoon sa labas si Bree Jonson. If the prosecution finds probable cause that Bree Jonson—that Julian Ongpin has committed the crime or murdered Bree Jonson, kung may probable cause iyan, of course, ipa-file iyong kaso sa korte. Kung after determination of probable cause of the judge, who has jurisdiction over the case, may ilalabas na warrant iyan.

So, as of this moment, under investigation iyong kaso ni Julian Ongpin with regard to the killing of Bree Jonson.

REP. BROSAS. Yes, I understand, Mme. Speaker, si Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra issued the Department Order No. 229, transferring the complaint against Ongpin from the Office of the Provincial Prosecutor of La Union to the Office of the Secretary of Justice Prosecution Staff.

Now, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, si Julian Ongpin kasi, son of a billionaire and former Trade Secretary. Tama po ba? Roberto Ongpin, siya po iyong person of interest. And, tama po kayo, sabi ninyo, initially arrested siya in La Union, in fact, for the possession of 12.6 grams of cocaine. He also tested positive for the use of it. Tama po ba?

REP. GONZAGA. Yes, Ma'am, the arrest was conducted in La Union. Pero, Mme. Speaker, binitawan siya o pinalabas siya ng prosecution because sabi po ng prosecution, hindi siya covered doon sa warrantless arrest. So, hindi puwede iyong—wala siyang—hindi siya, sa warrantless arrest kasi, of course, actually committing the *flagrante delicto* or iyong taong huhuli sa kanya has the probable, has the knowledge, personal knowledge based

on facts and circumstances na siya iyong gumawa ng krimen ay puwede siyang hulihin.

So, hindi siya puwedeng i-under custodial—ide-detain siya because hindi siya puwedeng ihulog doon sa warrantless arrest kaya pinalaya siya, kaya mayroong preliminary investigation. Regular filing po ang proseso na gagamitin kay Julian Ongpin. Iyon po ang proseso, not because he is a son of a billionaire, because, that is really the process under the law, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, G. Sponsor, iyan nga po, precisely, iyong tanong ko, kung bakit iyong La Union Prosecutor Office in-order kaagad iyong release ni Ongpin.

According to R.A. No. 9165 of the Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002, “any person shall not be allowed to avail of the provision on plea-bargaining when charged of possession of more than 10 grams.” Nag-usap po tayo kanina, 12.6 grams of cocaine, and you did agree; and he tested positive. Ten grams of shabu, opium, morphine, heroin and cocaine.

Kaya, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, parang tila may special treatment kay Julian Ongpin.

Bakit parang kapag malaking tao, nasa posisyon o anak ng isang politiko, kapag nakuhaan ng ilegal na droga ay madali lang natin pakawalan, palayain, samantala kapag mahirap ang nahuhulihan ng droga, baril, agad katapat nito, tapos tokhang agad, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. GONZAGA. Mme. Speaker, iyon nga ang—that is the appreciation of the prosecution in La Union. Kung nakuha sa physical possession iyong droga or iyong illegal drugs na iyan while conducting a search, or what we call buy bust, well, inquest kaagad iyan.

Sa nangyari kay Julian Ongpin, hindi nakuha iyong possession sa katawan niya. So, ibig sabihin, there was no buy bust. Kung wala namang buy bust, hindi puwede iyong warrantless arrest na iyan. Kaya, ang sinasabi natin kung si Julian Ongpin has committed the offense charged, iyon, puwede iyong warrantless arrest. E wala naman, kaya hindi puwede iyong inquest sa kanya. So, ang nangyari, regular filing.

Sinabi nila may violation of 9165— Republic Act No. 9165, e wala naman pong testigo, public officer or private individual na nagsasaad na nakuha sa kanya, so kaya kailangan iyong proseso is under the regular process, kaya may kasong finayl sa kanya, kaya ang resulta niyan preliminary investigation, not inquest.

Kung under preliminary investigation ka, papalayain ka, kasi kung iho-hold ka ng public officer, three days walang kaso, arbitrary detention naman iyong kaso ng public officer. O kaya talagang ipa-follow natin iyong proseso under the law, otherwise, those executing, implementing the law or the enforcer will be charged of a crime under another law na naman. So, kailangang lalabas si Julian Ongpin para mai-proseso sa regular na pamamaraan.

So, iyon po ang nangyayari po, Ma’am, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor, sa inyong sagot.

Iyon nga po iyong ano, ‘no, parang ang nangyari dito ay kapagka ordinaryong mamamayan lang, napakabilis at napakadali nating umaksiyon tapos na, ang tindi noong mga dinaranas noong nakaraan lalo na sa war on drugs ni President Duterte. But, anyway, tapos ito may posisyon, son of a billionaire, so talagang hindi mo maisip na, uy, may due process of law dito, kailangan ganito.

Anyway, I will not belabor the point, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor. This Representation firmly believes that a thorough investigation on the death of Bree Jonson must be executed.

Sa sistema po ng hustisya sa Pilipinas lagi na lang pinapatakas iyong mga nasa kapangyarihan habang iyong mga biktima at kanilang mga pamilya hindi nabibigyan ng karampatang suporta.

Mme. Speaker, G. Sponsor, ang hiling ko na lang po, may we be apprised, ‘no doon sa case, ‘no, iyong kung ano na po iyong inaabot noong kaso. We will continue to siguro alamin kung ano iyong mga nagaganap na sa kaso na iyan, Mme. Speaker, G. Sponsor.

Maraming salamat po. Iyong lang po ang mga katanungan ko, Mme. Speaker, G. Sponsor.

REP. GONZAGA. Thank you very much, Ma'am, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). Majority Leader.

REP. ROMUALDO. Mme. Speaker, the next Member who wishes to interpellate is the Gentleman from Party-List BAYAN MUNA. I move that we recognize Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). The honorable Representative Zarate is recognized for his interpellation.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Magandang hapon po. Naririnig po ba akong muli sa plenaryo?

REP. GONZAGA. Yes, Sir. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Okay. Thank you, good Sponsor. Magandang tanghali po muli sa ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor at sa ating mga kasamahan sa Plenaryo.

First, we appreciate and acknowledge iyong ibinigay na mga dokumento ng Department of Justice tungkol po doon sa ating naging talakayan or interpellation sa budget briefing. However, Mr. Sponsor, I have to state for the record that mayroon pa rin pong mga—inaantay pa rin po ng Kinatawang ito ang mga ni-request nating mga dokumento. Una, doon sa report ng mga kasong handled related to—this is related to the war on drugs handled where perpetrators were convicted. So, mga kasong hinawakan ng DOJ kung saan mayroong mga na-convict. Doon naman din po sa operational guidelines on the drug war inter-agency panel. At pangatlo, ang result po ng DOJ review doon sa 52 cases out of the 6,000 officially—more or less officially admitted by the PNP na namatay during the drug war—war on drugs as mentioned by Secretary Guevarra during the budget briefing.

So, these are the three reports or documents na up to now ay inaantay pa po natin. Will the good Sponsor commit that before September

30, this Representation will already have a copy of these reports?

REP. GONZAGA. With regard naman sa kaso o dokumento na hinihingi mo during the deliberation, naipadala na po sa inyo, emailed on September 26, so lahat ng hinihingi ninyo po ay napadala na po sa inyo. Kindly check your email add, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat po. We will double-check ang atin pong email on that regard. So, I will go now doon ho sa aking points in the interpellation sa budget ng DOJ or matters related to the Department of Justice.

Mr. Sponsor, nito pong nakaraang August 10, a certain Brig. Gen. Joel Alejandro Nacnac, Director of the so-called Center for Law of Armed Conflict, sinabi po niya that the AFP adheres to the enforcement of the IHL through Administrative Order No. 35, creating the mechanics of enforcement of the International Humanitarian Law, headed by the DOJ.

In the same article, this was carried by the *Philippine News Agency*—by the way, Brigadier General Nacnac was quoted saying that he also—the AFP also submitted a list of alleged IHL violations of the CPP and the NPA to the DOJ, including cases of willful killings. So, puwede po bang matanong, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, do these cases of killings submitted by Brigadier General Nacnac fall under the purview or the coverage of Administrative Order No. 35, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. Iyong sinabmit ni Brigadier General Nacnac na mga cases ay under po ng evaluation ng DOJ whether under the purview of iyong sinasabi mo or outside the jurisdiction po, so lahat po ay under study kung sila po ay under ng DOJ jurisdiction.

REP. ZARATE. Yes, so there is no definitive decision yet from the DOJ?

REP. GONZAGA. As of this moment, wala pa po. None, not yet.

REP. ZARATE. Yes. Thank you, good Sponsor. But it is very clear that the mandate of the Inter-Agency Committee as created by that

A.O. No. 35 pertains to incidents considered as extralegal killings. Is that correct, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Yes. And sa atin pong jurisprudence and even sa ating mga Saligang Batas, the good Sponsor will agree that extralegal killings or extrajudicial killings are properly already defined and identified. For example, in Republic Act No. 11188 or the Special Protection of Children in Situations of Armed Conflict Act, Section 5 on the Definition of Terms clearly states “Extrajudicial Killings” you may refer it as extralegal killings “refer to all acts of omissions of State” –I have to underscore that “State actors that constitute violation of the general recognition of the right to life embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” Tama po ba ang aking nabanggit, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. Well, that is the provision or the exact provision of the law. Yes.

REP. ZARATE. Yes. So, I do not want to belabor the point. So, kung ang itong sinabi – mali itong sinabi at mali itong submission, I have to state that out rightly na ang AFP na itong sinasabi nilang willful killings come within the purview of Administrative Order No. 35, because certainly, ang CPP or NPA sila iyong nag-commit noong killings na iyan. They are not State actors. Is that correct, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. Well, we maintain our answer earlier that this is under study of the DOJ, so we have ...

REP. ZARATE. Okay, I will take that for now, but will the good Sponsor take it into consideration iyong binanggit kong definition kanina as stated in Republic Act No. 11188 that extrajudicial killings or extralegal killings refer to acts and omissions of State actors, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. Well, kung binasa mo iyong section na iyan, well, we agree on that

because extrajudicial killing iyan e. So, iyon ang sabi ng batas, iyon ang nakasaad sa batas so we cannot defy or we cannot refute the provision of the law, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, good Sponsor. So, I strongly urge the good Sponsor and the Department to consider that.

Going back – I will go back to another point, good Sponsor. In the 2020 annual report of the Commission on Human Rights, nabanggit po doon sa page 58, sinabi nila, under item number 195, “While Administrative Order No. 35, which created the Inter-Agency Committee (IAC), is meant to address the spate of politically-motivated extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, incidents of torture, and other human rights violations, the mechanism has been slow in holding perpetrators liable for violations. To date, no case has resulted in a conviction through the sole effort of the IAC as a super body.”

Now, my question, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, what is our view on this analysis of the CHR noong binanggit nila na it is very slow in holding perpetrators liable for violation? Bakit po it has opined that despite your reported 13 cases of convictions, they deemed that there are no cases at all that resulted in a conviction through the sole effort of the inter-agency committee as a super body? Ina-acknowledge ho ba ng Kagawaran that the mechanism has been slow in holding these perpetrators accountable, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. Mme. Speaker, lahat naman ay iyong sinasabi mo na mga EJK na iyan ay under litigation iyan. So pag may litigation iyan, it is not only the sole duty of the prosecutor or the DOJ to fast track the cases kasi may mga factors iyan. Like for example, may judge na iyan, may counsel of the accused, the prosecution. So, under our trying times, may pandemic tayo ngayon, nahihirapan tayo for the past two years. So, probably, it explains well bakit for the past two years mahina iyong takbo ng mga kaso na sinasabi mo.

So nevertheless, the DOJ, on the side of the DOJ, they will call the attention of the

prosecutors handling the mentioned cases, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, good Sponsor.

Of course, certainly you know and I know that there are really factors kung bakit mabagal ang pag-usad ng mga kaso sa ating bansa dahil sa—lalo na ngayon na nasa panahon ng pandemya ng COVID. Just for the record, kailan ba—kailan inilabas itong A.O. No. 35 at nabuo ang Inter-Agency Committee, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker? And, up to now, ilang cases na ang nasa consideration or under litigation because of the mandate of A.O. No. 35?

REP. GONZAGA. As of this moment we do not have the figure but we will secure as fast as we can and we will get back to you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Yes. Thank you, good Sponsor, dahil importante po iyan dahil, of course, we can dwell on generalities but precisely ito pong A.O. No. 35 ay naging produkto noong pagtutulak na magkaroon ng mekanismo para sa daglian at kagyat na pagtugon ng ating pamahalaan doon sa mga lumalalang kaso ng extrajudicial killings, especially, politically-motivated extrajudicial killings. And we cannot, of course, just—kung bumabagal iyong pag-usad nito ay hindi ho puwedeng buong-buo halimbawa ang gawin nating dahilan ay nasa pandemya tayo o dahil mayroong mga kahinaan sa pagtakbo ng proseso sa mga iba't ibang korte. We have to know specifically saan ba ang weak points dito. Bakit parang there is a reverse sa objective na dapat pabilisin ang pagresolba ng mga kaso ng extrajudicial killings kaya nga binuo itong inter-agency super body na ito to respond to these issues.

Now, in the government's own human rights report, it was also cited that in at least 127 cases na na-cover nito, perpetrators have been cleared through acquittals and dismissals in court or through dismissals by the Office of the Ombudsman or through dismissals or provisional dismissals by the prosecution.

So, I have this data sa ating pananaliksik and these comprise 35 percent of the 385 cases

being handled by the Department under the auspices of A.O. No. 35, itong Inter-Agency Committee. So, how does the Inter-Agency Committee look at or assess its role now to resolve these unsolved cases when it has a higher batting average of clearing perpetrators than it has in getting conviction, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. It is the view of the DOJ to invite the affected families to come forward to personally engage the Department of Justice kasi sa lahat na cover na iyan ng A.O. No. 35, nahihirapan po iyong prosecutor—iyong DOJ dahil availability ng mga witnesses, pamilya ng mga alleged na namatay sa EJK. Kailangan pong mag-coordinate sila so, it is one of the factors na bakit hindi natugunan kaagad iyong mga problemang iyan.

Nevertheless, iyong counsel naman diyan ay tinitingnan—ina-asses namin o ina-assess pa rin kung anong puwedeng maidagdag para mapadali iyong mga paglilitis sa problemang tinutugon ninyo po, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat, good Sponsor. In fact, maidagdag ko diyan, in the same report that you make, mayroon ding 101 cases na reported—that are still being under investigation or under preliminary investigation and these 101 cases comprise 26 percent of the 385 cases being handled by the Inter-Agency Committee under the mandate of A.O. No. 35. Ano na po ba ang status nitong 101 cases na ito that are still under investigation or under preliminary investigation? Ano ang problema na na-encounter bakit hindi ito mabilis na umuusad, good Sponsor?

REP. GONZAGA. Mme. Speaker, with regard to the 26 percent o iyong under ng preliminary investigation or—titingnan po ng Departamento iyong mga kaso na iyan, so, if you have the—sort of a list of the 26 percent or the 101 percent, titingnan po ng Departamento kung saan na sila. Like, for example, iyong sa 101 na iyan, sila ba lahat dito sa Luzon, Metro Manila, or Davao, o Cebu or in the Visayas, so, will you please help us to identify the 101 percent or 26 percent para ang

Departamento ng DOJ will call the attention of those prosecutors handling the cases and they will re-evaluate bakit matagal po iyong paglilitis o pagresolba ng mga kaso na iyan, Mme. Speaker?

REP. ZARATE. Well, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, ito pong mga datos na ito ay kinuha po natin sa government Human Rights Report, and this was also submitted, I think, to the UN Human Rights Council, iyong compliance doon sa commitment ng Philippine government to respond to these issues on human rights.

Earlier, you mentioned and in fact, widely reported din ito sa media that there are problems in obtaining support or trust sa mga kaanak ng mga biktima and even from civil society organizations documenting the cases. We also read in the news, good Sponsor, that the initiative to engage the DOJ regarding, halimbawa, ito pong nangyari sa Southern Tagalog, iyong nataguriang “Bloody Sunday” na kung saan ang tinatawag na warrant factory dito sa National Capital Region ay nag-issue ng napakaraming warrants. Simultaneously, ginamit ito ng mga kapulisan at ng mga militar para mag-lunsad ng operasyon at nagresulta nga sa pagkamatay ng iilan nating mga kababayan at pagkakulong ng iilan din. And this incident ay napaulat na mayroon parang reluctance or problema ang pakikipag-relate ng DOJ o ng pamilya with the DOJ. So, what are the ways by which this problem of trust is addressed now by the Department of Justice at paano po ang Inter-Agency Committee rito or ang DOJ maging mas proactive considering na iyong mga sensitivities and views of the relatives and even the witnesses? Siyempre, nandiyan din po iyong mga takot dahil napaslang nga ang kanilang mga kaanak at nakakulong ang kanilang mga kaanak. So, the fear of reprisal at magkaroon din ng masamang pangyayari sa kanila ay nandiyan given the fact na ang mga alleged perpetrators are State actors or State forces. Can you give a—can we hear a comment from the good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. Mme. Speaker, una, iyong sinasabi ninyong warrant factory

ay lumalabas na—nagpalabas na po iyong Supreme Court ng guideline diyan. So, wala lang po iyong Metro Manila, Quezon City Executive Judges na puwedeng mag-issue ng warrant kasi judicial regions na iyong puwede na diyan ngayon, judicial regions or the court where the problems arise. So, for example, kung may problema doon sa Davao, hindi na puwede—may problema na kailangan ng warrant of—search warrant iyong government forces or natatakot sila dahil maimpluwensiya iyong tao na subject doon, dito sila magpa-file sa Metro Manila, wala na po iyan. So, by region or doon sa specific area where the court stands. So, wala na ho iyong sinasabi nating warrant factory.

Pangalawa, iyong sinasabi nating may problema doon sa trust, sa mga biktima ng pamilya o pamilya ng biktima, kaya nagiging mahinao masyadong slow iyong pacing ng litigation ng mga kaso na tinutukoy mo, ang kailangan lang natin, we have to open up communications. Sarado po iyong komunikasyon ng prosecutor at saka ng pamilya. Iyong pamilya natatakot na pumunta sa prosecutor dahil sinasabi mo “State actor” iyong respondent or iyong kino-complain natin, so kinakailangan, we have to be realistic, practical, and we have to open up, we have to help them open communications and get in touch with the arms of the government, which is the DOJ. Kung hindi natin maireresolba iyong komyunikasyong problemang iyan, talagang walang trust na maibibigay iyong pamilya doon sa prosecutor. And who will be handling the case? It is the prosecutor. So, kinakailangang hindi matakot iyong pamilyang lumabas, otherwise, alam na natin kung ano ang konsukwensya kung matatakot iyong pamilya ng biktima na lumabas. How can you expect na mananalo iyong—sa litigation, mananalo iyong pamilya ng biktima na hindi naman sila tumutulong? Kaya the number one solution to the problem is communication. Tulungan nating ma-engage sila sa handling prosecutor, hindi sila matakot lumabas, at saka kinakailangan din silang mag-cooperate na maituturo kung sino pa iyong mga testigo laban sa mga akusado. So, that would solve the problem, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Maraming salamat, good Sponsor, sa inyong tugon.

But, certainly, of course I agree with you. Communication is very important. But, certainly, you will also agree na malaki ang papel, na dapat maging proactive ang Department considering that these are, you know, mga ordinaryo po nating mga mamamayan ito. In fact, they are not so familiar with the intricacies, how our justice system works. At nadagdag pa diyan iyong, hindi lang kakulangan ng resources, nabanggit ko na kanina, ang pangunahing rekonsiderasyon diyan noong kanila ding pag-alala, ang kanilang takot dahil nga hindi lang seguridad kung hindi buhay rin nila ang nakasalalay diyan. Kaya sana po ay maging – we strongly urge the Department to initiate more proactive measures to gain the trust of the relatives of the victims and the witnesses, lalo na po, hindi naman po kaila sa atin na napakaraming kaso na sa una ay tingin nating malakas pero po ay natatalo, nadi-dismiss, at ito iyong nagbibigay sa kanila ng alanganin. Nandiyan iyong pag-iisip nila na wala ring mangyayari sa kasong iyan dahil taga-gobyerno rin iyan.

So, iyon po ang ating mensaheng ipinapaabot sa Kagawaran. We trust the Department of Justice as an institution na mayroon itong magawa, na mabigyan ng hustisya itong mga biktima ng paglabag sa kanilang mga karapatang pantao, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

Now, in these past days, the DOJ also, Mr. Sponsor, mentioned the formation of a Special Investigation Task Group on cases. How does this Special Investigation Task Force or Task Group function? Ano po ang mandato nito at saan po – may pondo po ba itong Special Investigation Task Group na ito sa kasalukuyan o para sa susunod na taon? Naisama po ba ito sa panukalang budget for 2022, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. So iyon nga, Mme. Speaker, iyong special task force na iyan is an inter-agency task force. So may NBI, may PNP or anong ahensiya na involved diyan so – pero ang lead diyan sa task force na iyan, iyong prosecutor. So, it is not a one-man body,

it is an inter-agency, so ang prosecutor po ang nangunguna diyan, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, good Sponsor.

Dahil nabasa ko po, isa – ang mga ilang kaso na binanggit ng kagalang-galang na Secretary Guevarra ay, halimbawa po, iyong kaso na sabi niya ay iimbestigahan ng task group na ito, ng task force na ito, ay iyong pagpaslang sa lider ng ANAKPAWIS Party-List na si Randall “Ka Randy” Echanis, iyong pagpaslang din sa human rights worker sa Negros na si Zara Alvarez, at iyong pagpaslang ng mga kapatid nating Tumandoks doon sa Capiz, at iyong nabanggit ko na earlier na Bloody Sunday incident. So, ano na po ang naging status ng mga investigation na ito, sa mga insidenteng ito, which were all committed in the past year, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.?

REP. GONZAGA. So, Mme. Speaker, iyong lahat ng mga kaso na binanggit mo ngayon ay may imbestigasyon. Mayroon na ring report na naisagawa iyong DOJ diyan and the DOJ, in due time, ipapalabas nila iyong report sa mga ilang kaso na sinasabi mo, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Do you have a timeline, good Sponsor, if I may?

REP. GONZAGA. Mme. Speaker, yes. In a couple of weeks, in two weeks, may ilalabas na report ang Department of Justice.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat po. Aasahan po namin iyan na in a couple of weeks ay mayroon na ngang report na maipalabas ang Department of Justice.

May ilan na lang pong tatlong – siguro tatlong mga katanungan related dito. Gusto ko lang pong busisiin talaga itong edisyon na ito.

Doon po sa budget ng Inter-Agency Committee, I read na ang committee na ito, halimbawa, may nabasa po akong isang article in 2017 ay mayroon itong budget na P32.9 million; in 2018 – P11.42 million, 2019 – P10.78 million, 2020 – P10.7 million, and for this year – P10.9 million. So, kung pondo at pondo din lang naman po ay mayroon pong pondo talaga itong – na inalalaan para sa Inter-Agency

Committee by virtue of the mandate of A.O. No. 35.

Ang tanong ko po patungkol sa budget na ito, ito bang budget na ito ay na-disburse or nagamit na ng Inter-Agency Committee, in general terms, 'no, and how much was spent on investigation for case build up, for example, out of this budget, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

Halimbawa na lang po, pagbabatayan natin itong nakaraang dalawang taon, 2020 and itong kasalukuyang taon, mayroon po ba kayong maibibigay na, at least, report or statistics on this, and how this budget were expended para po maitupad ang mandato ng A.O. No. 35, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

Of course, may budget iyan every year. Ginagamit po ng DOJ iyan dahil lahat naman po may usog o may resulta iyong mga kaso na tinatalakay mo kanina. So, we will get in touch with the in charge of the details of these expenses and after we get that we will inform you on your request, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, good Sponsor.

We expect a detailed report on that. If you cannot give that today, at least before September 30 for our consideration. Tinanong ko po iyan dahil nga – gaya noong nabanggit ko kanina na mga statistics, 'no, mayroon tayong budget, pero, as observed, even the CHR in this report, and even the report itself submitted by the government ay nakita natin iyong napakahinang pag-usad ng mga kaso na nasa loob ng mandato ng A.O. No. 35.

Now, another point, good Sponsor. Tapos na po ako diyan sa inter-agency task force. Mayroon lang po akong gustong liwanagin pa rin.

Under DOJ Circular No. 61, Series of 1993, nabanggit po doon "When death occurs," pag mayroon pong namatay during a police investigation or there is a possibility of foul play, the prosecutor should take the initiative, sinabi po doon, "prosecutors should take the initiative of making a procedural investigation whenever a dead body is found and there might be foul play," provided that the police are required to submit all relevant documents

to the prosecutors. Nasa DOJ Circular po ito, No. 61, Series of 1993.

So, in relation to this, iyon pong mga pagpatay doon sa mga nabanggit ko kanina, iyong mga Tumandok sa Panay, iyong pagpatay po sa mga consultants, peace consultants ng National Democratic Front of the Philippines na sina Agaton Topacio, Eugenia Magpantay, Reynaldo Bocala, at ang kanyang companion o kasama po na si Willy Epago, si Julius Giron, at iyong doktor na si Lourdes Tangco, plus iyon pong isa pang NDFP in Mindanao spokesperson na si Alvin Luque and his companion, at iyong mga sa Bloody Sunday incidents sa Southern Tagalog na nabanggit ko na kanina.

So, ang tanong ko po rito, on the part of the DOJ, nakapag-submit po ba ang PNP ng mga relevant documents, related documents sa prosecutors, and have the prosecutors conducted preliminary investigation on all of these cases that I mentioned, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. Mme. Speaker, at the moment we do not have a specific data on that matter or information so, the DOJ will assess if there are reports from the PNP with regard to your concern, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. At any rate—so we will also await specific reports on that. I am already winding up. Nakalimutan ko lang itanong kanina sa inter-agency iyong issue ng A.O. No. 35. Is A.O. No. 35 also receiving foreign funding for the implementation of its mandate, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. Mme. Speaker, none.

REP. ZARATE. What about the funding coming from the European Union GOJUST Programme, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. Mme. Speaker, wala din.

REP. ZARATE. I hope the good Sponsor and the DOJ will review this because I read in the Government Rights Human Report that some of the funding from the European Union

GOJUST Programme or Project, was also given to the A.O. – the implementation of the A.O. No. 35, iyong creation of Inter-Agency Committee and if it so, this Representation will also request how this funding given to the IAC – Inter-Agency Committee was used and how it helped in its work dito po sa usapin ng extralegal killings.

And finally, good Sponsor, final point. In the last UN General Assembly, President Duterte, again, mentioned that the government of the Philippines will abide with the UN mechanism, especially in its war on drugs, that he already mentioned a bloody war on drugs.

So, my question to this effect, will the DOJ, dahil nag-commit ang DOJ doon sa UN Human Rights Council, that they – that it will be proactive in looking into these extralegal killings, extrajudicial killings, or violations of protocols or standard operating procedures by the PNP and other State actors in the war against drugs, will the DOJ also be cooperative with another UN Body, the International Criminal Court that is now conducting a preliminary investigation on these cases, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). With your kind indulgence, honorable Representative Zarate, please wind down your interpellation as your time has now expired.

REP. ZARTE. Yes, Mme. Speaker. Thank you. That would be my last question actually, Mme. Speaker. May we hear a response from the good Sponsor?

REP. GONZAGA. Mme. Speaker, the DOJ will conduct – do its own investigation. So, whatever the results of the investigations will be, that is a public document and will be given to anyone else. Thank you.

REP. ZARATE. Including the ICC, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GONZAGA. Once the DOJ reveals the result of the investigation, that is apt for public.

REP. ZARATE. And it can be accessed, it

can be made available to any agency, foreign and domestic, including UN agencies, like the UN Human Rights Council and the International Criminal Court. Is that correct, good Sponsor?

REP. GONZAGA. Well, that is accessible to anyone when it goes public, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. At any rate, thank you good Sponsor for your responses and thank you to the Department of Justice. Again, I appreciate the documents that were furnished to us as requested during the budget briefing. Thank you again, good Sponsor.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Magandang hapon ho sa ating lahat.

REP. GONZAGA. Thank you, Congressman Zarate.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). Majority Leader.

REP. ROMUALDO. Mme. Speaker, the next of our colleague who has registered for interpellations is the Gentleman from Party-List MAGSASAKA.

I move that we recognize Rep. Argel Joseph Cabatbat.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). The honorable Rep. Argel Joseph T. Cabatbat is now recognized to interpellate the Sponsor.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Will the good Sponsor yield to some of our questions?

REP. GONZAGA. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you.

Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, naobserbahan po ba ng NBI iyong pagtaas ng kriminalidad na may kinalaman sa digital o electronic crimes or internet-related – or internet-fueled crimes, Mme. Speaker?

REP. GONZAGA. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor.

Dahil po sa pandemic, naintindihan natin na marami ngayon ang nasa online, either through education, mga meetings, nasa online na, pati po ang paggo-grocery, online na. Matanong ko lang po, handa po kaya ang NBI para matugunan iyong pagtaas ng kriminalidad pagdating sa mga krimen na related sa online o kaya iyong nangyayari online? I mean, is the NBI ready when it comes to responding to those crimes? Mayroon po bang digital forensic investigation tools and equipment ang NBI sa ngayon?

REP. GONZAGA. Mme. Speaker, mayroon na po pero kinakailangan talaga ng tulong because the NBI needs help to enhance the equipment they have, the facility they have today.

REP. CABATBAT. So, sa madaling salita po, mayroon pero hindi sapat. Kailangan po ng suporta, tama po ba?

REP. GONZAGA. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CABATBAT. So, based on the trend ng mga krimen na nangyayari online, kailangan pong pondohan ito. Tama po ba?

REP. GONZAGA. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CABATBAT. Magkano po ang kailangan na pondo ng NBI para po makatugon sa ganitong challenge? Mayroon po ba tayong — o mako-confirm po ba iyong aming datos na ang kailangan po ng NBI is around P254 million, tama po ba?

REP. GONZAGA. Doon po sa digital equipment, Mme. Speaker, ang hinihingi po ng NBI is P500 million.

REP. CABATBAT. Five hundred.

REP. GONZAGA. Yes po.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor.

Anyway, in due time, I will support the move to provide the NBI with that budget and

I hope our colleagues will also support that move. Otherwise, alam n'yo po, malakas ang loob ng mga criminal kung walang deterrence. Kung alam ng mga kriminal na ang NBI ay hindi — o may kulang sa kanilang equipment, I think, magkakaroon — parang mas lalakas ang loob ng mga kriminal na mag-commit ng crime online kung walang ganitong kagamitan ang NBI. So, I think, to add deterrence to these crimes and to deter future criminals, I really believe that we should give that fund to the NBI.

Anyway, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, let me move on to my second question. Pagdating naman po sa ballistic identification, sa ngayon po ba, mano-mano po ang paggawa ng NBI when it comes to ballistic identification o mayroon na po ba tayong kagamitan o technology para dito? Mayroon na po ba ang NBI o wala pa?

REP. GONZAGA. Mme. Speaker, mayroon naman po, pero kagaya noong digital, kailangan natin i-enhance, so, kaya we need to support the NBI on this matter, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor.

May proposal po ba o estimate ng pondo na kailangan para ma-enhance ang ballistic identification system ng NBI?

REP. GONZAGA. Mme. Speaker, kailangan ng NBI ng P100 million for that matter.

REP. CABATBAT. Okay. Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, at the risk of sounding repetitive, alam n'yo po, kung mayroong ganitong equipment ang NBI ay matatakot ang kriminal, e, na gumamit ng mga licensed or unlicensed firearm in committing their crimes. So, kapag ma-improve po natin ito, I think this will send a message to future criminals na hindi talaga — kung gagawa ka ng krimen, maghanap ka ng ibang gamit, dahil matutunton ka ng NBI lalo na kapag mayroon silang ganitong kagamitan.

So, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, in due time, we will, I will support that budget proposal, and I hope my colleagues will also do the same. So, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, wala naman po akong ibang tanong.

Maraming salamat po, and I hope, and I wish our DOJ family and the NBI family good luck. And there being no other Minority Leaders who will—who wish to interpellate on the proposed budget of the DOJ and its attached agencies, it is my honor and privilege to move for the termination of the period of sponsorship and debate on the proposed budget of the DOJ and its attached agencies.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, on the part of the Majority we join the Minority in its motion to terminate the period of sponsorship and debate on the budget of the Department of Justice, including its attached agencies.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the interpellations—the period of sponsorship and debate on the proposed budget of the Department of Justice and its duly attached agencies is hereby terminated.

Majority Leader.

COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we open the period of sponsorship and debate on the proposed budget of the Commission on Elections, and please recognize Hon. Francisco Jose “Bingo” Matugas, Vice Chair of the Committee on Appropriations, to sponsor the budget of the Commission on Elections.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). Hearing no objection, the period of sponsorship and debate on the proposed budget of the Commission on Elections is now open.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF REP. MATUGAS

REP. MATUGAS. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. I am privileged and honored to

present the budget of Comelec, as approved by the DBM, with the amount of P26.497 billion, P15 billion less than their proposed budget for 2022. And before I proceed, before we proceed for the interpellation, may I ask permission from Mme. Speaker, to share a bit of good news to this august Chamber...

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker.

REP. MATUGAS. ...and to all the Members of the Eighteenth Congress and the public in general, that the Commission on Elections will be approving tomorrow the voters—the extension of the voters’ registration until October 31.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker.

REP. MATUGAS. With this, Mme. Speaker, I hope na wala na pong mag-interpellate sa budget ng Comelec, and...

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker. Mme. Speaker, before we continue, we would like first to acknowledge the presence of our guests from the Commission on Elections.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). Yes.

REP. BOLILIA. Those who are with us in the plenary hall are Atty. Teopisto Elnas Jr., Deputy Executive Director for Operations; Mr. James Arthur B. Jimenez, Director IV, Education and Information Department; Atty. Martin B. Niedo, Director IV, Finance Services Department; and via Zoom, we have Chairman Sheriff M. Abas, Comm. Maria Rowena Amelia Guanzon, Comm. Socorro B. Inting, Comm. Marlon S. Casquejo, Comm. Antonio T. Kho Jr., Comm. Aimee P. Ferolino and Exec. Dir. Bartolome J. Sinocruz Jr.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). We acknowledge the presence of the heads and officials from the Commission on Elections. Welcome to the House of Representatives.
Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, again, my reiteration to please recognize our esteemed Vice Chair of the Committee on Appropriations to continue with the sponsorship of the budget of the Commission on Elections.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). The honorable Representative Matugas is recognized.

REP. MATUGAS. Thank you, Mme. Chair. I am now ready to receive any interpellation from my colleagues, with the permission of the Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize Representative France L. Castro of ACT TEACHERS Party-List for her interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Villar). The honorable Rep. France Castro is hereby recognized for her interpellation.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker.

Muli magandang hapon po o tanghali sa ating lahat, lalong-lalo na po sa ating butihing Sponsor at sa ating mga kasama sa Kongreso, at siyempre iyong pamilya po ng Comelec.

Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, during the last briefing, I asked the—about the review of the—with the Election Service Reform Act Law, so Section 4 provision that every three years po nire-review iyong honorarium, benefit no'ng ating mga volunteer poll workers. And sabi po dati ng Comelec, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, so kino-consider daw po nila iyon at ni-review nila. So, may we know if there is an update on the plight of our volunteer BEIs or poll workers in terms of the increasing of honorarium and other benefits, Your Honor.

At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Villar relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Bernadette "BH" Herrera-Dy.

REP. MATUGAS. Mme. Chair, Your Honor,

mayroon po tayong update. Mayroon pong ibibigay ang Komisyon na P2,000 increase across-the-board, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. So, I believe nagpasa—nag-ano po kami ng request. So, sinasabi po natin na iyon pong request ng Comelec, Your Honor, na—if I remember it right, P13 billion po for the said increase in honorarium. So, magkano po ba ulit ang naibigay ng DBM kaugnay nito?

REP. MATUGAS. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, with the P2,000 increase, hindi na po kailangan iyong P13 billion na additional fund, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. So, saan po ito kukuhanin, Your Honor?

REP. MATUGAS. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, doon po sa Other Professional Services Budget. Mayroon pong nakalaan na about P7 billion or more na allocation for that, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. But, at any rate, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, so, this Representation will further amend or will further effect amendments so that the increase of the honorarium of our volunteer poll workers would increase din. Kasi po ang panukala natin sana, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, ay sana sa mga chairman ng mga BEI ay P10,000, sa mga members po ay P9,000. Gusto rin po nating madagdagan iyong DepEd support personnel po na at least P4,000. At saka magkaroon ng transportation allowance at saka ng meal or food allowance po iyong ating mga poll workers, and at the same time service credits. So, matutulungan po ba tayo ng ating Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, na maiano iyong amendments na iyan, so that we can add to the budget of our Comelec?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, po, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

Kasama niyo po ako na magsuporta doon po sa adhikain na madagdagan ang support doon sa ating mga teachers, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you po, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

Puwede ko po bang malaman iyong last na update po about doon sa—hinihiling din po natin na madagdagan din iyong service credits? As of now, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, parang five days lang considering na tayo po ay nasa pandemic and medyo hahabaan iyong election hours, talagang apektado po iyong ating mga teachers. So, mayroon po bang desisyon na on service credits? Iyong five days po ba, ano na siya, ilang araw na po kaya?

As of now, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, parang five days lang. Considering na tayo po ay nasa pandemic and medyo hahabaan iyong election hours, talagang apektado po iyong ating mga teachers. So, mayroon po bang desisyon na on service credits? Iyong five days po ba, ano na siya—ilang araw na po kaya?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, as of now, mayroon pong ginagawang MOA ang Komisyon and they are just waiting for the agreement with the Department of Education. Five days po iyon, tama po iyong five days. So, kung mag-agree na po ang DepEd, mai-implement po iyon, iyong sa service credits, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Your Honor, five days po talaga iyong nasa batas so gusto natin madagdagan. May I know, iyong draft ng MOA, ilan po ang nilalagay ng DepEd at ng Comelec dito?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, I stand corrected, additional five days pala ang ibig kong sabihin, hindi lang five days.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Yes, yes. Salamat, Your Honor, medyo satisfied po ako diyan sa ganyan kasi talagang ang mga teachers natin, ang mga volunteer poll workers po natin, ay talagang, in this pandemic time, talagang frontliners sila tapos iyong kanilang buhay ay at risk pa rin. So sa kanila, mahalaga na itong additional five days na service credits.

As regard to—ano po kaya iyong transportation allowance and meal allowance, mayroon po bang provision? Kasi, mayroon lang pong transportation allowance na P1,000,

Your Honor, Mme. Speaker. Kasi, itong P1,000 na ito, mukhang kukulangin ito dahil alam naman natin iyan, every election mayroong training iyong mga teachers, mayroong pupunta para magsusubok, sasanayin po sa machine, iyong mga gagamitin po na machine, ma-ensure nila na magamay nila iyon at saka, may iba pang ginagawa bago mag-eleksiyon. So, mayroon po bang additional amount for the transportation allowance of P1,000 and meal allowance po?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, iyong sinasabi ko kanina na P2,000, nandoon po nakapaloob ang P1,000 para sa transportation and P1,000 po para sa meals, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. So, hindi pa po iyon iyong dagdag na honorarium noong mga poll workers natin dahil sinasabi ninyo po for meal allowance and transpo allowance ito. Sa kasalukuyan, mayroon na pong provision for P1,000 na transportation allowance.

REP. MATUGAS. As of now, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, nire-recommend din natin na ma-augment itong budget na ito, for the allowance. We are hoping na, with the commitment of our leadership, ni Speaker Lord, ito po ay magawan ng paraan para madagdagan, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you, Your Honor.

On to my next topic, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, recently po mayroong pronouncement si Presidente Duterte about doon sa paggamit niya, pag-uutos niya later on sa mga military during election time, especially in Mindanao, kapag mayroon daw case na magiging unpeaceful iyong ating magiging election, sa Mindanao po ito, ang sabi po dito, and I will quote:

Either we have an election that is free or I will use the military to see that the election is free. The military is the guardian of our country and I could call them anytime to see to it that people are protected and elections freely, and orderly exercised.

That is the statement of President Duterte. So, ano po ang masasabing ating Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, dito sa statement na ito, especially doon sa in-underline or in-underscore ko na pag-call on the military, lalong-lalo na po na si Presidente Duterte magiging kandidato siya as Vice President. So, siya po ba iyong may call, hindi po ba ang Comelec? Puwede po bang mailinaw ito? Ano ba iyong guidelines at saka mga procedure kaugnay nito? Kasi alam ko ang Comelec kasi ang in charge during election and not the President when it comes to deputizing the military, the teachers or mga kasama po sa eleksiyon, ano, sa pagpapanatili ng eleksiyon or matuloy iyong eleksiyon. So, can you guide us or can you give me the ano, 'no, mabigyan natin ng impormasyon ang ating mga kababayan kasi nagbibigay ito ng negative impression sa ating mga mamamayan.

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, with regard to that statement, and during elections, it is really, under the law, it is the Comelec, sila iyong may supervisory powers, deputizing our PNP and the military. The military will do the peace-keeping job while the PNP can be deputized to be part of the electoral board. So, iyon po ang nakasaad sa batas. So, we will just follow kung ano po iyong nakasaad sa batas, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). So, sa tingin po ba, Mme. Speaker, ng ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor, what President Duterte said went overboard o parang sobra naman itong statement na ito na siya ang magko-call sa mga military? Well, hindi naman tayo against doon sa may peaceful and orderly elections, pero siya po ba ang kailangang magpatawag dito? At linawin niyo nga po, tama ba siya or hindi? Overboard ba iyong sinabi ng ating Presidente?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, it is my opinion that the President, as President of our country, gusto po niyang peaceful and orderly ang ating eleksiyon. Being the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, gusto niya na ma-ensure ang peace and

orderly implementation ng ating eleksiyon this coming 2022, considering na nasa pandemic tayo. But with regard to the supervision and deputization, ito po ay nasa jurisdiction ng Comelec during the election period, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Yes, I also agree with the honorable Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, may jurisdiction dito iyong Comelec. Kaya masasabi niyo bang overboard itong sinabi ng ating President that he "could call them any time to see to it that," siyempre, iyong peace and whatever? Yes or no, Mme. Speaker?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, hindi po siya overboard. Sinabi ko po, being the President of the Philippines, mayroon siyang obligasyon na maging mapayapa ang country natin, especially during the time of elections next year, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). So, Mme. Speaker, I respect the belief of our honorable Sponsor, but I said otherwise dahil kagaya nga ng sinabi niya, it is the Comelec that has the power to call upon the military and the police in case of untoward na mga incidents. At sinasaad din sa batas iyong kung ano lang iyong puwedeng gawin ng mga pulis at ano iyong distance nito mula sa polling place, et cetera, so naroroon po iyon ano. So, hindi po kailanman may poder ang Presidente, kahit man po si Presidente Duterte, na tumawag siya ng military in case na mayroong untoward incident, it is only the Comelec.

So, iyon lang po, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor. Thank you po doon sa pagsagot sa aking mga katanungan.

REP. MATUGAS. Thank you, Your Honor. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize Hon. Edcel Lagman of the First District of Albay to interpellate the Sponsor.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). The Hon. Edcel Lagman is hereby recognized.

REP. LAGMAN. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, and good afternoon to Chairman Abas and the hierarchy and personnel of the Comelec.

Will the distinguished Sponsor yield to some questions?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. In the Comelec website, among the laws on registration of voters which is published therein is Republic Act No. 8189, adopting among others a system of continuing registration. Is the distinguished Gentleman aware of this?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Well, considering that it is in its website, is the Comelec fully implementing Republic Act No. 8189?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, they are fully implementing the said Republic Act.

REP. LAGMAN. And the distinguished Gentleman is sure of his positive answer?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, ang pag-implement po ng ating Komisyon ay in consonance with the KABATAAN Party-List noong naturang Republic Act, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. What KABATAAN Party-List is the distinguished Sponsor talking about? Is it the *KABATAAN Party-List vs. Comelec* decision of the Supreme Court?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, this is in regard to adjusting the period of registration, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. And may we know whether, under that, when the Comelec would adjust the system of—what do you mean, registration? Is doing that consistent with Republic Act No. 8189?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Section 8 of Republic Act No. 8189 equivocally and clearly provides in full, and I quote:

Section 8. *System of Continuing Registration of Voters.* The personal filing of application of registration of voters shall be conducted daily in the office of the Election Officer during regular office hours. No registration shall, however, be conducted during the period starting one hundred twenty (120) days before a regular election and ninety (90) days before a special election.

Will the distinguished Sponsor confirm the veracity of Section 8 of Republic Act No. 8189 and that it is still subsisting legal provision?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Yes, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, I confirm.

REP. LAGMAN. Under Section 8 of Republic Act No. 8189, the last day of the continuing registration for the May 9, 2022 regular, local and national elections is January 9, 2022, which is 120 days before the May 9, 2022 regular elections, consistent with Section 8 of Republic Act No. 8189. Please confirm this, distinguished Sponsor.

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, I confirm, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. In *KABATAAN Party-List vs. Comelec*, which was promulgated on December 15, 2009, the Supreme Court upheld the continuing registration under Republic Act No. 8189 for the May 10, 2010 election and in the dispositive portion the Supreme Court said, and I quote, "Comelec is directed

to proceed with dispatch in reopening the registration of voters and holding the same until January 9, 2010.”

Would the distinguished Gentleman, confirm this dispositive portion in the case of *KABATAAN Party-List vs. Comelec*?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, yes, I confirm but there is a Resolution from the Commission that they can adjust the opening of the registration period, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Is that Resolution consistent with the clear and unequivocal language of Section 8 of Republic Act No. 8189?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, in relation to R.A. No. 9369, the Commission can adjust the period of registration in relation to the automated elections, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Could you kindly read into the records that particular provision of the law you are invoking, distinguished Sponsor?

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. MATUGAS. Mme. Speaker, may I request for a one-minute suspension of the session.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The session is suspended.

It was 1:16 pm.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 1:19 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). The session is resumed.

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, in the *KABATAAN Party-List vs. Comelec* case, the Supreme Court ruled that the

120 days is not mandatory but just directory. So, the Comelec has the regulatory powers, the power to adjust the period of registration, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Well, I wonder whether the distinguished Sponsor can quote exactly the decision of the Supreme Court in the *KABATAAN Party-List vs. Comelec*, which was promulgated on May 10, 2010, with respect to his statement that Section 8 of Republic Act No. 8189 is not mandatory but the Comelec has the discretion to change the deadline for the registration of voters?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

In the *KABATAAN Party-List vs. Comelec* case, the Supreme Court said that Section 8 of R.A. No. 8189—the 120-day period is not the reckoning point for the determination of the last day for the filing applications for registrations. What the Voter’s Registration Act merely provides is that registration shall no longer be allowed during the period of 120 days before a regular election, or in this case before January 8, 2016. It does not, however, mandate that the period of registration should be up to such time. To quote:

The subject provision does not mandate the Comelec to conduct voter registration up to such time; rather, it only provides a period which may not be reduced, but may be extended depending on the administrative necessities and other exigencies. x x x the Comelec has the power to promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to fulfill its mandate. Perforce, this power includes the determination of the period to accomplish certain pre-election acts such as voter registration.

REP. LAGMAN. That is the second *KABATAAN Party-List vs. Comelec* case, but in that particular case it does not give the Comelec the discretion to change the mandate provided for in Section 8 of Republic Act No. 8189. So, Republic Act No. 8189 still subsists. That is why when we reckon the period for the registration of voters for the May 9, 2022

elections, the distinguished Sponsor admitted that it is January 9, 2022.

Now, if the Comelec would allow the registration of voters only up to October 31, 2021, then the potential registrants will be deprived of around 50 days short of what they are entitled to because 50 days is the number of days before January 9, 2022. So, I would submit, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, that the Comelec must abide by Section 8 of Republic Act No. 8189 wherein the last day for the registration of voters for the May 9, 2022 election is, and I would like to underscore this, January 9, 2022.

And I hope that the Comelec would be able to see through the full implementation, the faithful implementation of Section 8 of Republic Act No. 8189. And, we should remember that the first *KABATAAN Party-List* case concerned the automated election as well as the registration process or biometrics. In other words, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, the implementation of the automated election process and of the biometrics registration process do not deter the full implementation of Section 8 of Republic Act No. 8189.

I hope, again, that the Comelec can review its position and hopefully would implement the continuing registration for the May 9, 2022 election up to January 9, 2022, consistent with the clear provision of Section 8 of Republic Act No. 8189. With that commentary, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, I will be ending my interpellation and I would like to thank the distinguished Sponsor for accommodating my questions.

REP. MATUGAS. Thank you very much, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize Rep. Eric Pineda of the 1-PACMAN Party-List for his manifestation. I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Rep. Eric Pineda is hereby recognized. Representative Pineda.

REP. PINEDA. Good afternoon. Can you hear me? Hello? Good afternoon.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Go ahead, Congressman Pineda. We can hear you. Go ahead.

MANIFESTATION OF REP. PINEDA

REP. PINEDA. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

This is just a short manifestation on the 2022 proposed Comelec budget.

Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, on the 2022 proposed budget of the Commission on Elections, I would just like to make a short manifestation as we deliberate upon the budget of the Comelec.

Mme. Speaker, esteemed colleagues of this august Chamber, the 2022 national election is fast-approaching and this is the last budget deliberations we will hold and approve in the Eighteenth Congress.

We, as a nation, have gone through so much. With the effects of the pandemic, our people's problems became more evident and more urgent. Party-list organizations (*inaudible*) people from across the entire nation, we have no one location that we cater to, compared to district Representatives, which is why it is important that the marginalized sectors are given sufficient representation.

However, we, as a nation, are still learning how to adapt to the development of technology. During the past elections, we have adopted an electronic method of voting. With human development also came the creation of several other marginalized sectors that need specific laws and programs to cater their needs.

During the 2016 elections, the party-lists were placed on the back of the ballot, resulting to several party-list voters being disenfranchised. According to Comelec data, in 2016, of 34.6 million who voted, 6.9 million or 20 percent did not vote for a party-list group. However, in 2019, of 42.7 million who voted, only 15.9 million or 37.7 percent failed to vote for a party-list group. I believe the placing of the party-lists on the back of the ballot contributed to this and most, if not all, party-list groups would agree to this observation.

Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, we should not repeat the same mistakes in the coming 2022 elections. Since party-list representation is national, the list of choices should even come right after the senatorial candidates.

I hope that the Comelec will rethink the order and design of the ballot so that it will be easier for our people to understand, that they may have confidence when they cast their votes and that their voices are counted.

The national election is one of the most important political exercises in our country. We have to do it right for our development and for the future.

Thank you, Mr. Sponsor, and thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. MATUGAS. Thank you, Your Honor. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Thank you, Congressman Pineda. Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize Rep. Ferdinand R. Gaité of the Party-List BAYAN MUNA for his interpellation.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Herrera-Dy). Cong. Ferdinand Gaité is hereby recognized.

REP. GAITE. Salamat po, Mme. Speaker. Salamat po sa pagkakataong ito na makapag-interpellate.

Papahintulutan ba ng Sponsor na mag-pose lang ng ilang mga katanungan hinggil sa iminumungkahing programa at budget ng Comelec, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes po, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Sige po, salamat po. Pasensiya na po, medyo garbled kanina, noong kayo po ay nag-i-introduce noong inyong sponsorship. May nabanggit po kayo tungkol sa pasya ng Comelec hinggil sa extension ng registration

ng voters. Puwede ho bang pakiulit ninyo? Pasensiya na po at hindi ko masyadong na-pick up.

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, nasabi ko kanina sa opening statement ko na mayroon na pong approval ang Komisyon doon sa extension ng voters' registration. It will be approved tomorrow by *en banc*, so until October 31 po iyong extension ng voters' registration, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Okay, salamat po. Akala ko mali lang iyong dinig ko.

Pero, I think, definitely that is welcome news dahil nga po nabanggit na ng marami sa mga kasamahan natin sa loob ng Kongreso, kahit sa mga mamamayan na gustong bumoto, hindi sumasapat iyong panahon, considering na nakailang lockdown tayo nitong taong ito at marami ay nagkaroon ng restrictions sa mobility dahil nga sa problema nga ng pandemya.

At naniniwala ako na kahit paano, ang Comelec ay nakinig din. Naalala n'yo po ang Committee on Suffrage and Electoral Reforms na pinamumunuan ni Chairperson Yoyet Ferrer ay isinulong din iyong mga iminungkahing mga panukalang batas, panukalang resolusyon para i-move ang naturang date at tila iyon nga, ang naging term na ginamit niya (*inaudible*) stubborn masyado iyong Comelec. But, apparently, as of last week, what happened, mayroon na ngang bill na isinusulong ang Mababang Kapulungan para i-set na rin iyong extension ng registration. And we do welcome that development, especially iyong mga kasamahan natin dito sa Kongreso, para sa extension ng voters' registration. Salamat po sa Comelec, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, for this positive development.

Pero ganoon pa man, tanong ko po patungkol dito, ibig sabihin ho ba dito, pag in-extend ang registration, applicable po ito hindi lamang locally pati po internationally, para sa ating mga overseas absentee voters, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, ito pong isinasalang na extension

of voters' registration, bukas po, bukas ho aaprubahan ng *en banc* ay for—iyong one-month extension is for the local voters only. Iyong sa overseas voters, baka one week lang iyong extension, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Hindi masyadong magandang news po iyon, ano, dahil doon sa aking interpellation noong nakaraan, iyong panawagan rin natin para sa extension ay sana ang applicability niya ay para sa lahat. Bakit ho ba pinag-iba sa overseas Filipinos, lalo na iyong ating mga dual citizens? Ako po dual citizen, senior at Filipino. Iyong dual citizen na binabanggit natin, iyong Filipino and iyong ibang bansa—nasa kung anong bansa na kanilang kinalalagyan ngayon. Pero, bakit po one week lang para sa possible overseas voters who may participate? Hindi ho ba dapat patas? If we will apply this dito, locally, para sa mga Pilipinong, kailangan din ay—ganoon rin po naman ang sitwasyon sa ibang bansa, nagkaroon rin po ng mga lockdowns, nagkaroon din po ng mga limitasyon. As a matter of fact, sa nakuha naming impormasyon, ultimo iyong mga offices ng ating consular offices na kung saan, I think they were designated to the overseas absentee voters' registration, nagkaroon rin ng mga panahon na sila rin ay nagkaroon ng lockdown dahil tinamaan rin ng sakit na COVID kaya nagkaroon ng mga limitasyon para makapunta ang ating mga kababayan sa ibang bansa para makapag-participate sa voters' registration. Hindi ho ba puwede iyang i-extend na kung ibibigay natin yong one month for local registration, voters' registration, dapat ang applicability niya walang pag-iiba pa sa ating mga kasamahan sa ibang bansa, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, with regard to the overseas voters, the problem is, iyong voting po ng overseas voters ay one month earlier po doon sa ating national and local elections. So, iyong preparations needed is dapat po mas maaga. In fact, as Comelec discussed during the briefing na mahihirapan talaga sila even if mag-extend ng voters' registration sa local kasi, with the many preparations needed

for the automated elections, especially at this time of pandemic, nahihirapan po ang ating Komisyon. So, kaya po, based on their computation, iyong puwede lang talaga nilang ibigay na extension for the overseas voters ay isang linggo po, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Natuwa na sana ako doon sa development, pero, mayroon pa rin lang—may mga kabiyak pa pala.

Again, I strongly suggest na sana po i-apply na ito sa lahat. Kung maaalala po ninyo, doon sa resolusyon filed ng Makabayan bloc, sa pag-aaral po nina Cong. Sarah Elago na naging pangunahing proponent ng panukalang resolusyon na ito, nakita naman nila na kahit even before the pandemic ay napakahaba noong panahon ng voter registration, dati nga hanggang October, I think, for the 2019 elections. But prior to that, mayroong pa nga umabot yata December, kung hindi ako nagkakamali, iyong voter registration. At that time, mas mahirap kasi hindi nga AEV o automated election ang sistema natin. And, well, sana po ma-accommodate ito dahil pareho rin iyong dinaranas ng ating mga kababayan sa ibang bansa. At ito nga iyong line po na gusto naming i-raise, and we raised this during the briefing kasi hindi malinaw iyong mga datos. Kasi nga po, 'di ba po iyong tinatawag na "dual citizens" sa ibang bansa na mga Pilipino ay maaaring boboto? Tama po ba iyon? Although, of course, limited lang 'to, iyong mga national positions lang. Ibig sabihin, puwede lang silang bumoto for president, vice president, senators, party-list, pero for the local officials hindi na sila puwedeng bumoto. Tama po ba iyon?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, I just received information from our Chairman of Comelec, na iyong proposal po na gawin nating 30 days ang extension ng overseas voters' registration, isama nila sa consideration tomorrow sa *en banc* meeting nila so hopefully...

REP. GAITE. Thank you.

REP. MATUGAS. ... ma-extend po ng

isang buwan din iyong overseas voters' registration, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Salamat po.

So mali po iyong kumakalat na tsismis na stubborn ang Comelec, nakikinig po pala sila. Salamat po for accommodating the recommendation of this Representation, and I hope, 'no, iyong ating layunin na mas marami ang makapag-participate, huwag ma-disenfranchise, iyong mga gustong bumoto ay makaboto, sana po ma-consider ito sa gagawing pagpupulong bukas ng Comelec na i-extend ito para sa lahat. And, of course, alam ko naman, mas dagdag na problema ito dahil overseas, pero sana mabilis na ma-coordinate natin sa ating Department of Foreign Affairs, iyong foreign service posts, na mainform kagaad iyong ating mga kababayang Pilipino once ito po ay lumabas para ma-assure sila na makakapag-participate sila.

On the same vein, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, mayroon ba tayong idea kung ilan ba talaga iyong ating qualified, hindi nga registered ano, qualified to vote sa ibang bansa? Iyong dating figure na binitbit e parang kung hindi ako nagkakamali ay bilang lamang iyon ng mga overseas Filipino workers, which is different from what the law allows, na iyong ating dual citizens nga ay puwedeng bumoto. Mayroon kaming figure dito, 11 to 12 million Filipinos are abroad as migrants or immigrants. I would understand, hindi rin naman lahat iyan ay qualified to vote dahil may proseso nga na dual citizenship. Pero, again, as I understand, given the law, may provision sa batas na kapag ikaw, ang mga magulang mo ay Filipino at birth, hindi mo na kailangan mag-apply ng dual citizenship. So the figure would be substantial, but of course, again, as I understand, may mga bansa na hindi pinahihintulutan iyong konsepto ng dual citizenship but in big countries such as the United States, na maraming Pilipino, pinapahintulutan ito. So mayroon ho bang aktuwal na figure ng sinasabing qualified na mga Pilipinong boboto at, on the other hand, ilan na po — kasi napakababa iyong figure na ibinigay ninyo noong nakaraan, at masama pa niyan, bumaba pa iyong registered voters, as I understand. So ilan ba ang kabuuang

qualified to vote as dual citizens, including of course, iyong ating transient na mga Overseas Filipino Workers? Ilan ho ba iyong aktuwal na figure na tinatantiyang puwedeng bumoto at ilan na ngayon ang rehistradong bumoto, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, as of today, ang actual data, ang registered overseas voters are 1.5 million. Ang target po ng ating Komisyon is 1.6 million voters para sa 2022 elections for the overseas voting.

At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Bernadette Herrera-Dy relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Roberto V. Puno.

Wala pong update on those qualified to vote. Wala pong data as of now sa qualified to vote, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. But I think, it is of great concern that Comelec, right now, ay hindi nila ito binibigyan ng diin o pansin. Kasi sa batas nga, sa law on dual citizenship, ito iyong isa sa mga karapatan nila and tungkulin ng Comelec na gawin ang lahat ng paraan para hindi ma-disenfranchise ang atin mga kababayan sa ibang bansa. At nagulat ako na hanggang ngayon hindi pa alam ng ating Comelec kung ilan iyong bilang dahil nakaatas na tungkulin ng Comelec ito, ang malaman ano iyong universe ng Pilipino sa ibang bansa na kailangan na puwede o qualified na bumoto. At dito sa binabanggit na data na 1.5 million ay tila napakaliit kung, well — of course, tulad ng nabanggit ko, itong 11 to 12 million, posibleng not all of them will qualify, but I think, the 1.5 million, considering na ang pinakamalaking bansa na ina-allow na bumoto ay itong US na four million daw ang mga Pilipino diyan, tila napakaliit ng bilang na ito.

Kaya, anong mga hakbang ang ginagawa ngayon ng Comelec para ma-ensure na, with their right of dual citizenship, ma-exercise nila iyong right to vote? Marami na ho kaming nakuhang mga reklamo sa mga migrante sa ibang bansa na napaka-difficult for them to register, malalayo ang ating

consul—of course, this is not the problem of Comelec dahil problema ito ng ating consular offices, ang foreign service posts, pero sana magkaroon ng ugnayan ang Comelec at DFA para ma-facilitate o makatulong kung paano ipatutupad ito.

So papaano po kaya ito mare-reconcile? Ang laki noong bilang tapos hindi pa pala, wala pang figure ang Comelec kung ilan ba iyong qualified, at tingin ko, this is an important aspect in programming kung ilan dapat iyong target. Kasi ang hirap naman na ganito lang iyong figure natin, iyon pala, ang dami palang disenfranchised na voters dahil hindi inunawa ng Comelec iyong kanilang tungkulin, lalo na sa usapin ng pag-rehistro ng ating mga Pilipino sa ibang bansa. Ano po iyong mga steps na ginagawa ngayon ng Comelec patungkol dito?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, as of now, ang ating Komisyon po ay mayroon siyang field registration na ginagawa sa mga foreign countries, mayroon siyang mobile registration, and of course, iyong information campaign through their website, their social media platforms and all the other key platforms available. Iyon po ang ginagawa ng ating Komisyon para mabigyan sila ng awareness na dapat magrehistro na po sila sa Comelec natin, sa mga overseas offices, sa mga consulate offices sa ibang bansa, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Thank you for that answer, Mr. Sponsor, at talagang kailangan nito, and there have been so many proposals kung paano padadaliin iyong proseso ng registration while putting in place iyong mga necessary safeguards para ma-ensure na iyong karapat-dapat hong bumoto ang bumoto. Ayaw naman natin na i-pad iyong listahan ng voters para lamang paboran ang kung sino man, pero iyong mga proposals regarding digital registration, iyong proposals sa—ito pa, isa pang problema, iyong aktuwal na pagboto. Ang huling binanggit noon during the briefing ng Comelec, pinag-uusapan na rin at inaaral na raw iyong Internet voting. Medyo ano iyan, talagang bagong-bago iyan, pero may nabanggit lang na mayroong initial studies na ginagawa. Mayroon po bang developments dito sa mga nabanggit

noong huling briefing regarding the steps that the Comelec is taking, lalo na sa ganitong problema? This will not only benefit those abroad but kahit dito sa ating bansa, kung na-adopt na iyong proseso. Totoong may requirements regarding sa pangangailangan ma-capture iyong biometrics at iba pa, pero sa digital age ngayon, pati iyong biometrics, kaya ng ma-capture via the Internet using other forms ng verification, tulad noong passports na dumaan rin sa mahabang proseso bago ma-validate, driver's license, and other documents to prove na iyong taong nagke-claim na siya iyon ay siya iyon. So mayroon na ho bang developments doon sa nabanggit na measures na ginagawa ng Comelec para ma-facilitate iyong process ng registration and eventually, iyong process ng election, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, as of now, iyong sinabi po kanina, first, for the voters' registration sa ibang bansa, mayroon pong naka-setup na 143 field offices ang ating Komisyon saka 100 mobile registration centers.

Now, with regard to the registration, and especially on voting ng overseas voters natin, ginawa na po iyong online trial ng voting through the Internet. As of now, gagawin pong continuous iyong trial and evaluation sa platform na iyon, iyong pagboto po ng overseas voters using the Internet, and once makita na it is a secure way of voting, ito po ay ipe-presinta dito po sa atin sa House para makita natin lahat kung talagang secure nga iyong pagboto ng mga overseas voters natin, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Thank you for that information. Tama po, paramount iyong security, iyong safeguards, dahil ayaw rin naman natin na madali pero hindi secure, walang safeguards so kailangan talagang mapag-aralan.

Natutuwa ako na mayroong mga ganitong efforts at sana po sa pinakamaagang panahon ay mai-present na sa atin for our evaluation kung ito po ay magko-comply doon sa requirements sa batas sa usapin ng pagboto, at the same time—recognizing iyong problema ng

pandemya, ay kung paano natin matutugunan iyong panawagan ng ating mga kababayan na gustong mag-exercise ng kanilang karapatang bumoto. Pero sa dami ng mga suliranin ng Comelec bunga ng mga pinalalabas na mga lockdowns at iba pa, bunga ng pandemya – nagkakaroon maraming restrictions.

Sa bahaging ito, magkano po kaya ang – patungkol na po sa budget natin, ano, magkano po ang kabuuang ni-request ninyo sa pondo para sa kabuuang OAV elections? At magkano naman po ang inapbrubahan ng DBM? During the last hearing, some very basic problems arose, ‘no, for example po, iyong postage na sana nga po ay libre na dahil sabi ng ating Saligang Batas, hindi kailangan ng literacy, property, or other substantive requirements be imposed in the exercise of suffrage. E papaano kung wala ho siyang pambayad ng postage? Sa ibang bansa, napakamura, pero nabalitaan din namin, gusto namin i-relay na may mga bansa na napaka-expensive nito. It was raised in New Zealand na aabot daw ng \$40 iyong gastos para sa postage alone. So, ibig sabihin, malaki-laki iyong gagastusin nila just to vote.

So ito ang naalala ko, may mga na-slash na budget. Puwede ho bang i-share ng ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor, ano iyong ni-request ninyong pondo para kabuuan sa OAV? And magkano naman po iyong inapbrubahan ng DBM, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, iyong with regard to overseas voting, ang Komisyon po ay nag-propose ng P160 million para sa postage. But iyong na-approve po is only P6.4 million so masyado po siyang mababa. Gusto nga nilang ma-augment para po maging effective po iyong pag-register ng ating overseas voters, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Salamat po doon sa impormasyon na iyon. Ay talagang sobrang malaki yata iyong na-slash, ano. Parang ang DBM ayaw pabotohin iyong ating mamamayang Pilipino, ‘no. Parang hindi naman ata dapat iyon ang ating direksiyon. Kung ano iyong nire-request sana ng Comelec ay dapat i-provide para iyong ating mga kababayan sa ibang bansa ay makaboto.

Lubhang napakaliit iyong inapbrubahan at naniniwala po ang Kinatawang ito na sa panahon ng amendments sa budget ng Comelec, itutulak po natin na iyong mga ni-request na budget, partikular sa OAV, ay magkaroon ng kaukulang karagdagan.

Hindi ko na masyadong pahahabain dahil alam kong marami pa tayong tatalakayin sa maghaponing ito. At nagpapasalamat na lang ako sa pagkakataon na magkaroon ng ilang positibong mga developments lalo na sa usapin ng Comelec. Sana po ay mabigyan ng pansin itong matagal nang problema ng ating mga kababayan, pati ang ating OFWs. Actually, na-inform kami na, lalo na iyong transient, ang daming nagsiuwian na OFWs at registered sila doon sa lugar po nila pero nabanggit naman nga na may proseso para sa pag-transfer ng kanilang voting kung sila ay nakabalik na o na-repatriate. Sana po widely informed iyong ating mga OFWs kung paano iyong procedure para hindi rin sila ma-disenfranchise, especially, iyong mga na-repatriate.

So iyon lang po. Maraming salamat po doon sa mga kasagutan ng ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to our distinguished colleagues in the House of Representatives.

REP. MATUGAS. Maraming salamat, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Hon. Sarah Elago of the KABATAAN Party-List for her manifestation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). The Honorable Sarah is recognized.

MANIFESTATION OF REP. ELAGO

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, we in the KABATAAN Party-List welcome the Comelec budget’s Sponsor’s announcement on the extension of the voter registration period until October 31, 2021. Malaking bagay ito para sa nasa sampung milyon pa na hindi

nakakapagparehistro upang makaboto sa darating na eleksiyon. Malaking hakbang pasulong ito para tiyaking ligtas at mas marami pa ang makapagparehistro.

Kaya po ang Representasyon na ito ay nagbibigay pagpupugay, pakikiisa at pasasalamat sa lahat ng mga grupo, iba't ibang sektor na nakiisa sa pagpapalakas at pagtatambol at pangangalampag rin sa Comelec na manawagan para i-extend ang voter registration period.

With that, Mr. Speaker, we join the earlier interpellators in their proposal to augment the budget of Comelec, and we will propose that augmentation at the proper time, Mr. Speaker.

And there being no other member of the Minority, who wishes to interpellate, I move to terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Commission on Elections.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno).
Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, on the part of the Majority, we join the Minority in its motion to close the period of sponsorship and debate on the proposed budget of the Commission on Elections.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). There is a joint motion to terminate the interpellation on the proposed budget of the Commission on Elections. Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the interpellation on the proposed budget of the Comelec is hereby terminated.

Congratulations.

Majority Leader.

METRO MANILA DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we open the period of sponsorship and debate on the proposed budget of the Metro Manila Development Authority.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). Is

there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, before we recognize the Sponsor, we would like to acknowledge the presence of the following attendees present at the plenary session: MMDA Chairman Benjamin C. Abalos Jr.; Atty. Romando S. Artes, AGM for Finance and Administration; Engr. Baltazar Melgar, Director, FCSMO; Engr. Neomie T. Recio, Director, TEC; and Miss Angelica P. Garcia, MMDA, Budget Division.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). Our guests from the Metro Manila Development Authority, headed by Benjamin C. Abalos, the Chairman, welcome to the House of Representatives.

Thank you for your visit.

Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, please recognize the Hon. Allan Benedict Reyes of Quezon City, Vice Chair of the Committee on Appropriations, to sponsor the proposed budget of the Metro Manila Development Authority.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). The Hon. Allan Reyes is recognized to sponsor the Metro Manila Development Authority's budget.

REP. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I am now open to accept questions regarding the budget of the Metro Manila Development Authority.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno).
Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I move for the recognition of Rep. Ferdinand Gaité of Party-List BAYAN MUNA to interpellate the Sponsor.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). The Hon. Ferdinand R. Gaité of the

Party-List BAYAN MUNA is recognized for his interpellation.

REP. GAITE. Muli, salamat po, Mr. Speaker. At salamat po sa ating mga kasamahan sa Kongreso, mga kapita-pitagang mga Kasapi ng Eighteenth Congress and of course, sa ating mga kasamahan sa MMDA.

Mr. Sponsor, pahihintulutan ba muli ako magkaroon ng interpellation sa budget and programs ng MMDA, kung mamarapatin n'yo po?

REP. REYES. Yes, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Congressman.

REP. GAITE. Thank you, Cong. Benedict Reyes.

Salamat po sa pagkakataong ito.

May ilan lang namang katanungan hinggil sa, una, iyong inilabas ng COA report, hinggil sa flood control projects at kung ano ang papel ng MMDA dito.

Una po, ang MMDA – ay sorry po, naisama na pala iyon sa Manila Bay Rehabilitation na kasama din ang MMDA. But first, to cite the report, there was a delay in the implementation of P1.279-billion worth of flood control projects by the Flood Control Sewerage Management Office. Sabi dito, of the 94 programmed flood control projects for 2020, 67 projects with the total cost of P835,244,000 were not completed as of year-end due to the delays in the conduct of procurement activities and/or pending release of the SARO from the DBM. Moreover, 41 projects totalling P444,213,624.54 were not completed during the said period.

Bagama't iyong agency ay iyong DPWH ang nababanggit at iyong LGUs, ano ho ba ang role ng MMDA dito in attaining – at dahil dito na-hinder iyong role ng MMDA in attaining its important objective to mitigate flooding in metropolis? Puwede bang maklaro iyong tungkulin ng MMDA? Dahil totoo, may inter-agency coordination at may kanyang kanyang roles. Pero, ang MMDA ano po ba ang kanyang pangunahing tungkulin sa flood control projects, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. REYES. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, regarding the question of the flood control

project that are delayed, many of the projects have, because of the FLR, so some are delayed and because of the pandemic, many of the projects have been slightly delayed because of the many of the workers have been tested positive. But, I have been informed that the MMDA's budget has been approved and released and ongoing projects will be on the way, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. GAITE. Salamat po sa kasagutan.

So ano po iyong role ng MMDA dito sa flood control projects? Sila ba iyong aktuwal na nagbi-build o DPWH? Doon sa budget ninyo, sino ang magme-maintain noong mga flood control facilities and projects? MMDA po ang may role dito kung gayun, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. REYES. Mr. Speaker and Your Honor, based on the GAA, the projects under the GAA for the MMDA, they are the ones doing the bidding. And then the other projects, such as the maintenance and repair of our flood control program, facilities are maintained by the MMDA, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. GAITE. Salamat po.

Kaya napakaimportante ng usaping ito – tag-ulan na naman po tayó, iyong paulit-ulit na lang na problema ng pagbaha sa Metro Manila ay parang never-ending problem kaya po concerned ang Kinatawang ito na mayroong findings nga ang COA na nadedelay iyong mga projects na ito which could have minimized the effects of the yearly flooding of our thoroughfares at ng ating mga kabahayan dito sa Metro Manila.

Salamat po sa dagdag na information.

Dito naman po sa Manila Bay Rehabilitation, ang MMDA ay bahagi ng 13, again, coordination of 13 government agencies na nagpapatupad ng Manila Bay rehab. Ano sa partikular naman ang mandato ng MMDA sa programang ito, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. REYES. May we request for a one-minute suspension of the session, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). The session is suspended.

It was 2:04 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 2:04 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). The session is resumed.

REP. GAITE. Salamat po, Mr. Sponsor.

And tanong ko po, ang MMDA ay bahagi ng 13 government agencies na inatasan sa pagpapatupad ng rehabilitation ng Manila Bay, ito po iyong Supreme Court Writ of Continuing Mandamus at iyong inilabas na Administrative Order No. 16, Task Force Manila Bay, pero, ano ho ba iyong role ng MMDA dito sa Manila Bay Rehabilitation, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. REYES. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, the MMDA was tasked to build the STP and to maintain the STP, the sewage treatment plant, as well as to do the maintenance of the area, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. GAITE. Salamat po.

So, nandoon po kayo sa sewage treatment plant na itinayo para iyong mga estero, iyong mga contributors ng pollution sa Manila Bay ay, before itapon sa Manila Bay, ma-treat para maging or at least ma-lower iyong toxins at iba pang pollutants na nanggagaling sa mga lugar na ito.

Tama po ba, P43 billion ang kabuuang budget na inilaan para sa Manila Bay rehab? At kung ganoon, kung alam ng ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor, magkano na ang nagastos mula rito at ano-ano iyong mga proyektong inilaanan dito? Nabanggit niyo po iyong STP at natunghayan ko iyong iba nito noong kami po ay – tatanungin ko rin ng kaunti mamaya iyong usapin ng bike lanes kasi doon po kami dumaaan sa harap noon – nakita ko po iyong STP na high-tech, solar-powered. Magkano na po 'yung nailaan doon sa budget? Tama

po ba iyong figure, P43 billion, ang kabuuang budget dito, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. REYES. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, as I understand your question, Your Honor, regarding the funding of the MMDA from the ELCAC, the MMDA is among the presiding officers ...

REP. GAITE. Okay.

REP. REYES. ... of the ELCAC, but no funds ...

REP. GAITE. Okay.

REP. REYES. ... are allocated to be used by the MMDA from the said fund, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. GAITE. So, wala pong ia-allocate doon sa P43 billion for the MMDA in its role in the Manila Bay rehabilitation? Is that correct, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. REYES. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, regarding the said budget, the MMDA is tasked to develop programs in behalf of the ELCAC so that they could implement them if there will be projects here in Metro Manila only, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. GAITE. Okay. Kasi nabanggit niyo po kanina na iyong STP, I think some of them are, in one way or another, related to the Manila Bay rehab, bahagi ng programang ito at nabanggit niyo po na iyong budget ay bahagi ng budget ng MMDA. Hindi ba tinuturing na bahagi ng Manila Bay rehab iyong nabanggit niyo kaninang STP at ito ay pinaglalaanan ng budget galing na ina-allocate para sa MMDA from the P43 billion na budget, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. REYES. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, may I correct myself. The said STP budget came from the DENR.

REP. GAITE. Okay.

REP. REYES. I apologize.

REP. GAITE. Okay.

REP. REYES. But the maintenance and operation of the said facility are being done by the MMDA, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. GAITE. Okay. Salamat po.

REP. REYES. Sorry for that.

REP. GAITE. Thank you po. Salamat po sa clarification.

Ganoon din pagka-appreciate ko noong umpisa, that the STPs were funded from the budget of the DENR at sila iyong may, well, sila iyong may kakayanan sa pagtatayo nito dahil iyan iyong kanilang mandato.

So isang concern lang po namin, tama po ba na nakikipag-ugnayan ang MMDA sa PNP at DILG upang hulihin ang mga nagtatapon ng basura sa Manila Bay at paglinisin dito? We have obtained reports that there are big facilities and companies malapit sa Manila Bay na nagko-contribute sa pollution. Pinaghihirapan linisin pero walang habas pa rin iyong pollution. Hindi na matitigil ito kung mismo iyong mga violators, iyong mga polluters ay tuloy-tuloy na pinalalala iyong water quality ng Manila Bay. Mayroon ho bang ginagawang hakbang ang MMDA patungkol dito?

REP. REYES. Mr. Chair – sorry, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, I believe the MMDA has been monitoring the said complaints or the pollution issues, but the LGU is supposed to be the first in line to give the violation or issue violations to the said companies. As per the MMDA, they said they are coordinating with said LGUs who are being affected by the pollution issues, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. GAITE. Salamat po sa clarification. So LGUs are, although part rin naman sila ng MMDA because they sit on the council, pero depende kung saan iyong location noong facility, noong kompanya such as, probably, itong malls, mga casinos, mga hotels. Kung saan ito naka-locate it will be the responsibility of the LGU. Tama po iyong pagkasabi ng ating Sponsor na iyon po ang dapat na manguna sa

pag-e-ensure na iyong violators, polluters ay gagawan ng karampatang aksiyon. Tama po, hindi po MMDA.

REP. REYES. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, I believe that the LGUs have the first hand to issue violation reports or violations to companies, or let us say, hotels for violating the said – that are polluting the Manila Bay, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. GAITE. Salamat po sa clarification. At siyempre 'di ba nire-require na po na ang lahat ng mga ganitong mga facilities ay magtayo ng kani-kanilang mga sewage treatment plant, at sana po may konkretong hakbang rin either the LGU or the MMDA para ma-ensure na may gawing hakbang ang mga violators. Would the good Sponsor have any information kung mayroon na bang mga nakasuhan hinggil dito through the MMDA, if they are monitoring the supposed violators? Mayroon bang data o statistics kung mayroon na bang nahabol na mga violators na polluters sa Manila Bay, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. REYES. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, the MMDA has informed me that the LLDA, Laguna Lake Development Authority, and the DENR are tasked to look into the violations more than the MMDA. The MMDA is just the body that would, if the discharge is of poor quality, and would report those incidents to the said higher authority such as the LLDA and the DENR, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. GAITE. Thank you po. LLDA, Laguna Lake Development Authority, tama po?

REP. REYES. Yes, Your Honor.

REP. GAITE. Okay. Hindi ko rin maintindihan bakit LLDA, Laguna Lake, na ang pinag-uusapan natin ay Manila Bay.

REP. REYES. LLDA (*Inaudible*) discharge, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Anyway, sige. Although of course, iyong katubigan ng Laguna Lake ay dumadaloy din, for example, sa Pasig River

at contributor rin ito sa pollution ng Manila Bay. Pero siguro dahil inatasan ang MMDA na maging bahagi ng pag-monitor ng ganitong violators, maganda rin sana na ang MMDA ay on top ng ganitong sitwasyon considering that the LGUs sit on the council of the Metro Manila Development Authority, to have a parang database or centralized information, makita rin kung ano iyong mga hakbang na ginagawa at in the same way, ano iyong mga good practices noong iba't ibang LGU at hopefully our officials in the LGUs, our mayors ay magtutulong tungkol dito.

Kanina nabanggit ninyo po iyong sewage treatment plant, may high-tech nga diyan, iyong solar-powered sewage treatment plant. Binuksan na po ito noong nakaraang taon, tama po?

REP. REYES. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, it has already been operating since last year, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. GAITE. Tama po. So, papaano ho ba na-develop iyong project na ito? At ang binanggit n'yo kanina, DENR ang nag-provide ng funding at alam ko mayroon pang foreign counterpart iyan, kung hindi ako nagkakamali, may foreign funding itong project na ito. Would you know, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, magkano iyong inilaan para dito? Kung mayroon mang GOP o local counterpart, magkano rin iyong foreign counterpart? At, of course, ang basic na tanong rin dito, sapat na po ba itong current capacities nitong mga sewage treatment plants natin considering ang daming mga esteros na kailangan ng ganitong sewage treatment plant? Ang fear ko, baka hindi nakakayanan, baka—ang term nila, “baka mabulunan,” parang ganoon ano, in terms of capacity at iyong kabuuang inilalabas na volume ng kailangan i-treat dito sa facilities na ito. Would you have an idea, first, ano iyong halaga at kung may local counterpart at may foreign counterpart, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. REYES. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, I have been also informed that there is part two or a second ...

REP. GAITE. Okay.

REP. REYES. ... STP facility that is going to be put up. It is the same, DENR-funded as well, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. So that there will be a bigger capacity for the discharge, before it reaches Manila Bay, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. GAITE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor.

Magkano po iyong inilaan para dito sa—isa lang ba ito, itong solar-powered sewage treatment plant currently? Isa lang ho ba ito o several po ito?

REP. REYES. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, the first one costs P100—well, I am sorry, P100 million and the second costs P180 million because it is a bigger facility, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. GAITE. Okay, Salamat po.

So mayroon na po pala in the pipeline na dadagdagan. Of course, ang concern po natin, I think, without probably saying, hindi pala iyon talaga adequate, iyong current sewage treatment plants. The fact that mayroon tayong in the pipeline, ito po ay indicative na hindi pa kaya noong current na plant, iyong current STP, itong requirement natin.

Anyway, sana po matignan kung paano pa mapapaunlad dahil siyempre, although this is not a concern of the MMDA, nevertheless, kasama kayo doon sa Manila Bay rehabilitation. Iyong controversial dolomite na nakita nga natin, we do not think that it is a priority, it is just for “beautification” but does not add to the overall quality or water quality ng Manila Bay. Magandang tingnan sa mata pero hindi naman makakatulong sa kabuuang pagtulong sa aktuwal na rehabilitasyon ng tubig. But nakuha namin iyong huling pronouncements ng DENR na for 2022, wala na raw budget o ilalaan para dito sa Beach Nourishment Program.

Panghuli na lang po, ito po iyong patungkol sa—may pinaabot po sa akin na ilang development, ilang mga programa pa sana ng MMDA, ito iyong patungkol po doon sa pangunahing tungkulin ng MMDA, regarding some of its major functions: urban renewal, zoning and land-use planning and shelter services, which include the

formulation, adoption and implementation of policies, standard rules, et cetera, especially iyong development ng ating lugar.

Ano ba iyong mga sinasabing projects ngayon ng MMDA, what projects and programs were implemented last year or are implementing this year that would help doon sa inyong mandato, iyong urban renewal? In a general sense, ano ho ba iyong mga concrete programs na inihahanda ng MMDA?

REP. REYES. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, the MMDA is continuously improving, greening our areas. They have also recently informed the Speaker of their new programs of putting up pocket parks around our different cities as well as the continuous lighting of the areas the blighted areas, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. GAITE. Thank you po.

Importante talaga ito, iyong open-space development, iyong greening dahil sa Metro Manila, na napaka-congested, makikita mo from the air, parang lahat ay puro building, mga yerong bubong at wala kang makikitang open space, wala kang makikitang green. Kaya po, I think, these are positive developments and I think dapat nga maitulak pa natin ito, and of course, again, tama naman po kayo kanina, in the same vein, iyong LGUs ang mayroon talagang pangunahing tungkulin para dito, pero sana kung ano pa ang puwedeng itulong ng MMDA ay ito po iyong paraan para lalo pang mapabilis itong sinasabi nating urban renewal programs. Pero ang concern po ng Kinatawag ito, itong development ng Pasig River Expressway or PAREX. Ano pong position ng MMDA tungkol dito? Hindi ba ang tungkulin natin sana urban renewal pero sa halip na pagandahin natin iyong Pasig, lalagyan natin ng highway? Is that our concept of urban renewal? More cement and asphalt? Doon na lang sa iilan nating katubigan ay lalagyan daw sa gilid ng highway, ito nga itong PAREX. What is the position of the MMDA on this matter, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. REYES. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, the MMDA has not seen the programs of the DOTr so we would rather not comment yet on

the effect or the looks of the said project. But according to our Chairman, Chairman Abalos, there will be an improvement of the perimeter of the Pasig River being set up, being planned by the MMDA, which is something to look forward to and this will bring more open and green areas to our citizens in Metro Manila, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. GAITE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor. Iyon lang po iyong isang concern nito kasi I believe there are organizations that are opposing the PAREX, ito iyong PAREX Coalition, I believe, at nakita na nga nila, na instead na itulak natin iyong urban renewal ay lalagyan na naman natin ng dagdag na kalsada. At, of course, the basic question is, who will benefit from Metro Manila? E di iyong mga car and other vehicle users na – I think, magandang konsepto iyong sa MMDA, iyong inaprubahan sa Bayanihan 1 and 2, iyong sinasabing active transport, pero dito sa nakita namin sa PAREX iba iyong direksiyon, para na naman sa maraming sasakyan.

Sabi nga, for 2021, promoting people mobility daw ang programa ng MMDA pero hindi – although nag-start na, I was able to join the Committee on Transportation in touring o experiencing the bike lanes dito sa Metro Manila. Mayroon din yata daw sa Cebu at sa Davao pero dito pa lang sa areas na ito at marami pang ibang lugar na walang designated na mga bike lanes and other facilities.

So, mayroon kayong budget – noong 2021, you had a budget of P440,437,000 regarding promoting people mobility. Papaano po nagamit ito, Mr. Sponsor? Anong mga programs ang naipatupad? Puwede bang malaman, how did these programs help the people's mobility, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. REYES. One minute, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Yes po.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). The session is suspended.

It was 2:24 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 2:25 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). The session is resumed.

REP. REYES. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, regarding the said budget, included in that budget are the salaries of our MMDA personnel manning the traffic, as well as the program, the Intelligent Traffic Signaling System, wherein everything will be automatic rather than it being a manually operated traffic system, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. GAITE. Thank you po. Again, doon sana ang emphasis ng MMDA, lalo na iyong, ito nga po, iyong binabanggit na active transportation, for example, iyong ating paggamit ng mga bisikleta at iba pang less-polluting forms of transportation, I think, talagang this is a step in the right direction. Sa mga ilang bansang napuntahan ko, talagang binigyan nila ng diin hindi lamang iyong pedestrians but pati iyong active transport tulad ng mga bisikleta. Nag-a-allocate sila ng sapat na lanes, parking areas, facilities, pati iyong accessibility para ng ating mga mamamayan. Hindi pa natin masyadong nakikita iyong ating mga kababayang disabled o mga senior citizens na magkaroon ng pasilidad para mas madali para sa kanila na magamit itong mga kalsada, sidewalks at iyong iba pang facilities ng MMDA.

Sana rin po magkaroon din, tulad ng nabanggit, iyong lalo pang development ng free spaces ay dapat talagang bigyan pa ng mas malaking diin, sa halip na ito ilang programs na tingin namin ay hindi dapat gawing priority lalo sa panahon ng pandemya. Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, in the proper time, I will make the necessary motions to have certain items of the budget of the MMDA be realigned for the purpose of developing the programs that were earlier stated. So, iyon lang po, Mr. Sponsor.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Salamat po.

REP. REYES. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor,

the MMDA will gladly welcome all your suggestions, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Representative Quimbo for her manifestation.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). The Honorable Quimbo is recognized for her manifestation.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, there being no other member of the Minority who wishes to interpellate, I move to terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Metro Manila Development Authority.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, on the part of the Majority, we join the Minority in its motion to terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the proposed budget of the MMDA.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). There is a joint motion to terminate the interpellations on the proposed budget of the Metro Manila Development Authority. Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the interpellation on the proposed budget of the Metro Manila Development Authority is hereby terminated.

Congratulations to the MMDA Family. Congratulations, Honorable Sponsor.

REP. REYES. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). Majority Leader.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
AND HIGHWAYS

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we now begin the consideration of the

proposed budget of the Department of Public Works and Highways.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, before we proceed with the recognition of the Sponsor, please acknowledge the following DPWH officials and attendees who are in the plenary session today: Secretary Mark Villar; Senior Usec. Rafael C. Yabut; Usec. Roberto Bernardo; Usec. Eugenio R. Pipo Jr.; Usec. Maria Catalina E. Cabral; Usec. Emil K. Sadain; Usec. Eduardo Ramos; Usec. Maximo Carvajal; Usec. Marichu A. Palafox; Asec. Antonio V. Molano; Asec. Mel John Verzosa; Rodel Racadio from the Office of the Secretary; Nerissa Acuña from the Office of the Secretary; Gerald M. Longoria from the Planning Service; and Elijor Benjamin Rodil from the Planning Service.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). The House of Representatives acknowledges the presence of the heads and officials of the Department of Public Works and Highways headed by their Secretary, the Hon. Mark A. Villar. Welcome to the House of Representatives and thank you for your visit.

Majority Leader.

REP. BOLILIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Hon. Francisco Jose Matugas to sponsor the proposed budget of the Department of Public Works and Highways.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). The Honorable Matugas is recognized to sponsor the measure.

SPONSORSHIP REMARKS OF REP. MATUGAS

REP. MATUGAS. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to present the budget of the DPWH for

consideration. They have an approved NEP budget of P686 billion, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). Majority Leader.

REP. MATUGAS. I am now ready to receive interpellation, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). Majority Leader.

REP. SANGCOPAN. Mr. Speaker, may I move that we recognize Rep. Arlene Brosas of the Party-List GABRIELA to be the first to interpellate on the proposed budget of the Department of Public Works and Highways.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). The Hon. Arlene D. Brosas of the Party-List GABRIELA is recognized for her interpellation.

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maraming salamat, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Sponsor yield to a few questions, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Your Honor, magandang hapon po.

My question, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, is, the DPWH has allotted P6.239 billion for Tatag ng Imprastruktura para sa Kapayapaan at Seguridad o TIKAS Program for 2022. The program aims to construct and improve various infrastructures in support of national security. Now, Mr. Speaker, bakit DPWH ang nagpopondo nito? Hindi ba dapat kinukuha ito sa Capital Outlays ng Department of National Defense, Mr. Speaker, G. Sponsor?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, itong project po called "TIKAS" is a convergence project of the PNP and the AFP for mga buildings po nila, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Mr. Speaker, my question is, bakit hindi ito nasa Capital Outlays ng DND kung ito naman po ay sa AFP, Mr. Speaker, G. Sponsor? Bakit hindi ito inilista doon?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, ito po ay mga public buildings at ito – sinasabi ko nga kanina, ito ay convergence projects na mga buildings para sa ating military and uniformed personnel, sa group. And ...

REP. BROSAS. Precisely, Mr. Speaker, G. Sponsor. Parang nag-uulit tayo e. Mayroon namang Capital Outlays sa DND, bakit hindi doon inilagay as an item?

Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, taong 2019 ito sinimulang pondohan. Tama? Tama po ba?

REP. MATUGAS. Tama po, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Sa GAA 2019 kasama lamang ito sa Special Provisions pero walang specific figure o walang specific na amount, figure. Ibig sabihin, hindi nakasaad kung magkano ang inilaan sa TIKAS, saan gagastusin ang pondo at ano-anong mga proyekto ang nakinabang dito. Magkano po ang ginastos ng DPWH para sa TIKAS noong 2019?

REP. MATUGAS. Based po sa information na nabigay sa akin, from 2019 to 2021 ay nasa P15 billion po ang na-allocate for 616 projects under TIKAS, to enhance the capability and readiness of our military police in providing an environment of peace and security conducive for national development and overall increase in quality of life, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, iyong 616 projects po ba sa convergence pa rin? Convergence na po ba ito o 2021 na natin ito ginawa?

REP. MATUGAS. It started po, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, nag-umpisa po ito noong 2019 until now, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. So that is part of the convergence, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor.

REP. MATUGAS. Tama po, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, convergence po.

REP. BROSAS. Okay, P15 billion, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor – can we get a copy of the list of the infrastructures constructed, improved, under the TIKAS Program mula po noong 2019 hanggang 2021?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, the DPWH will submit the list of projects under TIKAS from the year 2019 to 2021, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Kasi po, Mr. Speaker, sa totoo lang, iyong kopya po na mayroon tayo for GAA 2021 – kasi last time ‘di ba 2019 wala naman e, SPF siya, Special Purpose Fund siya, ibig sabihin naka-lump sum siya. Ito ngayon, we are questioning the allocations dito sa GAA 2021, kasi ang mga nakalagay dito: construction of the HHS GP Administration Building Phase 1 with parking and ground development, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City – P150.5 million; next, construction of apartment family housing for officers, Wallace Air Station, Poro Point, San Fernando City, La Union – P3.802 million; construction of police commissioned officers’ dormitory building, Camp B. Gen. Rafael T. Crame, Quezon City – P100 million; construction of police commissioned officers quarters building, Camp B. Gen. Rafael T. Crame, pangalawa – P100 million ulit, dalawa; construction of staff officers’ quarters with parking at the basement and ground development at HPA, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City – P105 million; construction of 10-storey multi-purpose Army transient facility, Phase 1 with basement parking and outside utilities, FBMM – P105 million; construction of apartment family housing for officers, Wallace Air Station, Poro Point, San Fernando City, La Union, Package 2 – P18 million; construction of parking ramp with drainage, Paredes Air Station, Pasuquin, Ilocos Norte – P37.1 million; concreting of Callao Bayview Boulevard, including access road, Callao, Gonzaga, Cagayan – P37.1 million; concreting, construction of housing – hindi, sa ano pala iyon, construction of fire clamp with drainage, Paredes Air Station,

Pasquin, Ilocos Norte - P37.1 million; iyong sa Callao Bayview Boulevard - P25 million; iyong construction of housing facilities sa Camp Lapu-Lapu, Apas, Cebu City, Cebu, Phase 2 - P102 million; iyong construction sa AGE parking including rehabilitation of drainage system, Col. Jesus Villamor Air Base, Pasay City - P11.990 million; at iyong construction of transient quarters, two-storey, Camp Sumuroy, Catarman, Northern Samar - P12 million; ganoon din iyong construction ng water system, FSRR, PA, San Miguel, Bulacan - P7 million; construction of married enlisted personnel living quarters sa Naval Station, San Antonio, Zambales - P40 million; construction of field grade married officers' quarters. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, bakit po mayroong mga ganito, halimbawa, iyong pong family housing for officers, field grade married officers' quarters, mayroong married enlisted personnel living quarters, five-storey condominium, PMA, Baguio City, construction ng Kaputian - okay pa po iyong mga police substation, pero iyong mga ganito, construction of sports complex, Malacañang Park, Manila City - P50 million. So, sa panahon po ng pandemya nagko-construct tayo ng sports complex sa Malacañang? Nagko-construct tayo ng dental facility sa Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City? Okay pa iyong dental facility, pero ito pong mga five-storey condominium for PMA, iyong mga transient quarters, iyong family housing for officers, iyong construction of staff officers' quarters, army transient facility, iyong mga ganyan po, parang family package ito ng mga officers, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor.

Kindly ipaliwanag po ninyo kung bakit ganito ang mga proyekto at katulad po ng tanong ko kanina, kasi, in fact, kulang ba ang nakalagay sa Capital Outlay ng DND? Bakit ito nakahiwalay pa at bakit ito inilagay sa DPWH, particular, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, itong programa pong TIKAS ay isang convergence program. Ang coverage po niya or ang scope is construction, improvement of infrastructure in support of national security. Under this project, dito po sa Department of National Defense-

DPWH convergence program ay iyon pong mga military operational facilities, military operational support facilities. Under po sa PNP-DPWH convergence program ang mga police station, mandatory infrastructure-based on prior-year procurement, provincial, city police office building, regional mobile force barracks, quartering facilities - so kasama po iyong mga tulugan na sinasabi n'yo po kanina, RHQ buildings, regional NHU buildings, training facilities, and kasama po doon iyong parang sports facility kasi those are part of the training and warehouse and motorpool facilities, and other supporting projects, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, iyon precisely po iyong tanong namin. The TIKAS Program, we are questioning iyong allocation nito, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor. Sa GAA 2021 milyong-milyon iyong ginamit para sa pagpapatayo ng dormitories, transient facilities and even family housing. Mayroon pang construction ng headquarters ng Philippine Army Administration Building Phase I na may parking at ground development pa para sa Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City na umabot ng P150.5 million. So, bakit ba pati programang pabahay pinasok ng DPWH? Hindi ba trabaho ito ng National Housing Authority, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, as I have said, iyong TIKAS is in support of our national security. Iyong mga proyekto pong iyon ay kailangan po nila lalo na po ng ating mga military personnel. Mahirap na nga po iyong mga military personnel, police personnel natin; wala po silang tulugan. So especially at this time of pandemic that they are the or we consider them as our frontliners, kailangan po nila ng suporta. And the construction of those buildings are under the mandate of the DPWH kasi ang DPWH ay may mandato na gumawa po ng public works at kasama po doon itong paggawa ng mga buildings under the TIKAS Convergence Program, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, hindi naman for national security iyong

i-house mo o bigyan mo ng dormitory, iyang transient facility, iyong mga uniformed personnel. And to be very specific po, bakit hindi nga ito inilagay, kung pangangailangan po pala talaga ito ng DND o ng AFP, bakit hindi po ito inilagay doon sa line item, Capital Outlays ng DND at ng PNP kung iyon po ang gusto nila, Mr. Speaker, G. Sponsor?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, ang DPWH po ay, ito iyong specialized – ang specialized activity nila is engineering works so sila po iyong may kakayahan na mag-construct ng mga buildings. In fact, itong TIKAS Convergence Program is similar po sa tourism, iyong TRIP Program natin na under the DPWH din, wherein magko-construct ang DPWH ng roads leading to tourism facilities. So in a way, this is a support program sa mga program ng ating national government. kasi kung wala po iyong mga buildings sa ating military and PNP, saan po natin ilalagay iyong mga personnel who are serving our country, especially at this time of pandemic, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. BROSAS. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, naniniwala po ang Kinatawan na ito na ang primary talagang may trabaho nito at may layunin dapat na ayusin ito ay ang DND. Tama po ba, Mr. Speaker, G. Sponsor?

REP. MATUGAS. As I have said, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, as I have said, iyong DPWH po ay sila po iyong mayroong special na kakayahan because of their mandate to do engineering works or public works. Iyong nasa DND po, iyong mandate nila is actually national security. Iyong PNP naman is iyong peace and order sa buong bansa natin so hindi po nila specialty or core competence itong engineering works, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Una, Mr. Speaker, magkano ang Capital Outlays ng DND? Magkano ang Capital Outlays ng PNP, DILG, particular po?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, I am sorry, I am not the Sponsor of the budget of the DND and the PNP.

REP. BROSAS. Okay. I understand, but do you, Mr. Sponsor, alam n'yo po na mayroong Capital Outlays, tama po ba, ang DND ang PNP, at ang DILG, 'di ba, Mr. Speaker, G. Sponsor?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Your Honor.

REP. BROSAS. Because they do that, humihingi sila ng pondo – sagutin n'yo lang po ako: Humihingi ng pondo ang DND, ang PNP, DILG, for Capital Outlays, tama po ba, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. So I am asking about the difference ng TIKAS Program. Kung sinasabi n'yo pong national security ito, sabihin ko lang po sa inyo, sa NEP 2022, under the TIKAS Program, may allocation na P50 million para sa construction ng sports complex sa Malacañang Park, at P50 million ulit sa construction ng dental facility sa Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo. Kailan po naging matter of national security ang pagpapatayo ng sports complex at dental facility, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, I just would like to make a differentiation doon sa Capital Outlays ng PNP at DND. Siguro po, nakikita natin na iyong Capital Outlays ng PNP at DND, mostly po, if not 90 percent, naka-allocate po doon sa for example, in the PNP, doon po sa mga what you call “arms,” iyong mga assets, mga floating assets, especially iyong mga speed boats for our maritime police; sa police naman, sa PNP natin, iyong mga patrol cars, mga mobile assets, doon siya naka-allocate, and the firearms; and sa DND naman, doon din sa firearms, like the purchase of naval vessels, iyong mga eroplano, iyong mga fighter planes natin and all kinds of firearms na gagamitin ng ating military.

Iyong component po nila doon sa building ay napakakaunti lang po as compared dito sa TIKAS Program, which is, sabi ko nga, doon sa DPWH dahil sila nga iyong may special capability to do engineering works, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Mr. Speaker, G. Sponsor, hindi n'yo pa po sinasagot iyong tanong ko. Kailan naging national security issue iyong pagpapatayo ng sports complex saka dental facility?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, iyong pagtayo po nitong mga building na ito under the TIKAS Program is a holistic approach doon po sa ating main goal na national security. Ito iyong mga tinatawag natin na mga "support programs." Susuportahan natin ang ating military and PNP personnel para po maging motivated sila, magampanan nila iyong obligasyon nila to keep the peace and security sa ating bansa, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Mr. Speaker, G. Sponsor, the DPWH is requesting funding for these projects amid the pandemic. May TIKAS Program kayo na nag-a-amount to P6 billion, hindi po ba? Tapos, gaano kalaking sports complex, dental facility, holistic na pag-ano ito—ano bang itsura ng facility na mayroon dito na makakatulong sa atin sa panahon ng pandemya, Mr. Speaker, G. Sponsor? And ...

REP. MATUGAS. Your ...

REP. BROSAS. Ah sige, sige po.

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, sinasabi nga n'yo pa, dental facility, iyon nga, it is just one of the support, like, siyempre during—especially during this pandemic, we have to care for our soldiers and our police so those facilities ay makakatulong po sa kanila, sa mga dental needs nila at this time, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, gusto ko lang sabihin na, in fact, mayroon pong AFP Engineering Brigade, 'di ba, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor? Are you familiar with that?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, familiar po ako.

REP. BROSAS. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor,

ano po ang ginagawa ng AFP Engineering Brigade?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Your Honor, mayroon pong Engineering Brigade ang ating military.

REP. BROSAS. Bakit n'yo po sinasabi ngayon—ano po ang trabaho nila? Bakit n'yo po sinasabi ngayon na iyong DPWH iyong mayroong kakayanan e mayroong AFP Engineering Brigade? And, I think, sila nga iyong particular doon sa P28.1-billion budget na tinatanong ko sa BDP funds 'di ba, sa NTF-ELCAC, P28.1 billion BDP funds. Iyan po iyong tinatanong ko doon e. Isa sa mga maaaring magsagawa ng proyekto ay ang AFP Engineering Brigade so, why tell me na mayroon kayong DPWH, tapos mayroon pa kayong AFP Engineering Brigade na puwedeng gumawa nito? Bakit parang doble-doble, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, iyong Engineering Brigade ng military natin ay iba po iyong mandato niya. Mostly ay ginagamit sila to support the military, especially, in the, let us say, opening of certain areas na mahirap nilang puntahan kasi mayroon silang mga engineering equipment, 'no, iyong mga malalaking truck nila, those facilities. Pero iyong purpose nila is not actually to construct buildings, noong atong engineering—in fact, during calamities, the military, the President will call on the engineering brigade of our military service to help, especially during floods, during typhoons, kasi mayroon silang mga equipment that can support the aid of our citizenry, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Mr. Speaker, G. Sponsor, ang tinatanong po natin sa—gumagawa ng infra, infra projects ang AFP Engineering Brigade, ano, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor? Gumagawa ng infrastructure projects, 'di ba? Kasi kaya nga po sila iyong tina-tap doon sa ano e, sa BDP e. If I remember it well, kaya nilagay iyon na ganoon, if the barangay cannot do it, the municipality, the LGU, and then the national, and the national—the AFP

Engineering Brigade, sila iyong puwedeng i-tap diyan. Tama po ba? At infra ang usapin diyan. Kasi ano iyan e, farm-to-market roads, mga ganyan din 'yan 'di ba, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor. Pag-bi-build din iyan ng mga schools, tama po ba, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor? Ibig sabihin, may kakayanan talaga ang AFP Engineering Brigade, so why tap the DPWH? Kaya po ang tanong natin, bakit po doblado? Bakit dalawa? Bakit kailangang ganito? In fact, kapag titingnan mo pa nga, hindi lang dalawa, kasi kung titingnan natin, mayroon sa DND, mayroon sa PNP, tapos DPWH. Parang tatlo kayo ngayon iyong gumagawa. So parang hindi ba ito – tapos panahon pa ng pandemya ngayon, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, nag-a-allot tayo ng P6 billion para diyan, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor.

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, iyong mga engineering works ng Engineering Brigade, nakatutok iyon sa mga areas na may problema sa peace and order. Kaya nga sila iyong last line, kumbaga. As you have said, bago iyong Engineering Brigade, may LGU pa na puwedeng gagawa. Pero pag hindi magawa ng LGU na because of the threats ng karahasan, then, tinatawag po iyong engineering brigade ng military to do the engineering works for safety purposes. Kasi we have already heard news na iyong mga contractors sinusunog po ang mga equipment. Iyong sa mga areas po na maano iyong karahasan, mataas iyong bilang ng karahasan, wala pong contractor na tumatanggap ng project so that is why, in those areas, iyong engineering brigade ng military ang tinatawag para mag-construct noong mga roads, farm-to-market roads and buildings, to alleviate the situation of our people doon sa hinterlands, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Mr. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, ito pong sinasabi ninyo, iyon lang ang trabaho ng AFP Engineering Brigade? So hindi siya nagtatrabaho ng iba pang mga kailangan na infra ng AFP? Iyon ang sinasabi ninyo, conflict-affected areas lang ang kanilang tinatrabahuan? Or they are not capable even dito na halimbawa, mag-

construct ng mga industrial trade corridors, RoRo ports, seaports, railway stations at kung ano-ano pa?

REP. MATUGAS. Hindi ko po sinasabi iyan, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker. Ang sinasabi ko lang, specialized iyong scope nila, ng ating Engineering Brigade, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Bakit, Mr. Speaker, G. Sponsor, hindi ibinigay sa kanila iyon? Bakit kailangan ihati from the DPWH, sa Convergence and Special Support Program, tapos mayroon pang DBP, mayroon pang ano, mayroon pang, partikular sa DILG talaga na mga infra, tapos mayroon pang infra particular sa AFP or DND? So parang dagdag ito, added, Mr. Speaker, G. Sponsor.

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, as I have said earlier, iyong TIKAS Program natin under the DPWH is naka-focus talaga sa buildings, especially dito sa mga poblacion or mga cities, not in the hinterlands. Kaya iyon po ang scope ng ating TIKAS Convergence Program, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. 'Yon lang, Mr. Speaker, G. Sponsor.

Talagang mariin naming kino-question iyong allocation na ito kasi tingin namin hindi talaga nararapat sa panahon ngayon, for example, iyong sinasabi na milyon-milyon gagamitan for pagpapatayo ng dormitories, transient facilities, family housing. Wow, buti pa sila, kasi iyong mga projects po ng DPWH, nagpapalayas, halimbawa, sa Tondo, 'di ba, ng mga mamamayan natin. Iyong riverside po ng Tondo, na-demolish iyong mga mamamayan natin, tinanggal nga kahit iyong kanilang toilet doon sa lugar. Ito pala, mayroon palang mga dormitories, transient facilities at family housings, particular sa Philippine Army headquarters. At tapos ito po mayroon pang construction ng dental facility, tapos mayroon pa tayong pinag-uusapan dito na malaking sports complex sa loob ng Malacañang. Habang may pandemya, ganito po ang pino-propose ng convergence na ito, Mr. Speaker, G. Sponsor. So, I think is not

ano – hindi talaga ito dapat. Kung pupuwede lang ay ilagay natin iyong mga pondo na ito sa direct response ng COVID kasi iyon ‘yong kailangan natin ngayon. Hindi tayo makapagpondo ng mga pangangailangan na basic ng ating mamamayan katulad ng mass testing o libreng testing, o ilagay natin iyan para sa pangangailangan sa pondo para sa treatment ng COVID o pondo para sa pagkuha noong – Unprogrammed Funds pa nga ‘yong vaccine natin, Mr. Speaker, G. Sponsor. Tapos mayroon pa ditong P6-billion TIKAS Program. Wow, ang tindi natin dito, Mr. Speaker, G. Sponsor. Nagpapagawa tayo ng mga facilities na ganito, hindi natin dinadagdagan iyong mga pangangailangan ng ating mga nagkukulang ng bed capacity na mga ospital, tapos kailangan natin ng mga gamot para sa COVID-19, tapos kailangan natin ng something as basic as vaccines, ano, para sa ating mga mamamayan.

Mr. Speaker, G. Sponsor, ito pong mga breakdown na kanina na binanggit ko, Mr. Speaker, G. Sponsor, sa tingin po natin, itong list of infrastructures ay talaga namang kapuna-puna, Mr. Speaker, G. Sponsor. Hindi dapat natin ito ginagawa sa panahon ng pandemya, Mr. Speaker, G. Sponsor, lalong-lalo na nagsa-suggest tayo o naglalagay tayo ng increases. In fact, budget increase po ito, 232 percent na increase mula sa dati so ang laki po ng increase na hinihingi ng TIKAS Program, Mr. Speaker, G. Sponsor.

Last, Mr. Speaker, G. Sponsor, pupunta na po ako sa susunod na mga tanong ko kaugnay po sa mga construction projects for bridges para sa – actually, particular po ito sa Marikina, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor. Ano-ano po iyong mga ongoing construction projects ng DPWH sa Marikina? Kasi may mga numerous construction projects for bridges that can result – ang pangamba kasi po namin dito, magresulta ito sa mga demolisyon sa mga communities, mga houses and communities.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. MATUGAS. Mr. Speaker, may I request for a one-minute suspension of the session.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). The session is suspended.

It was 3:00 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:02 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). The session is resumed.

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, to answer the question of Honorable Brosas, mayroon po tayong construction, ongoing construction ng bridge, Nangka Bridge, sa Marikina at may various flood control projects amounting to P1 billion sa Marikina po, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Mr. Speaker, G. Sponsor, puwede ko pong mahingi iyong mga detalye dito? Tapos may mga planned constructions pa po ba? Nangka ito?

REP. MATUGAS. Nangka River.

REP. BROSAS. Nangka River.

Sa Minahan Street po, sa Barangay Malanday, may status po ba kayo ng proyekto dito?

REP. MATUGAS. May I beg your pardon, Your Honor.

REP. BROSAS. Yes, sa Minahan, sa Barangay Malanday, Mr. Speaker, G. Sponsor.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. MATUGAS. Mr. Speaker, may we request for a one-minute suspension of the session.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). The session is suspended.

It was 3:03 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:03 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). The session is resumed.

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, ang project po sa Barangay Malanday is iyong Malanday Pumping Station, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Pumping station, Mr. Speaker, G. Sponsor?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes.

REP. BROSAS. Mayroon po bang mga mapapaalis na bahay dito sa proyekto na ito, pumping station?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, ...

REP. BROSAS. May pending demolition po ba dito, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, mayroon pong relocation plan na ginagawa ang DPWH sa area na iyan, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, may I be furnished a copy noong proyekto at iyong mga detalye po nito, Mr. Speaker, G. Sponsor.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). Before the distinguished Sponsor responds, may I remind the interpellator that her time has expired. Please attempt to wind up please.

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I will wind up. That is the last of my questions, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, magsa-submit po ang DPWH.

REP. BROSAS. Thank you very much, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as a last manifestation, this Representation is very much appalled by the projects under the TIKAS Program. Taon-taong pinopondohan ng bilyon-bilyon

ang mga pulis at sundalo sa kanilang luho habang ang mga ordinaryong mamamayan ay nanlilimos para sa kakarampot na ayuda. Bilyon ang binibigay sa ganitong klaseng programa habang kakarampot ang pondo para sa pagpapatayo ng ospital sa kabila ng pandemya. Mr. Speaker, P6 billion would have been enough to construct additional public hospitals; P6 billion could have been used for cash aid and services for the poor amid the pandemic.

Maraming salamat, Mr. Speaker. Maraming salamat, Mr. Sponsor.

REP. MATUGAS. Thank you, Your Honor. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). Majority Leader.

REP. SANGCOPAN. Mr. Speaker, next to interpellate the Sponsor, I move that we recognize Rep. Pantaleon D. Alvarez of the First District of Davao del Norte.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). The Hon. Pantaleon D. Alvarez of the First District of Davao del Norte is hereby recognized for his interpellation. The Honorable Alvarez.

Majority Leader.

REP. SANGCOPAN. Mr. Speaker, considering that Representative Alvarez is not yet available even via Zoom, I move that we recognize the next interpellator to the Sponsor, Rep. Maria Laarni Cayetano from the Second District of Taguig.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). The Hon. Maria Laarni L. Cayetano of the Second District of Taguig is recognized for her interpellation.

Majority Leader.

REP. SANGCOPAN. Yes, Mr. Speaker, with the same circumstance, I move that we recognize Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate from the Party-List BAYAN MUNA as the next interpellator to the Sponsor.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Puno). The Hon. Carlos Isagani T. Zarate of the Party-List BAYAN MUNA is recognized for his interpellation.

REP. ZARATE. Maraming salamat po, kagalang-galang na Speaker.

Mapapaunlakan po ba ng kagalang-galang na Sponsor ang ilang mga katanungan tungkol sa budget ng DPWH?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes po, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Maraming salamat po.

Bilang panimula po, muli, pagbati sa pamilya ng DPWH at sa ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor.

Unang katanungan ko po, sa details po ng proyekto ng DPWH, specifically page 1470, mayroon pong P52.769 billion na nasa Central Office sa ilalim ng Foreign-Assisted Projects, at napansin ko po wala po itong detalye. Ano po ba ang paliwanag ninyo rito, kagalang-galang na Sponsor? Napakalaki po ng pondong ito. If these are foreign-assisted projects, ibig sabihin may loan ito na galing sa labas, foreign-funded pero mayroon din pong counterpart ito – na manggagaling sa GAA, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, iyong tanong niyo po under din sa the same page, 1470, ay nakalista po iyong detalye nang paggagamitan ng ating foreign loans. Ito po ay composed ng GOP at saka ng loan, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Yes, at ang mga proyekto pong ito ay na-itemize po. Tama po ba, good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Your Honor, naka-program po siya by loan, so naka-itemize po siya, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. At saan po nagmumula ang mga loans na ito, if I may ask, good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, iba-iba po iyong sources ng loan. Mayroong ADB, mayroong JICA, mayroong KOICA, ADB, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. And just for the record, how many projects po ang pinopondohan nitong P52.769 billion?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, around 39 projects under the foreign-assisted program.

REP. ZARATE. Around 39? So it is not 40, it is not 38, it is not 37?

REP. MATUGAS. Based po dito sa NEP under Page 1470 and 1472 – until 1472, more or less nasa 39 po iyong nakalista, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Because we are pressed for time, may I request the good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, to provide this Representation iyong complete details noong mga proyektong iyan. Anong partikular ng mga proyektong iyan? Saan nagmumula iyong foreign funding niyan? Dahil gusto nating malaman ano ang mga kondisyones noong mga pagkakautang na iyan dahil alam naman ng kagalang-galang na Sponsor, next year, aabot na sa P13 trillion ang ating utang under this administration. Punong-puno na tayo sa utang, at even after this administration is out of Malacañang, ang magbabayad niyan ay ang atin pa ring mga mamamayan. Can we get the commitment from the good Sponsor to submit to this Representation before September 30 iyon pong hinihingi nating mga detalye ng mga, more or less sabi ninyo, 39 projects na iyan, good Sponsor?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes po, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, magsa-submit po ang DPWH ng detalye ng lahat ng projects na naka-list under Foreign-Assisted Projects, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat po. Pupunta po ako sa iba pang punto, dito po sa paglilinaw noong usapin ng agency budget contract

vis-à-vis contract award price. Tama po ba good Sponsor na ang mga proyekto for comprehensive release ay dumideretso na ma-download sa DPWH. Tama ho ba ito?

REP. MATUGAS. Tama po, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Yes, that is correct. At pagkatapos po na ma-download ang Approved Budget for the Contract or iyong tinatawag nating "ABC" ay itinatakda na ng ahensiya para sa bidding. Tama po ba ito?

REP. MATUGAS. Tama po, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Yes, thank you for that. Kaya nga iba iyong amount na makikita natin sa appropriations doon naman sa makikita natin sa Approved Budget for Contract. Tama po ba?

REP. MATUGAS. Tama po, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Yes, mas mababa iyong sa ABC kaysa makikita natin sa appropriations, you will confirm that. Now, good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, ayon sa ating Procurement Act, ibinibigay ang awards sa pinakamababang bidder. Tama po ba ito? Nangyayari po ba ito?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes po, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, nangyayari pa rin po.

REP. ZARATE. Yes. Yes, dahil iyan pa rin po ang kalakaran natin sa ating budgeting ngayon, sa ating procurement. Kaya nga ang contract award price ay napupunta sa lowest bidder, 'di po ba?

REP. MATUGAS. Lowest complying responsive bid po, Your Honor.

REP. ZARATE. Yes, but keyword there is "lowest." Is that correct, good Sponsor?

REP. MATUGAS. Responsive, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Yes, yes, I agree. So ang sunod ko na tanong diyan, halimbawa, puwedeng ganito ang puwede natin maging scenario: mayroong P100 million sa ating NEP na appropriation ng isang proyekto pero ang kanyang approved budget for the contract ay posibleng P95 million lamang, at ang kanyang contract award price, iyong the lowest responsive bid, ay magiging P93 million. Puwede po ba ang scenariong ganoon, good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MATUGAS. Possible po, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Possible at nangyayari iyong. Tama, good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes po, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. So, ang next ko na tanong, ganito rin po ba ang mga itsura ng ating mga tinatawag na "FLRs" or "for later release"? Puwede n'yo po bang ipaliwanag?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, iba po iyong sa case ng FLRs.

REP. ZARATE. Ano po ang pagkakaiba, good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MATUGAS. Iyong FLR po, ang meaning po niyan is "for later release" so hindi pa po siya nare-release sa DPWH, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. At any rate, kasi FLR nga, may isinusumiteng special project proposal sa DBM bago i-release ang pondo. At any rate, next ko na tanong, good Sponsor, tama po ba – kasi ang daming mga naka-list sa ating budget book, ang dami pong mga nakalistang mga projects ang DPWH diyan. Kanina nga tinanong din ng ating kasamahan, pati na iyong TIKAS, na para naman sa AFP at PNP nasa DPWH din, ano. Kaya lumalabas tuloy, kung idadagdag mo iyan doon, talagang napakalaki na ng pondo ng PNP at ng AFP; a big chunk of our P5-trillion budget talagang mapupunta sa kanila. But, going back to my

question, tama po ba na lahat ng proyekto ng DPWH ay ganito ang nangyayari, ibig sabihin, mayroong ABC, Approved Budget Contract, at mayroon pong contract award price, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes po, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, iyan po ang nangyayari.

REP. ZARATE. Okay. So balik tayo doon sa halimbawa nating ibinigay kanina, iyong binanggit ko na mayroong P100 million na appropriation pero ang kanyang ABC ay P95 million lamang at ang kanyang approved contract, contract award price o iyong CAP niya ay P93 million. So ang tanong ko ngayon, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, dahil nag-appropriate tayo sa GAA ng P100 million, although this is a theoretical question, ano ang mangyayari doon sa P7 million na diperensiya ng appropriation at saka noong contract award price, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MATUGAS. Iyong P7 million na difference po ay dine-declare na savings, so babalik po iyan sa Treasury.

REP. ZARATE. Yes, so matatawag na itong savings sabi po ninyo, good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker? Tama po ba na ito ay savings?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Paano po natin matawag na savings ito, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker? Dahil po sa GAA, malinaw po ang ating definition ng savings, 'di po ba, good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes po, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. And kung babalikan po natin iyong definition ng savings, ang sinabi po doon, ito po ang sinabi, babasahin ko po:

Meaning of savings - Savings refer to portions or balances of any released appropriations in this Act which have not been obligated as a result of any of the following: completion, final discontinuance or abandonment of a

program, activity or project, for which the appropriation is authorized; or implementation of measures resulting in improved systems and efficiencies and thus enabled an agency to meet and deliver the required or planned targets, programs and services agreed in this Act x x x.

So iyon po ang definition ng savings natin sa General Appropriations Act at hindi ko po makita kung napasok iyan doon, pero dahil sabi n'yo nga may difference doon sa ating example na P7 million, at dahil nasa appropriation na ito ng ahensiya at sobra, ito sa aktuwal talaga, puwede natin itong matawag na savings, tama po ba, good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker? As you mentioned earlier, this is savings?

REP. MATUGAS. Tama po, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you.

So kung magkaganoon, good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, sa napakarami pong projects ng DPWH, iyong kanyang regular agency projects, iyong mga so-called convergence at pati pa iyong iba pang mga proyekto, taon-taon ay may savings ang DPWH dahil taon-taon naman may mga proyekto ito, tama po ba, good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MATUGAS. I am sorry, Your Honor, hindi clear iyong audio. Puwede po bang ma-repeat?

REP. ZARATE. Uulitin ko po, can you hear me now?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Okay. So, kung magkaganoon—base doon sa ating binigay na example kanina, dahil napakaraming infrastructure projects under the DPWH, in fact, may mga convergence projects pa kayo, so, taon-taon ay may savings na na-generate ang DPWH. Tama po ba ito?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker. Mayroon pong savings.

REP. ZARATE. Yes. So, I will go now to my other points. At least na-establish na natin iyan na nagkakaroon o nagdye-generate ng savings ang DPWH.

Pupunta po ako doon sa—itananong ko na rin ito sa DBM at I suppose naitanong din ito during the budget briefing ng aking kasamahan. Kaugnay po ito, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, doon sa P10.3 billion Contingent Fund ng 2020. Napansin ko po at napansin po namin na ang negative SARO to cover the unobligated allotment or balances ay sourced from “decreased cost resulting from competitive bidding and improved efficiency measures.” Uulitin ko po. Ang nakalagay po doon sa negative SARO, “decreased cost resulting from competitive bidding and improved efficiency measures.” So ang tanong ko, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, para lang maliwanagan tayo, hindi ba parang pagbabago ito sa meaning ng savings at pagdadagdag ng additional qualification doon sa binasa nating meaning ng savings sa ating General Appropriations Act dahil dinagdag nito iyong “decreased cost resulting from competitive bidding”? Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, ano po ang comment ninyo rito?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, iyong provision na iyon doon sa GAA ay nagka-provide ng efficiency doon sa bidding process ng ating DPWH kaya nakapag-generate sila ng savings, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Yes, efficiency at in-elaborate ninyo kung ano iyong meaning ng savings sa GAA kaya dinagdag ninyo dito iyong “decreased cost resulting from competitive bidding.” At any rate, gusto ko lang mairehistro iyon na iyong meaning na iyan ay wala sa General Appropriations Act. Kung dinagdag man ninyo iyan ay that is, again, to me, at least questionable. You cannot just define what is savings dahil ang DPWH is not Congress; only Congress can define what is savings, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker. Kaya nga malinaw na inilalagay natin iyan sa General Appropriations Act.

At any rate, kung babalikan po natin, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, dahil pamilyar naman kayo doon sa P10.3 billion Contingent Fund,

June 25, 2020 inaprubahan ng Presidente ang SARO na may P10.3 billion; July 14, 2020 naman na-issue ang SARO and July 22, 2020, natanggap ng DPWH ang SARO; July 29 to July 30 issuance of negative SAROs, hindi lang ito isa from DPWH projects, the SARO releases, nakikita po ito sa website ng DPWH. And, finally, doon sa NEP nakita po natin sa page 660, sa DPWH page, na may transfer to the Contingent Fund. Ibig sabihin, naglipat sa Contingent Fund ng P10.3 billion, then eventually, may transfers from the Contingent Fund na P10.3 billion din, magkatugma. So ibig sabihin na, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, ang DPWH ay may savings dahil sa, nabanggit na rin ninyo kanina, mayroong decreased cost resulting from competitive bidding at ito ay umabot nga ng P10.3 billion na nilipat ng DPWH sa Contingent Fund. Eventually, ang nangyari rito, ibinalik naman ng DPWH para ma-implement ang mga so-called new project. Iyong Contingent Fund, iyong nilipat sa kanya, binalik niya uli sa DPWH para mapondohan ang so-called new or urgent project. Hindi po ba ito ang nangyari? Hindi po ba tama ito sa nabanggit ko, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker? Recorded naman po ito. Makikita ito sa DPWH website at saka sa ating budget books na ito nga ang nangyari.

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, with regard to the P10.3-billion Contingent Fund, that particular question was already raised during the DBM Plenary debates and for specifically, the DPWH. Ang sa kanila is just they only request for funds to implement important projects. They are confident that the use of the Contingent Fund to fund this project passed through the necessary legal procedure, and was made in accordance with the General Appropriations Act, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you for the nonresponsive reply. Ang gusto ko lang i-confirm for the record, ang DPWH generated savings of P10.3 billion dahil doon nga sa sabi ninyong “decreased cost resulting from competitive bidding.” So, iyon po ang nangyari, at iyong P10.3 billion na iyan ng savings ninyo, nilipat ninyo sa Contingent

Fund, but eventually, the Contingent Fund, iyong pondo na nasa Contingent Fund, the same amount, P10.3 billion, ibinalik rin sa DPWH to fund new or urgent projects. Iyon po ang gustong kong i-confirm, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker. Can you confirm that for the record?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, iyong P10.3 billion na sinasabi na Contingent Fund ay actually nasa GAA. So hindi po siya galing sa savings ng DPWH.

REP. ZARATE. Isa-isahin po natin, with due respect, Mr. Sponsor.

Nag-generate kayo ng P10.3 million savings. Tama po ba?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, nag-generate, pero binalik nila po sa DBM, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. And, exactly, that P10.3 billion were transferred to the Contingent Fund; nilipat po sa Contingent Fund. If you look at all the budget books, nasa NEP po iyan ng ating budget books. So pumasok iyan sa Contingent Fund and you know, good Sponsor, na ang Contingent Fund halos kada taon nasa P13 billion iyan at nagagastos iyan. So what happened here, iyong savings ninyo sa DPWH, in-augment because allowed naman ang augmentation. In-augment ng Executive o in-augment doon sa Contingent Fund, and noong pumasok na sa Contingent Fund iyan, binalik ulit sa inyo in the guise of or ang rason ay to fund new and urgent projects. Can you confirm that, good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, that you also received P10.3 billion from the Contingent Fund?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, iyong sinasabi ko po kanina, iyong P10.3 billion Contingent Fund ay nilagay lang po sa GAA. Basically para siyang nilagay ng DBM kasi hindi po siya sourced within the DPWH, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Tayo po'y nagkakaroon ng mental calisthenics dito. But my question was did the DPWH receive P10.3 billion from the Contingent Fund in 2020?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Yes or no?

REP. MATUGAS. They received P10 billion from the DBM.

REP. ZARATE. Yes, from the Contingent Fund. Do not say "DBM"; galing sa Contingent Fund iyan. Wala namang item sa ating books na "DBM." Ang mga pondo ay nanggagaling sa partikular na mga sources of funds sa ating budget books at isa sa source of fund diyan ay the Contingent Fund na doon nanggaling iyon P10.3 billion. Okay, Mr. Good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, tama po iyan, for the record.

REP. MATUGAS. Yes po, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Okay. Now, that we have established that, tinatanong po natin iyan, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, dahil talaga pong napaka-scandalous, if I may say, to say the least, na noong 2020, 2020 nasa kalagitnaan tayo ng pandemya, sa paglaban nitong pandemya ng COVID, na hanggang ngayon ay ating nilalabanan, and in fact, nagkukumahog tayong maghanap ng pondo beginning March kung saan ay nagkakaroon ng lockdown, humihingi ng ayuda ang ating mga mamamayan dahil nagkaroon ng matinding lockdown, a militarist lockdown, beginning March and now we find out that agencies, for example, like the DPWH, transferred P42 billion to PS-DBM para makaganansiya iyong mga kaibigan ng Malacañang sa pagbili ng kung ano-ano.

And now, we learned that DPWH also, in the middle of the pandemic, na sana kung may na-generate na mga savings – kaya nga tayo nagpalabas ng Bayanihan 1 and Bayanihan 2 last year para sa ating COVID-19 interventions, but here we are, in June of last year, in the middle of the year with P10.3 billion and ano po ang pinondohan nito? Nabanggit ko na ito makailang beses. Ano po ang pinondohan nito? Hindi naman po COVID-19 interventions, hindi ayuda sa ating mga mamamayan, hindi special risk allowance

ng ating mga health care workers. Ano po ang pinondohan ninyo? Seventy million for sports facilities na may swimming pool; P150 million for facilities para po sa mga cruise ships, mga pantalan ng mga cruise ships; P100 million for a convention center; and P100 million for DPWH Las Piñas District Engineering Office. Mas inuuna po ba natin ito? Mas importante ba ito doon sa ating COVID-19 interventions? At mayroon pang bat cave na P30 million. Para kanino ito? Kay Batman ba ito at kailangang unahin natin ang P30 million bat cave rather than for COVID-19 interventions, pang-pondo natin sa ating mass testings?

Kaya po nagkagulo-gulo, nagkaletse-letse po ang ating COVID-19 interventions ngayon. Tumataas ang bilang ng mga kababayan po natin na tinamaan ng COVID dahil po sa napakahina ng ating mass testing. As early as March of 2020, we were already advocating for the government to initiate free mass testings, hanggang ngayon ho hindi pa naabot iyong itinakda ng DPWH o ng IATF na at least 90,000 testings a day. Hindi pa ho nila naaabot iyan; February pa nila in-announce iyan.

So iyon po ang very revolting dito, good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker. You have P10.3 billion savings, you transferred it to the Contingent Fund and we expect that it will be used to fund clear contingencies. but here, the Contingent Fund was then again used, ginamit ninyo ulit to fund new and urgent—what is so urgent with a bat cave? Hindi po siguro mamamatay at mawawala iyong mga paniki kung hindi natin napondohan iyong bat cave na iyan. But last year, ang dami po nating health care workers, ang dami nating mga doktor, mga nurses na namatay dahil po sa problema natin sa pandemya ng COVID. Up to now, halos naglulupasay na ang ating mga health care workers para lang makuha nila ang kanilang special risk allowance, good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

So we register iyong amin pong pagkadismaya, to say the least, at nakakapanggalit na ganitong klaseng pagpopondo ng Departamento in the midst of this grave crisis aggravated by this pandemic. Would you like to reply to that, good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker,

ito pong DPWH, iyong sa, specifically, doon sa P10.3 billion na fund na ginamit for different projects, ito po ay nakapag-generate nang—we can say that indirectly it is also a COVID-response, because it generated about 1.5 million jobs. So malaki po ang multiplier effect noong 1.5 million jobs because they received compensation, which in turn they can also use to purchase masks, to pay for their testing. So iyong ...

REP. ZARATE. With due respect, with the kind indulgence of the good Sponsor, do not patronize us by saying na nakapag-generate ng jobs. That is very patronizing and I take exception to that. During that time, hindi po indirect ang kailangan natin kundi direktang ayuda sa mamamayan, direktang tulong sa ating mga health care workers. Paano pong nakakatulong iyong swimming pool noong panahon ng pandemya? How can that swimming pool generate jobs? How can that convention center generate jobs na halos ang lahat ng mga mamamayan natin ay nasa loob ng kanilang pamamahay. How can a bat cave of P30 million be that important? So do not patronize our people in the midst of this pandemic, na kailangang hindi indirect but direktang pondo na P10.3 billion. Napakalayo na po ng maaabot noon kung ginamit ang savings na iyon papunta sa ating COVID-19 interventions.

You have to remember, good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, at that time, sobra po ang pagkalugmok ng ating ekonomiya, sobra po ang pagkalugmok ng ating mga mamamayan. Humihingi sila ng ayuda, delayed pa nga ang pagdating ng ayuda dahil sa napakatindi ng lockdown noong panahon na iyon. So with due respect, do not give us that kind of very patronizing statement that indirectly it helps our people, because it did not, if I may say that in this Plenary debate, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

Now, on to my last point, good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

Ano po ba ang rate of completion ng DPWH sa mga proyektong iniimplementa nito?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, can you please repeat your question?

REP. ZARATE. Ano po ang rate of completion ng Departamento sa mga proyekto na ini-implement ninyo, ng DPWH?

REP. MATUGAS. As of August, Your Honor, as of August 31, 2021, iyong absorptive capacity ng DPWH is 87 percent – 83 percent, I am sorry.

REP. ZARATE. Eighty-three percent. So, with your budget for this year – just for the record ano po ang budget ninyo for this year for implementation sa mga projects?

REP. MATUGAS. Iyong budget for this year is a total of P611 billion po, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. And 83 percent of that are already in completion, you are saying?

REP. MATUGAS. Iyong 83 percent po ay obligated na po, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Obligated na. So you only have three months. Iyong naiwan na pondo sa DPWH, is there an assurance that this will be obligated as well?

REP. MATUGAS. As of now, Your Honor, as of August 31, 2021, iyong unobligated amount is P105.7 billion.

REP. ZARATE. Say that again one hundred...

REP. MATUGAS. It is P105.7 billion po, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. So P105.7 billion and you barely have three months. That P105.7 billion, iyon po ang io-obligate pa ninyo in the last three months. Is that correct, good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, iyong unobligated portion po is as of August 31. As of now, wala pa silang definite data, but definitely po nag-increase na po iyong performance nila. So lumiit na po iyong unobligated balance, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. And kasama na po diyan iyong mga – wala naman sa in-approve ng Kongresong ito, iyong tinaguriang nilang “FLRs.” Is that correct, good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MATUGAS. Hindi pa po kasama doon ang FLRs except for those FLRs na na-release na.

REP. ZARATE. Ah, mayroon din na palang FLRs na already released, good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Your Honor, mayroon na po, kaya lang wala tayong specific data. Maybe around P30 billion na po iyong na-release, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. I am just surprised the DPWH has no data. Sino po ba ang nagdecide sa pag-release ng mga FLRs na iyan?

REP. MATUGAS. Iyong FLR po, ang proseso po ngayon is, magre-request ng approval sa Office of the President, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. So at any rate, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, iyon lang po ang aking mga katanungan in interpellation. But again, just for the record, inirerehistro natin ang ating matalas at matinding pagpupuna sa DPWH sa kanilang o sa inyo pong prioritization. Napakalaki po ng mga pondo, ng mga savings ninyo – and ito nga din pinupuna natin na sa DBM in the past how many years, since 2017.

At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Puno relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Weslie T. Gatchalian.

Hindi natin nakikita iyong entries ng savings and last year, I can recall it very correctly, vividly, sinabi ng DBM, wala na pong savings dahil ubos na po iyan, nagagastos na po.

At ngayon, nalalaman natin at inamin naman ninyo na mayroon kayong savings talaga taon-taon dahil doon sa natitipid ninyo sa mga bidding. But sa panahon ng pandemya,

nakakapanggalit po iyon na ang savings ay gagamitin ninyo sa so-called new and urgent projects na hindi naman nakadirektang nakatuon doon sa pagbigay ng solusyon sa pandemya ng COVID. Hindi po ninyo puwedeng sabihin na hindi naman kasi natin na-anticipate na magkaroon ng pandemya in 2020. Remember, as early as March, nagpasa tayo ng Bayanihan 1 and Bayanihan 2 as a response to COVID. And that is already a cue for the DPWH na sa Bayanihan 1 kailangan mag-realign ng mga pondo para gamitin sa COVID-19. But anong ginawa po ninyo? In the middle of the year, P10.3 billion, hindi doon sa COVID-19 ninyo dinala but dinala sa maluluhong proyekto—pantalan para sa cruise ships, bat cave, swimming pool and gaya noong mga akin nang narehistro kanina.

So I urge the Department to be very prudent dito po sa paggamit ng inyong mga pondo especially kung nakapag-realize kayo ng savings.

Iyon lang po ang aking mga katanungan, good Sponsor. Salamat po sa inyong mga katugunan. Salamat, Mr. Speaker, magandang hapon po sa ating lahat.

REP. MATUGAS. Thank you, Your Honor. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). Maraming salamat po. Majority Leader.

REP. SANGCOPAN. Mr. Speaker, next to interpellate the Sponsor, I move that we recognize Rep. France Castro from the Party-List ACT TEACHERS.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). The Honorable Castro is recognized. Please go ahead, Ma'am, via Zoom. Honorable Castro.

REP. CASTO (F.L.). Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Medyo nadelete iyong—medyo nadelay. Anyway, magandang hapon po, Mr. Speaker, muli, sa ating honorable Sponsor, sa ating mga colleague at sa pamilya po ng DPWH.

Ang unang tanong ko po, Mr. Sponsor, Mr.

Speaker, ay iyong budget natin. Alam naman po natin na mayroon na pong effort at mayroon na pong plano para doon sa pagbubukas ng pagbabalik-eskuwela or safe reopening ng mga schools po natin. At based doon sa guidelines ng DepEd, at ng DOH, napakahalaga iyong mga infrastructure facilities ng ating mga eskuwelahan, halimbawa po iyong water and sanitation facilities, comfort rooms clinics at siyempre rehabilitation noong mga schools, mga rooms.

Para po sa safe reopening, iyong panimula dito sa mga infrastructure. Pero nakakalungkot, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, dito po sa basic education facilities dapat po ito ay P10 billion pero binabaan po ito ng DBM, naging ano lang, naging P5.7 billion for the 2022 NEP. Okay, tama po ba iyong data ko, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, sa DPWH po, ang nakalagay po dito is sa 2021 pa lang ito na data, iyong about P22.9 billion. Iyong sa buildings for DepEd, nasa DepEd po iyong budget. Hindi ko po ma-confirm iyong P5 billion na sinasabi n'yo po, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, dahil ang mga pondo naman po na ito ay mapupunta sa DPWH for the projects so kung titingnan po natin doon sa NEP, doon sa budget po ng DepEd. So tama po kayo, 'no, mayroong P2.9 billion po para doon sa, ang nakalagay po dito, "for the construction, replacement and completion of kindergarten, elementary, secondary school buildings and technical-vocational laboratories, and the construction of water and sanitation facilities. One percent of the said amount shall be used to cover changes in the detailed engineering design for prior years' project," and so on and so forth. Sabi din po dito, "Said amount shall be released directly to the DPWH which shall implement the same based on the list, location and standards."

So, iyon po ang nakalagay doon, tapos, P1.03 billion "for the rehabilitation, renovation, repair and improvement of"—parang the same lang po ito—"kindergarten, elementary, secondary school buildings, repair of water and sanitation facilities."

Letter c, P14,675,000 po for engineering and administrative overhead, and then P1.1 billion po for the acquisition of school desks, furniture, et cetera.

Okay, so, ang concern ko lang po, ano, medyo napakaliit na nga itong budget, binabaan pa. Tingin ko po hindi na po ito nakaayon doon sa pandemic response natin at saka iyong doon sa ating plano sa pagbabalik eskuwela noong ating mga estudyante. Maganda sana kung nadagdagan din ito.

So, puwede po bang—kasi wala ditong mga details, wala ditong mga details, dahil ang concern ko lang po, iyong mga water facilities, et cetera, kaugnay nitong mga project na ito to be directly supervised by the DPWH. So puwede po bang makakuha ng detalye nito, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, iyong—first, iyong budget o iyong fund for the school buildings ay manggagaling po sa DepEd so iyong details din po ng construction ay manggagaling po sa DepEd. Iyong DPWH will just implement kung ano po iyong ibibigay na detalye ng DepEd, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. So, wala pa po sa inyo iyong details. Tama po ba iyan, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor?

REP. MATUGAS. Wala pa po, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Thank you po. Katulad po ng nasabi ko kanina, mahalaga talaga itong mga pasilidad na ito na maibigay natin sa ating mga eskuwelahan dahil pansin ko po, for the whole year ng 2020 to 2021, though mayroong budget po sa mga facilities, pero hindi pa rin talaga makasunod iyon doon sa requirements natin sa ligtas na pagbabalik eskuwela. Okay, salamat po.

Second po, puwede po bang humingi din ng detailed inventory sa mga parked funds, kung mayroon po ang budget ng DPWH for the last five years?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, puwede pong ma-specify iyong

sinasabi ninyong parked funds? Kasi sa budget po ng DPWH, sa NEP, wala pong nakalagay na parked funds na account, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. So, sure kayo doon sa sagot n'yo, wala tayong mga parked funds ng DPWH for the last five years?

REP. MATUGAS. I am sorry, Your Honor, please repeat your question.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). So, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, sure po kayo at confident kayo na wala na mga parked funds ng DPWH for the last five years?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, yes, sure po kasi iyong budget naman po ay naka-line item naman iyon based sa accounting rules natin, sa government accounting rules. May mga specific accounts po iyon, so, wala pong—walang account na sinasabi na ang pangalan "Parked Funds," Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Isa po sa mga nabanggit na—so iyon po, iyong parang kumbaga, iyong mga na-generate din na mga savings, ito rin iyong mga tinutukoy natin from the projects po ng DPWH for the last five years, but I will not belabor that issue, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

So on to my next question po, ano. Napansin ko po, 'no, dito sa DPWH budget ng 2022 projects, marami o ilang proyekto na nagkakahalaga ng bilyon, samantalang ang ibang katulad na projects ay halos P1 million lang iyong mga halaga. Noong tiningnan po namin iyong ilang mga projects, para sa isang proyekto ay umaabot ng P2 billion, samantalang ang iba ay P1 billion para sa buong rehiyon na. Tinutukoy ko po dito iyong—paano po ba nag-a-allocate ng project ang DPWH? Kasi may mga region na talaga namang mahihirap pero ang ina-allocate lang natin ay P1 billion, samantalang bukambibig ng ating mga leaders na dapat ay paunlarin iyong mga mahihirap na mga region, iyong mga probinsiya, and yet bakit napansin ko po ganito doon sa mga proyekto. So tama po

ba iyong aking observation? Kasi tingin ko may mga pinapaburang mga lugar dahil kung titingnan po natin iyong pag-aaral ng national na PSA o kahit na iyong 2012 na pag-aaral, iyong mga poorest provinces po – halimbawa, iyong Lanao del Sur, Apayao, Eastern Samar, Maguindanao, Zamboanga, kasama iyong Davao Oriental, Ifugao, Sarangani, Negros, ay mga poor regions po na dapat din naman bigyan ng prayoridad in terms of mga project, livelihood, infrastructure project, et cetera. Pero kung papansinin ninyo po, parang mayorya yata, kung iko-compare ko po doon sa mga regions na mga project natin, ay naka-channel or nakalagay dito sa Davao Region. So, paano po ba tayo mag-ano – for example, Cateel Diversion Road, Davao Oriental – P60 million, Davao City Coastal Bypass, at saka itong Bago Aplaya-Times Beach-Roxas-Sta. Ana – P2.1 billion, itong Davao City Coastal Bypass Road, at saka itong Wharf Package 2 – P500 million, Davao City Coastal Bypass Road, et cetera – P139 million, Davao City Coastal Bypass Road – P500 million, at marami pa pong iba, ‘no. Puro Davao City Bypass Package, et cetera. So kung titimbangin po natin sa pagba-budget, ay talagang parang skewed towards the Davao Region.

So mayroon po bang criteria ang DPWH sa pagpili ng mga project na ito bukod sa nandodoon iyong ating Presidente?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). May we ask the Honorable Castro to wrap up your question.

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, some projects po ng DPWH mayroon po tayong mga tinatawag na “flagship projects” na nag-undergo ng feasibility studies. Iyong mga feasibility studies, they were, ano, ginawa po ito before COVID times, pre-COVID pandemic. So itong sa ngayon, kaya nakikita natin ngayon sa NEP ng DPWH na malalaking amount, kasi natapos na po iyong feasibility study, then based on the feasibility study puwede po siyang gawin, iyong project na iyon ay viable. So that is why nalagay po siya ngayon sa 2022 NEP natin, iyong mga flagship projects. May mga convergence projects na national roads, mga

bridges, flood control, na iyon ang ginagawa nating priority, particularly dito sa NCR na kung saan congested iyong ating roads, so, marami po iyong flagship projects dito sa NCR to decongest our roads, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Mr. Speaker, mayroon pa po lang akong dalawang tanong, Mr. Speaker, isang parochial at saka iyong tungkol sa tourism.

So tatapusin ko lang po, Mr. Speaker, if you will permit, ito pong issue na ni-raise ko po on the ano, iyong mga pagpili po ng mga projects.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). Please go ahead, so we can wrap it up.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). So, yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you po.

Hindi ko po inaano iyong sa NCR, at talagang marami naman po dito sa NCR. Ang iniisip ko lang po, dahil iyong regions natin ay kailangan nating paunlarin din, lalong-lalo na iyong mga mahihirap na rehiyon natin na, binanggit ko nga, doon sa pag-aaral, iyon po iyong mga nangangailangan din. So puwede po bang magko-conduct din iyong DPWH ng mga feasibility studies para naman paunlarin natin itong ating mga ibang lugar in terms of infrastructure projects, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Your Honor, magbibigay po ang DPWH ng list ng mga feasibility studies na ongoing ngayon, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

Kaugnay po doon sa isang parochial concern ko po, kasi mayroong isa pong constituent ang Kinatawag ito, about daw po doon sa project po noong construction noong Candahon-Bintacay Road Project under the contract of Sun West Construction and Development Corporation. Naka-locate po ito, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, sa Boac, Marinduque. Kasi, itong mga may-ari po, although private po iyon, gagawin daw pong

parang access road. Pumapayag naman po iyong mga tao na maaapektuhan. In fact nga, mayroon isang magsasaka doon na isang pilapil na lang nga iyong pag-aari niya pero willing naman siya. Kaya lang ang sinasabi daw po doon sa dialogue ay wala daw po itong, wala daw pong compensation doon sa right-of-way, kumbaga, iyong paggamit noong mga maaapektuhan na mga pag-aari noong ating mga mamamayan. Ito po ay isinulat kay Engr. Evelyn Puertollano ng isa naming constituent. Ang sagot po yata doon sa dialogue ay wala daw pong makukuhang compensation. Hindi po ba nakalagay sa Bill of Rights, Article III, Section 9, "Private Property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation." So puwede po bang makahingi ng konkretong sagot or direct na sagot tungkol dito, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, ang DPWH po ay ie-evaluate niya and review iyong particular project na iyon. So 'pag may pondo po, malalagyan po iyan ng pondo para sa ating right-of-way, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Tama po ba, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, na wala silang karapatan daw na mag-claim ng compensation dahil ito daw po ay project daw ng lokal? Tama po ba iyon?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, mayroon po silang karapatan, especially if affected po ng project iyong area nila. So, they have the right to claim right-of-way payment from the government, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. I am relieved by that answer by our Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

Inaasahan ko pong makatulong po ang ating Sponsor at siyempre po ang DPWH Region IV-B, especially dito sa Boac, Marinduque, doon sa kailangan no'ng ating mga mamamayan so they have the right compensation po.

Last na lang po, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, parang ang dali ng time ko. So, Mr. Speaker, mayroon kasi dito iyong mga infra for tourism, hindi ko po ito naitanong ito sa DOT.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). Ma'am, you still have 15 minutes. You still have 15 minutes.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

Meron pong mga ano, itatanong ko sana ito sa DOT kasi ito po ay infra for tourism. Pero baka mas appropriate po sa DPWH dahil mayroon po ditong nakalagay na P16.8 billion, to be exact, P16,803,507,000 na Tourism Road Infrastructure Program o iyong TRIP. Mukhang ito po ay nasa central office. So, meron po bang detalye ng mga program ito o details of the project po? Kasi P16 billion po ito. Hindi ko po yata – hindi ko po kasi makita doon sa NEP.

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, magbibigay po ang DPWH ng listahan ng proyekto under the TRIP program, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. So, puwede po ba iyan matanggap natin before September 30 po?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay po. By the way, iyong ini-raise ko po about the parochial concern, kailan ko malalaman iyong review no'ng DPWH dito sa IV-A sa Boac, Marinduque, doon sa binanggit po natin.

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, puwede po kayong mag-coordinate deretso sa DPWH. You can contact the office of Usec. Cathy Cabral to coordinate iyong particular parochial concern mo, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. So, iyon lang po iyong ating mga questions.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). Thank you to the Honorable Castro.

What is the pleasure of the Majority Leader?

REP. SANGCOPAN. Mr. Speaker, may I move that we recognize Rep. Argel Cabatbat for his manifestation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). The Representative from the MAGSASAKA Party-List is recognized.

Please proceed.

REP. CABATBAT. Mr. Speaker, there being no other member of the Minority who wishes to interpellate on the proposed budget of the DPWH and its attached agencies, I move to terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the proposed budget of the DPWH and its attached agencies.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). Majority Leader.

REP. SANGCOPAN. Mr. Speaker, on the part of the Majority, we join the Minority in the motion to terminate the interpellation on the proposed budget of the Department of Public Works and Highways (and its attached agencies).

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). Are there any objections? (*Silence*) Hearing none, the motion is approved.

Thank you to Secretary Villar and to the DPWH family. (*Applause*) Congratulations.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). The session is suspended.

It was 4:01 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 4:08 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). The session is resumed.

Majority Leader.

REP. COLLANTES. Mr. Speaker, I move that we acknowledge the presence of the heads and officials from the Commission on Higher

Education, namely: Commissioner Dr. Aldrin Darilag; Atty. Ryan Estevez as the Executive Director, UNIFAST; Atty. Lily Freida Milla, Deputy Executive Director; and Atty. Septon De la Cruz, Director IV, AFMS.

From the Philippine Association of State Universities and Colleges: Dr. Tirso A. Ronquillo, PASUC President; Ms. Maria Gracia Cunanan, Executive Assistant; and Mr. Ruel Remoroza, Administrative Assistant.

From the University of the Philippines System: PGH Director Gerardo Legaspi and UPM Chancellor Padilla.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). The Commission on Higher Education family is welcome to the House of Representatives. Likewise, the representatives from the various state universities and colleges and organizations, welcome.

Majority Leader.

COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

REP. COLLANTES. Mr. Speaker, I move that we proceed with the interpellations on the proposed budget of the Commission on Higher Education, and the state universities and colleges.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). Are there any objections? (*Silence*) Hearing none, the motion is carried.

Majority Leader.

REP. COLLANTES. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Rep. Bingo Matugas, Rep. Paul Daza and Rep. Ed Christopher Go, Vice Chairpersons of the Committee on Appropriations, to answer questions on the proposed budget of the said departments.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). The Honorable Matugas, Honorable Daza, Honorable Go and the rest of our Appro Vice Chairs are recognized. Honorable Matugas, you may proceed.

SPONSORSHIP REMARKS
OF REP. MATUGAS

REP. MATUGAS. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May I present the budget of CHED the amount of P52.6 billion for 2022. This budget is higher than last year's budget by P766 million, Mr. Speaker, and we are now ready to receive interpellation from our colleagues, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). Thank you.

Majority Leader.

REP. COLLANTES. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Rep. France Castro of the ACT TEACHERS Party-List to interpellate the Sponsor on the proposed budget of the said Department.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, with the indulgence of the Majority Leader, may I be recognized just for a short sponsorship message.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). Please, Honorable Daza, please go ahead.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF REP. DAZA

REP. DAZA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is my honor, along with my Vice Chair, Cong. Christopher Go, to sponsor the budget of the 114 state universities and colleges totaling at P71 billion proposed expenditure program for 2022.

Allow me to welcome and also express my gratitude to all the state universities and colleges, the Presidents and all the officials, all the Board of Regents, and the President of PASUC who is here with us this afternoon, and my special greetings to the University of Eastern Philippines, to my President, Dr. Cherry Ultra.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and we are now prepared for any interpellation. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). Thank you to the honorable Vice Chair

and once again, welcome to the House of Representatives, to all our guests and our representatives.

We will now call on the honorable Representative of the ACT TEACHERS Party-List once again. Honorable Castro you may have the floor.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Magandang hapon po sa ating lahat sa pamilya ng CHED at saka sa atin pong mga bumubuo ng SUCs at sa ating mga colleague at iyong atin pong mga Sponsor. This is just a follow-up, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, doon po sa document na hiningi ng Kinatawang ito sa CHED regarding the guidelines on the implementation of NBC 461 Cycle 8. I would like to express my appreciation and thank you sa CHED dahil natanggap ko na po iyong draft na guidelines for the implementation of NBC 461, Cycle 8.

Napansin ko lang, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, draft lang ito. May I know from the CHED, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, when will this be finalized at kailan po ito ma-i-implement? Anong period po ito mag-i-implement just in case? Kasi mangangahulugan din, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, ng funding po, na kailangan nating pondohan ito, itong guidelines na ito. Parang long overdue na po itong guidelines na ito dahil inaantay na po ito noong ating mga faculty, teachers po sa SUC.

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, firstly, na-email na po iyong draft sa inyo but hindi pa siya final because it is still undergoing consultation, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, parang same-same lang iyong sagot, parang ganon din iyong sagot noong mga nakaraang panahon, kahit sa committee level. Na-appreciate ko nga po itong draft, so ano pa po ba ang kulang at puwede ninyo po ba ako mabigyan ng time frame para ma-finalize ito? Kagaya nga ng sinabi ko, kailangan natin itong pondohan, hindi lang naman iyong guidelines ang mahalaga po sa atin, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, mahalaga din po na ma-implement

na ito dahil kagaya nga ng sinasabi ko po, long overdue na ito, 2016 pa yata, dapat ay ma-implement na itong guidelines na ito at mag-a-apply itong ginawang guidelines.

So hindi po ba masyadong ano, kung baga, manghilingi po ako ng timeframe to finalize the draft guidelines po.

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, ang timeline po ng CHED is hindi po matatapos ang taon na ito ay mafa-finalize na po nila, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay po. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, itong taon na ito, so tapos na rin po iyong budget deliberation natin para dito sa guidelines na ito. Tama po ba? Alam naman po iyan ng CHED e, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. Alam iyan ng CHED na matagal na itong due para doon sa ating mga teachers, professors, iyong iba nga nag-retire na hindi na napakinabangan pa itong ano na ito. Masyado po yatang—mahirap ba na magbigay urgently dahil may draft naman na kayo? Ano po ba iyong concern doon sa consultation pa, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, iyong paggawa ng draft ay kasama po sa consultation ng mga SUC president natin. Actually, iyong end of the year po na timeline ay iyan na po iyong pinakamatagal, but they will do their best na mabilis po matapos or ma-finalize itong guidelines na ito, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. Dahil mukhang hanggang bago mag-end ng year na ito, ibig sabihin po iyong pagba-budget nito ay sa next year pa, so ganoon pa ang hihintayin pa nung ating mga teachers po sa SUCs and other colleges. Although kasama po ang PASUC dito, marami rin po talagang mga teachers natin iyong mga nagtatanong na, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

So anyway, can the honorable Sponsor provide me with support para makuha na natin iyong final nito before the end of the year, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Your Honor.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Can we have the commitment?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, ipa-follow up ko iyong ano, itong pag-finalize ng guidelines, hopefully before po papasok ang last quarter of the year, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Yes, yes, I am relieved by that answer, Mr. Speaker, by our honorable Sponsor.

Next po, doon po sa—kayo na rin po ba SUC po? May concern po ako doon sa budget po ng PNU, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

Okay. Thank you po, Your Honor. May tanong lang po ako dito doon sa budget ng Philippine Normal University. Hindi n'yo po natatanong, ako po ay graduate ng Philippine Normal University at very concerned po ako siyempre sa aking mother school. Dito po sa budget nila, nalulungkot ako at nabawasan po iyong budget nila from the 2021 GAA ng more than 2.74 percent, and that is P23,140,000. Nangangailangan pa nga po sana ang PNU ng additional na budget dahil po doon sa pagpapaunlad nila ng mga infrastructure para sa building noong Center of Excellence sa teaching. So puwede po bang malaman sa ating Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, iyong epekto nito? Bakit nabawasan po at ano ang magiging epekto nito sa PNU?

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, first of all, allow me to say that magagaling po iyong graduate ng PNU and we appreciate the question because ang nangyari po, for many, if not most of these state universities and colleges, talaga pong nabawasan; hindi po nag-iisa ang PNU. But should the Lady from the ACT TEACHERS have any recommendation, we are open to receiving her suggestions on the possible augmentation for that particular university.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, for that reassuring answer. I believe talaga naman pong sa pag-aaral natin, hindi lang po PNU, kaya nga lang

nabanggit ko itong PNU dahil mayroon po itong — malapit po sa puso ko ang PNU. But anyway, magpe-present po ako in due time noong amendments natin para ma-restore itong budget ng PNU. Siyempre po, alam ninyo po, habang binabawasan po natin iyong budget ng mga SUC at saka ng iba pang mga eskuwelahan na talagang pinopondohan natin due to the universal, hindi ba, free education for our tertiary education students, bumababa rin po iyong access sa pag-aaral ng tertiary. Kaya mahalaga po na magtulong po tayo para ma-restore po iyong mga budget and in due time, ang Representasyon pong ito ay magpa-file ng amendments para madagdagan po partikular iyong budget po ng Philippine Normal University.

Last question ko na lang po ito, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. Medyo may nag-text lang tungkol doon sa access natin sa mga universities, iyong mga state colleges and universities, dahil bagama't sinasabi doon sa briefing ng CHED na tumaas iyong percentages ng access o iyong mga enrollment sa SUCs as compared doon sa private na mga schools, tumaas po iyong enrollment pero may problema pa rin talaga sa access dahil isa po sa nakaka-hinder yata ay iyong quota na inilalagay ng mga eskuwelahan na nagpi-prevent doon sa ating mga poor students na maka-access.

So hindi po ba ang spirit natin dito ay universal access talaga doon at hindi dapat sagka itong mga ginagawang mga entrance test para po maka-ano — kasi talong-talo po talaga iyong mga public school students natin in terms of iyong talagang quality ng education, talong-talo sila daw ng mga, ibig sabihin natin, iyong mas mayaman or middle class na talagang kumpleto talaga doon sa pangangailangan sa pag-aaral. Ano po ba ang masasabi dito ng ating Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, para mas mapa-strengthen po natin iyong access pa rin sa mga SUCs natin?

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, in a perfect world, i-accept po natin lahat pero ang problema ho talaga, mayroon tayong tinatawag na absorptive capacity and if we over accept then it affects the quality of education, the quality of life in a university. But I think the

state universities and colleges, overall, are doing a fairly good job in accepting, and in fact, as mentioned, the enrollment in the SUCs have been better and less affected by the pandemic compared to the private colleges and universities.

But again, that is a function of augmenting the budget of these universities and if my esteemed colleague will support moves to augment the budget of some of these SUCs then we can increase the acceptance rates.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

Alam ko po may mga colleges din and universities na medyo naging lenient din siya doon sa pagbibigay ng entrance exam. Na-monitor ko may mga eskuwelahan din naman na hindi na rin nag-aano ng entrance exam para sa access noong ating education sa tertiary. So, puwede po ba sa panahon ng pandemya ay ma-get rid ito po sa ilang mga o sa lahat ng mga eskuwelahan, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor?

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, almost all the state universities did not implement an admissions test. Ang pinagbasehan po were the high school grades, an adjustment for the pandemic and as a way to help the graduates and the families.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you po, Mr. Speaker. So, Your Honor, sinasabi ninyo ba na lahat na ng school ay hindi na talaga gumamit noong entrance exam sa last academic year?

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, I have been advised that of the 114 SUCs, if not all, almost all, did not use admissions examinations. With the indulgence of the Lady from ACT TEACHERS, we can give — we can provide a more detailed response, a written report, on this particular concern.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Thank you, Your Honor and Mr. Speaker. Ma-appreciate ko po iyon kung mayroon pong ibibigay na written report ang SUCs at saka iyong CHED kaugnay niyan po.

Iyan lang po, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. Maraming salamat po sa pagsagot sa aking mga tanong. Thank you po.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). Maraming salamat to the Honorable Castro. Majority Leader.

REP. SANGCOPAN. Mr. Speaker, next to interpellate the Sponsor is Rep. Jericho Jonas Nograles from the Party-List PBA.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). Representing the...

REP. SANGCOPAN. May we recognize ...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). ... Majority bloc, the Honorable Nograles is recognized.

REP. NOGRALES (J.B.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the honorable Sponsor yield to a few questions regarding the Sulu State College?

REP. DAZA. My honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. NOGRALES (J.B.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this Representation was surprised to see that the Sulu State College was appropriated a zero budget in next year's Appropriations Law. Will the Good Sponsor please explain the reasons why a state college such as the Sulu State College was given a zero appropriation, Mr. Speaker?

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, for the record, and for transparency and to be consistent with the concern of our esteemed colleague, the Honorable Nograles, there were four SUCs that received no budget in the National Expenditure Program for 2022. We are equally disturbed, all three Vice Chairs who are here, Cong. Bingo Matugas, Cong. Christopher Go. Our understanding is that the DBM interpretation of the BARMM Law is that all financial subsidy appropriations for these four SUCs in the BARMM will be shouldered by the BARMM Block Grant. That is the rationale of the

DBM in putting zero budget for these four state universities, including the Sulu State College.

REP. NOGRALES (J.B.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to confirm the information that was shared by the honorable Sponsor. In fact, the letter received by the Sulu State College from the Department of Budget and Management states as thus:

This is in connection with Section 16, Article IX of Republic Act No. 11054, which states that, any school, college or university existing in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region as of the effectivity of this Organic Law, and such other schools and institutions that may be established hereinafter shall be deemed integral components of the educational systems of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region, and shall be governed by their respective charters.

As such, may we inform that the national government will no longer be providing funds for the operations of the Sulu State College; starting Fiscal Year 2022 since this will already be under the jurisdiction of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

This is a very perilous letter considering that while the provisions of the Organic Law are cited, these provisions are not yet ripe for implementation, Mr. Speaker. In fact, this Representation received a letter from the Sulu State College stating that there is no assurance that the Sulu State College is included in the budget of the BARMM.

With that, Mr. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, the 228 faculty members, the 135 personnel and more than 5,000 students of the Sulu State College are in danger of losing their education or their chance for a better tomorrow, especially under this pandemic.

I would like to manifest and express that this Congress cannot pass a General Appropriations Bill without giving a sufficient budget to one of the top priorities of the Duterte government, which is education.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, I would like to manifest my full

support for the reinstatement of the budget of the Sulu State College, specifically P146,232,476 for Personnel Services; P83,165,600 for MOOE under the Regular Agency Budget and P280 million for Capital Outlay, for a total agency budget of P509,398,076 for Fiscal Year 2022.

I also want to manifest that these figures, this budget, shall be taken from any appropriate fund as may be deemed necessary by our august Chamber.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, distinguished Sponsor.

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, for the record, because we know that many Members are equally concerned with this particular issue, we appreciate the Gentleman from PBA putting this on record and bringing this up. No less than three Vice Chairs of the Committee on Appropriations have been working on this particular concern—Vice Chair Bingo Matugas has spoken to the Speaker, this Representation and Vice Chair Christopher Go have spoken to CHED's Popoy de Vera and Usec. Ryan Estevez, and the President of the Philippine Association of State Universities and Colleges, Dr. Tirso Ronquillo. I spoke to Secretary Galvez who has assured me that there will be—that there have been meetings on this particular issue and I assure everyone that this House prioritizes education. We support the program for the state universities and colleges and we assure you, these thousands of students and faculty members, their concerns will be addressed and we agree that this should be addressed before it even gets to the Bicam.

So, thank you for noting that, Mr. Speaker, and we appreciate the concern of the honorable Gentleman from PBA.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). Thank you, Vice Chair, and thank you to the honorable Congressman Nograles.

Majority Leader.

REP. SANGCOPAN. Mr. Speaker, next to interpellate the Sponsor, I move that we recognize Rep. Gabriel Bordado from the Third District of Camarines Sur.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). Representing the Minority bloc, we now call on—Honorable Bordado or Brosas?

REP. BORDADO. Representative Bordado, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). Apologies. We call on Representative Bordado via Zoom.

REP. BORDADO. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, thank you. And thank you to the Mme. Majority Floor Leader.

A pleasant afternoon to the SUC Presidents and to the CHED Chairman.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, I have this affinity with the state universities and colleges. I studied in a state university, and my wife was the former president of a state university, the Central Bicol State University of Agriculture, here in Pili, Camarines Sur.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, I got report a few days before the start of this Plenary budget hearing that there were a lot of state universities and colleges without any MOOE or Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses. Is this true, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, my greetings to the honorable Gentleman from Camarines Sur.

I believe what he is referring to is the Capital Outlays of 36 SUCs, of the 114, that have zero Capital Outlay allocation, not MOOE.

REP. BORDADO. So, that is confirmed that the SUCs do not have Capital Outlays, and not MOOEs. What is the reason for this cut in the Capital Outlays?

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, to give a better picture, the 36 represent about one-third of all state universities and colleges. The DBM, in its own wisdom, because of utilization rates, oftentimes will not provide Capital Outlay for certain universities that are very slow in implementing projects. I suspect many of them received Capital Outlays in 2021 and they still

have large portions of these funds remaining unutilized. That is the main reason, I believe, that the DBM has opted not to give some of these universities their Capital Outlay.

REP. BORDADO. So, in other words, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, we are not sure of the reason for the cut in the Capital Outlays.

REP. DAZA. We are fairly sure, Mr. Speaker. But I would suggest to my distinguished colleague, let us focus on which particular SUC because they all have different situations. But in general, the DBM did not allocate because of low utilization rates.

REP. BORDADO. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, do you not think that the absence of Capital Outlays will directly affect the performance of the SUCs?

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, could I request my colleague to repeat the question please.

REP. BORDADO. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, with the absence of Capital Outlays, do you not think that this can affect the performance of the state universities and colleges?

REP. DAZA. Yes, Mr. Speaker. But then again, giving them appropriations also depends on their performance in utilizing and implementing their proposed Capital Outlay projects.

REP. BORDADO. Okay. So, how can we be sure that this will really happen, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, if I understood the question correctly, I think we should, well, with the help of CHED and PASUC here, many of these state universities and colleges, still have remaining funds from 2021. We need to push them to hurry up the implementation of their projects.

Should there be a specific state university that, for example, received no Capital Outlay this year, 2021, and they have proposed projects for 2022, then maybe can take a specific

look at that particular state university. This Representation is willing to do that along with the Committee on Appropriations. Should the honorable Gentleman from Camarines Sur have any specific concerns for a certain state university, we would be more than happy to take a look at that particular SUC. And should the Gentleman have any request to sponsor any project for that SUC, we would be more than happy to receive your proposal.

REP. BORDADO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor.

In your discussion with Congresswoman Castro, there was this mention of the drastic cuts in the budgets of the state universities and colleges. What specific programs of the SUCs will be impacted by these budget cuts, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. DAZA. Mostly, Capital Outlays, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BORDADO. Will these cuts affect the support and financial assistance to students?

REP. DAZA. No, Mr. Speaker. The payroll services, the MOOE, are essentially at the level of 2021. We assure the Gentleman that the funding for free tuition and other financial assistance are intact within the CHED UniFAST.

So what is really affected will be the hard infrastructure, and to some extent, the Smart Campus project that we should really implement in all our state universities.

REP. BORDADO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor. President Rodrigo Duterte recently approved the pilot run of face-to-face classes in certain schools. Has the SUCs come up with a plan to consider face-to-face classes in the coming year?

REP. DAZA. Yes, Mr. Speaker. The SUCs are planning for that. In fact, many state universities have been retrofitting the classrooms and we will come up with a specific plan and guidelines and we should be able to implement face-to-face classes within or sometime – the target date will be the second semester of the 2021-2022 school year.

REP. BORDADO. And I understand that the necessary budgets have been allocated for this purpose, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. DAZA. There is sufficient budget, Your Honor, but we can always – it would be up to the state universities to realign within their own respective budgets.

REP. BORDADO. Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much, Mr. Sponsor.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). Thank you to the Honorable Bordado. Majority Leader.

REP. SANGCOPAN. Mr. Speaker, next to interpellate the Sponsor – I move that we recognize Rep. Mark Go from Baguio for a manifestation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). The honorable Representative of Baguio City is recognized via Zoom.

Honorable Go.

Nawala yata.

We can proceed with the – Majority Leader, we can proceed with the next interpellator.

REP. SANGCOPAN. Mr. Speaker, considering that Rep. Mark Go is not yet on Zoom, I move that we recognize Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate from the Party-List BAYAN MUNA to interpellate the Sponsor.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). The Representative of BAYAN MUNA Party-List is recognized.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Naririnig po ba ako sa Plenary?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). Loud and clear, Honorable ...

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just have a few questions doon po sa budget po ng UP System, if the good Sponsor may allow.

REP. DAZA. Good afternoon to the honorable interpellator.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor. Ang Philippine General Hospital po ay, ang budget niya ay nasa UP System. Tama po ba, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. DAZA. Tama po.

REP. ZARATE. Yes. May I continue now, good Sponsor.

May I know the total proposed budget of the Philippine General Hospital for the Fiscal Year 2022.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, can we request a few minutes' suspension of the session please.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). The session is suspended.

It was 4:49 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 4:53 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). The session is resumed.

What is the pleasure of the Gentleman?

REP. DAZA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If we – if I may respond?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). Please proceed.

REP. DAZA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The 2021 GAA for the entire UP System is around P21.5 billion, of which PGH's budget was P7.2 billion. The proposed National Expenditure Program for 2022 is about P21.3 billion, of which P5.8 billion is for PGH.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor, for that reply.

Indeed, sa GAA 2021, ang total budget ng PGH out of the total budget of the UP System

is P6.872 billion, of which P2.5 billion is for PS, P3.1 billion for MOOE and P1.2 billion is for Capital Outlay.

Now, for 2022, as also mentioned by the good Sponsor, bumagsak ito to P5.666 billion. At ang component nalang po nito, as followed ngayon sa NEP, ay P2.6 for PS, P3.025 for MOOE and zero for Capital Outlay.

Good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, hindi po ba ang PGH ay, lalong-lalo na ngayon sa panahon ng pandemya, ang PGH ang ating pangunahing pampublikong ospital na kung saan dinadala natin ang ating mga kababayan na tinamaan po nitong COVID-19. At nakakabahala po ito, dahil nga nitong mga nakaraang mga araw, napaulat, napabalita na marami nga sa ating mga health care workers, mga nurses at mga doktor, unang napaulat, nag-resign, but it was again reported that hindi na nila ni-renew iyong kanilang mga kontrata dahil napaka-overwhelmed na ng PGH. And here we are, in the middle of still battling this COVID-19 pandemic, at tinapyasan po ang budget ng PGH. Can we get a good and acceptable explanation from the good Sponsor kung bakit po ganito ang nangyayari?

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, sang-ayon po ako doon sa sinabi ng colleague po natin. At importante talagang masuportahan po iyong premier hospital natin, the PGH. But allow me to assure my distinguished colleague, as pointed out accurately, the PS and the MOOE have remained the same as that of 2021. So palagay po natin, iyong services, the quality of services, from staffing to diagnostics to consumables, okay po tayo. Ang nabawasan po is iyong Capital Outlay for expansion, and for other big items, for the convenience of some of the employees—iyan po iyong nabawas.

So, with the help of my esteemed colleague, we can receive recommendations, suggestions, and the Committee on Appropriations is open to any improvements in the allocation of appropriations.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

We appreciate the openness of the good Sponsor na ma-restore at least to the same

level noong 2021 budget ng PGH. As admitted, this is our premier hospital, public hospital. At ang mga atin pong mga health workers diyan ay nagrereklamo nga, and I cannot understand na walang Capital Outlay na ang dami pa hong pangangailangan ng PGH. And PGH, can I just say, okay, we can accept we can do this without this Capital Outlay, and maghihintay na lang ulit kung biyayaan sila ng Malacañang mula sa mga disposable funds from Malacañang. And it behooves this Congress, in the exercise of our power of the purse, to do our share, to do our duty to fully fund this premier hospital, considering that we are battling a pandemic, that we are still in the middle of this pandemic. Siguro naman po nakita ng ating good Sponsor kung gaano kahaba ang pila diyan sa PGH ng ating mga mahihirap na kababayan.

In fact, during the surge of these COVID-19 cases ay talagang dumating po sa punto na huminto munang tumanggap ang ating PGH. Can you imagine if mabigyan sila ng Capital Outlay at makapagdagdag sila ng mga necessary rooms and wards para matugunan ang problemang ito? Hindi pa po natin nakikita kailan matatapos itong pandemic, and ito ang ginawa natin, binawasan ang budget. May we get a reply from the good Sponsor.

REP. DAZA. This Representation concurs with the honorable Gentleman from BAYAN MUNA. But to reiterate, ang nabawas po talaga dito sa budget ng PGH is iyong Capital Outlay.

REP. ZARATE. Yes, yes.

REP. DAZA. May mga items po diyan for equipment, nurses' housing.

So, if the honorable Gentleman is willing to sponsor some suggestions on augmentation, I personally would support that.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, good Sponsor. Then, we will gladly request the PGH to submit to this Representation as soon as possible the items that were covered by the Capital Outlays so that this good Representation can include these in the

proposed amendments that we will submit to the Committee on Appropriations for the proper action of the Committee as well as by this House.

May we get that assurance from the UP-PGH, good Sponsor, that they will submit the same as soon as possible?

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, I am with the Chancellor of the UP Manila, Chancellor Padilla. She assured me that she will coordinate with your office, Honorable Zarate. She sends her gratitude for your concern for the UP and the PGH and they will coordinate with your office.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, good Sponsor.

Now, I will go to another item. Is the representative of Kalinga State University, Isabela State University and Aklan State University in the plenary or in the Zoom or are there representatives present?

REP. DAZA. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we can proceed with the inquiry.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, good Sponsor.

Will the good Sponsor agree na ang mga pamantasan o ang mga eskuwelahan, these are safe spaces so that we can discuss ideas? Tama po ba iyon, good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. DAZA. I think, in general, I support that contention, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Yes.

In fact, it has been said that freedom of thought is, in fact, the cornerstone, the bedrock of academic freedom. Will you agree with that statement, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. DAZA. Having been a former student activist in my years, I agree with that 100 percent.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, good Sponsor.

Sinasabi nga nila sa mga pamantasan, sa mga unibersidad, let a thousand flowers blossom and let a thousand ideas contend. So, magkakaroon ng isang malayang talakayan.

Iyan ang assurance na ibinibigay sa atin ng pamantasan.

Kaya, good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, sa lahat ng mga usapin diyang sa pamantasan, positibo man iyan, negatibo, mula sa iba't ibang mga philosopher ay napag-aaralan diyang. Iyon iyong assurance natin kapag nasa isang pamantasan tayo, hindi lang iisang bahagi ang ating napag-aaralan kundi maraming mga ideya, maraming mga kaisipan at iyon ang nagpapatalas sa kaisipan din ng ating mga mag-aaral.

Kaya, nakakabahala po itong mga nangyaring mga development these past months, these past days dito po sa tatlong unibersidad na akin ngang nabanggit na itong Kalinga State University, Isabela State University and Aklan State University. Napabalita po na sa pagtutulak sa impluwensiya ng National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict ay mayroon pong mga aklat, mayroon pong reading materials that they withdrew from their libraries because these are subversive materials.

And, among these is, for example, a publication by the National Democratic Front of the Philippines on the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law.

And mind you, itong CAHR-IHL is an agreement signed by both the government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines. In fact, there were copies of this CAHR-IHL that were also published by the Armed Forces of the Philippines – by the Commission on Human Rights.

So, may we get the reaction from the good Sponsor on these kind of actions na ang mga pamantasan na dapat ay sila ay autonomous and independent sa dikta ng mga ahensiya ay ngayon po ay nadidiktahan halimbawa po nitong NTF-ELCAC, good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, we support the strong articulation of the Gentleman from BAYAN MUNA as to academic freedom, but the reality and the setup of our state universities and colleges, the power to determine which books are put in the library

and those used in courses is not a decision by the CHED nor its jurisdiction. This decision is made by the individual universities. So, should there be any particular concerns, issues on materials, kung ano po iyong dapat tanggalin o iiwan, nandiyan po iyan doon sa individual university. Hindi po puwedeng pakialaman po ng CHED. As we know, these SUCs are autonomous and independent, run by the Board of Regents, so doon talaga po dapat iyong usapin tungkol sa academic freedom and balancing kung ano po iyong mga materials na puwedeng tanggalin at puwedeng iwan.

REP. ZARATE. We understand that, good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker. That is precisely why earlier I inquired whether there are representatives from these three universities – state universities, from Kalinga State University, Isabela State University and Aklan State University. I, of course, know that the CHED cannot dictate on them, but I just want to inquire from these state universities the reason behind this at nakakabahala po ito. Anong klaseng pamantasang mayroon tayo na ang gusto nilang mapag-aralan lamang sa isang pamantasang ito ay isang ideya lamang, ‘no, iyong dinidikta ng NTF-ELCAC, iyong naratibo na whole-of-nation approach. That is not what a university is supposed to be. As I have said, a university should be open to all ideas and this will, in fact, help our students be creative, inquisitive and for the whole development of our students.

Nakakabahala po ito, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, dahil ang libraries are supposed to be safe spaces where we can learn just about anything without suppression. This is, in fact, a suppression of our freedom of thought dahil nililimitahan lang kung ano ang mapag-aralan natin sa mga unibersidad. And this Representation vehemently protests this kind of action by these universities. And possibly the Philippine Association of State Universities and Colleges can take a position on this when a task force can dictate on them. Sinabi ninyo autonomous sila, but here we are, they are being dictated by a task force on what books can only be found in a library.

Alam niyo po, good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker,

lahat naman – alam naman natin ito ang sinulat noon ni Jose Rizal na *Noli Me Tangere* at *El Filibusterismo* sa panahon ng kolonyalistang Espanyol, they were considered subversives, but now they are part of our libraries because we believe they are part of our nationhood. Iyong mga librong iyon ay nakatulong paanong naging isang republika ang ating bansa ngayon. Ang mga libro noon na nagsasabi na ang ating mga planeta ay umiikot sa araw ay sinabi nilang heretical noon sa mga unang panahon. But you can go to our library now and mababasa natin that our solar system is in fact, umiikot sa araw at ang hindi totoo ay flat ang ating mundo. So, ito iyong ideas na hindi dapat sinu-suppress. And again, that is – there is nothing wrong for example when a book which contains the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law is in our libraries, especially state-owned libraries.

So, again, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, it is very concerning that this happened – nangyari ito nitong mga nakaraang araw lang, Mr. Sponsor, and nangyari ito sa panahon pa na grabe ang mga revisionist narrative ngayon, especially kung ano ang nangyari sa panahon ng batas militar. Pilit binubura ang madilim na pahina ng ating kasaysayan kung saan nagkaroon ng malawakang paglabag sa karapatang pantao, nagkaroon ng pandarambong sa pondo ng ating bansa sa panahon ng batas militar. And we cannot just ignore this kind of thing na mga libro inaalis dahil kabahagi ito ng pagbubura ng kasaysayan. Revisionism is now on – is now in amok, nagwawala itong rebisyonismo na gustong walisin iyong mga pinaglalaman ng ating mga mamamayan.

So, again, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, I am strongly registering this strong statement against these moves by these three universities and I urge the other universities – state universities and their association to dissociate themselves from this kind of action. This certainly is an affront to freedom of thought and even free speech and academic freedom, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, we appreciate those thoughts and comments from the

Gentleman. The President of the PASUC has offered his office to facilitate a multisectoral discussion with these three universities, which I think should include the Honorable Zarate and/or his representatives. I hope—the Committee on Appropriations has limited jurisdiction and scope as to this particular concern. I think, if I may suggest, no less than the President is here who has offered to initiate these talks. Would the Gentleman be interested in the offer of the PASUC and President Dr. Tirso Ronquillo?

REP. ZARATE. Certainly, Mr. Sponsor, we appreciate the gesture of Dr. Ronquillo, so that this matter will be addressed also by their association. And in the coming days, we hope to get in touch with Dr. Ronquillo and have a discussion on this matter. So, doon—iyon na lang po ang aking mga katanungan, good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker. And again, may I appreciate, may I express my appreciation to the PASUC led by Dr. Ronquillo on taking on this issue.

But before I may end, Mr. Good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, ay nakikita ko kasi sa ating screen ngayon apat lang ang nakabukas na video, 'no, and I would like to personally greet the Chair—o lima na, anim na—to greet the Chair of the Committee on Higher Education a very happy birthday, Rep. Mark Go, kahit na birthday niya ay active na active pa rin dito sa ating mga budget deliberation.

So, iyon lang po. Muli, Mr. Speaker, and good Sponsor, maraming salamat po at magandang hapon sa ating lahat.

REP. DAZA. Thank you po.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). Thank you to the Honorable Zarate and I think next to speak is our birthday celebrant.

REP. SANGCOPAN. Yes, Mr. Speaker, I move that we now recognize the Chair of the Committee on Higher and Technical Education for his manifestation, Rep. Mark Go of Baguio City.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). So before that, we would like to greet our

honorable Chairman a happy birthday. You may have the floor, honorable Chairman Mark Go.

REP. GO (M.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Majority Floor Leader and our colleagues present today during this public hearing on the budget of the different departments. I would like to make some very short manifestations on the budget of the Commission on Higher Education and the various SUCs.

First of all, I would like to state that under the NEP appropriation for the CHED there was no allocation for the programs which are mandated by law to be implemented by the Commission on Higher Education and that includes the Doktor Para sa Bayan Act and the transnational laws. Likewise, the budget for the implementation of the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education and other important mandates of the CHED was also not sufficient and fully funded.

At the proper time, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, I would like to propose for additional appropriation for the CHED that would include the following: Seed Fund for Development of Medical Schools in SUCs, this includes the MOOE of about P1 billion; the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education, this is also MOOE of P5.5 billion; Medical Scholarship and Return Service, this is the Doktor Para sa Bayan, also MOOE ...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). I think nag-freeze si Cong. Mark Go.

REP. SANGCOPAN. Mr. Speaker, due to technical glitch, ...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). I guess we can call him again later.

REP. SANGCOPAN. I move that we proceed to the next interpellator to the Sponsor.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). Yes.

REP. SANGCOPAN. I move that we recognize Rep. Argel Joseph Cabatbat from Party-List MAGSASAKA.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). The honorable Representative of MAGSASAKA Party-List is recognized.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Would the good Sponsor yield to some of our questions, Mr. Speaker, for the state universities and colleges? Will the good Sponsor yield to some of our questions, Mr. Speaker?

REP. DAZA. It will be my honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The reason why I am standing here right now is to bring to your attention, Mr. Speaker, the issue between the Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology and the Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology National Multi-Purpose Cooperative. So, there appears to be an issue between the university and the cooperative.

For the information of this august House, Mr. Speaker, the Chancellor of the MSU-IIT is attempting to rescind its memorandum of agreement with the cooperative; the cooperative that was founded as early as 1978.

Mr. Speaker, due to the success of the cooperative, it expanded even beyond the university and now it prides itself for having around 115,000 members. Admittedly, Mr. Speaker, the members now cover outside of the university. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this success is now being used to destroy the cooperative. Kung baga, they are now becoming victims of their own success.

One of the reasons why we are being evicted from the building that they erected within the campus was because of the reason that they are catering to non-teachers or professors of the university. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, I just want a comment on that apparently unfounded, unreasonable, and patently illegal attempt to terminate the memorandum of agreement, a valid one, between the cooperative and the university.

Can I have a comment from the good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, no less than the Chairman of the Commission on Higher Education, Chairman De Vera, has already spoken to the Chancellor of the previously mentioned university, the MSU, and they have agreed to a status quo. Meaning, Mr. Speaker, our fear of an eviction or anything of that nature will not happen because they have agreed that there will be a dialogue and discussion, and I have also asked the President of the PASUC, Dr. Ronquillo, to coordinate with the office of the Gentleman from MAGSASAKA to intervene and come to a mutually acceptable solution.

So, we are assuring the honorable Gentleman that the cooperative will not be forced out of their premises until such time there is a dialogue with Your Honor, the PASUC, the cooperative, and the CHED along with the Chancellor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CABATBAT. With that assurance and commitment, Mr. Speaker, I have no further questions, just a manifestation that we should be cautious of coming up with such decisions hastily because it sends the wrong message that success stories are not to be celebrated, but instead sabotaged. Parang ganoon po kasi iyong dating sa akin e na ang ganda-ganda ng kooperatiba, dapat nga natin itong i-promote, at kung nakakatulong ito hindi lang sa mga miyembro doon sa MSU-IIT pati sa community ay dapat natin yatang i-promote ito imbes na parang sabotahihin.

So, anyway, I appreciate the commitment and the assurance. With that, Mr. Speaker, I have no further questions and good luck with your budget. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). Thank you to the...

REP. DAZA. Thank you to my distinguished colleague.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). Thank you to the Honorable Cabatbat. Majority Leader.

REP. SANGCOPAN. Mr. Speaker, the next to interpellate the Sponsor is the Hon. Mujiv Hataman from the Lone District of Basilan.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). The honorable Deputy Speaker Hataman is recognized via Zoom.

REP. HATAMAN. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, distinguished Sponsor, and magandang hapon po sa ating mga kasama sa plenaryo at nasa Zoom.

Mr. Speaker, my interpellation will be on the SUCs, state universities and colleges. Distinguished Sponsor, may I know how many SUCs in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao that are subsidized by the national government?

REP. DAZA. Could my esteemed colleague repeat what he had asked? I apologize. It echoed and I could not understand it.

REP. HATAMAN. Distinguished Sponsor, may I know how many SUCs are operating in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao?

REP. DAZA. There are four, Mr. Speaker.

REP. HATAMAN. There are four SUCs.

REP. DAZA. Yes.

REP. HATAMAN. And these are Tawi-Tawi Regional Agricultural College, Sulu State College, Adiong Memorial Polytechnic State College and Cotabato State University, right?

REP. DAZA. Yes, that is correct.

REP. HATAMAN. But the MSU is also operating in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, right?

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, the MSU is not in the BARMM.

REP. HATAMAN. No, Mr. Speaker, i-klaro ko lang ha. Ang tanong ko ho ay ganito, operating in the Bangsamoro Autonomous

Region, hindi supervised by the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region. Because the MSU is also operating in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region, likewise, the MSU-Tawi-Tawi and the MSU-Sulu, but they are not supervised by the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, may I request for a few minutes' suspension, please.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). The session is suspended.

It was 5:26 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:30 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). The session is resumed.

Honorable Daza.

REP. DAZA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Please allow me to respond to my esteemed colleague.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). Please go ahead.

REP. DAZA. I apologize to the interpellator on the delay of the response because there are quite a number of details. To provide a more comprehensive response and to give a better picture, Mindanao State University (Proper), MSU Tawi-Tawi, Basilan State College, and the University of Southern Mindanao have presence in BARMM but not all of them are within the BARMM area.

Whereas, because, just to facilitate the discussion, Tawi-Tawi Regional..., Sulu State College, Adiong Memorial Polytechnic State College, and Cotabato State University, the four SUCs that have no budget are all entirely in the BARMM region. Whereas the other one, like Mindanao State University, some parts are outside the BARMM region.

I hope my distinguished colleague is satisfied with that response.

REP. HATAMAN. Distinguished Sponsor, so in short, distinguished Sponsor, the very reason why we did not allocate funds for these four universities, I mean, four institutions is because they are operating in the ARMM, right—in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao?

REP. DAZA. Yes, because, mainly, all four are in the BARMM area.

But please allow me, Mr. Speaker, I was hoping that the discussion with the Honorable Nograles would have already satisfied the Honorable Hataman. We had indicated earlier that the Committee on Appropriations, with no less than three Vice Chairs—Congressman Matugas, Congressman Go, and myself have already taken up this particular issue on why the four state universities had zero budget in the NEP 2022.

Congressman Matugas has spoken to the Speaker on this particular issue. I, myself, have spoken to Secretary Galvez and to our CHED representatives and to the PASUC, and we are assuring the Gentleman that we will be finding solutions on how to restore, either partially or fully, the budget of these four state universities.

REP. HATAMAN. Thank you, distinguished Sponsor, for a very positive response. However, distinguished Sponsor, let me state it for the record, itong issue na ito ay very serious na usapan ho sa amin. Hindi puwede iyong sabihin lang natin, “we will find a solution.” Thank you for that, but for me that is not enough.

Kasi, alam mo, Mr. Sponsor, just for the record, sa totoo lang curious ako, ano’ng provision ng Bangsamoro Organic Law na ipinagbabawal ang national government to subsidize these four institutions, when in fact these four institutions were created prior to the creation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao?

Hindi ba parang, Mr. Speaker, the very essence of the creation of the BARMM dahil for the sake of peace in the region. And we all agree that education is the key to peace in the region also. So, really, distinguished Sponsor, kaya medyo curious ako, ano iyong

reason, kasi wala sa provision ng Bangsamoro Organic Law ang rason ng pagtanggap ng pondo sa apat na ito.

Kaya nga, kanina ho, itinatanong ko sa inyo, ang reason ba ay dahil operating sila within the BARMM? E, mayroon ding MSU na nag-o-operate sa BARMM. Mayroon din ba silang state college na nag-o-operate sa BARMM? Nagkataon lang iyong main address nila—in fact, ang MSU ang main headquarters nila is nasa Marawi, which is part ng BARMM.

So iyon lang, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, gusto nating malaman, for the record, ano iyong rason at ano ang probisyon ng Bangsamoro Organic Law na nagsasabi na dapat tanggalin ang pondo sa apat na institution na ito?

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, we are also serious about this problem.

So, I am personally assuring the Honorable Hataman, iyong problema po dito na sa apat na SUCs na zero ang budget, we will not defend the DBM. Hindi po tayo, hindi po ang Congress ang nag-zero, for the record, ang DBM po ang gumawa niyan. Kaya iyan po ang trabaho ng Committee on Appropriations, the three Vice Chairs who are here, narinig po namin kayo, and I am assuring you, personally, magkaibigan po tayo, hahanapan po natin ng solusyon iyan. Kami po rito, hindi po rin kami papayag na isi-zero iyong apat na universities.

So, as I have mentioned earlier, there has already been a discussion with the Speaker, there has been a discussion with the DBM, with the CHED and the OPAPP Secretary Galvez who has some involvement with the BARMM, so, aayusin po natin iyan. Hindi ko lang po puwedeng sabihin kung ano iyong eksaktong solusyon dito, ayaw ko pong i-pre-empt si Speaker, si Chairman Eric Yap, and Vice Chair. But, para maniwala po kayo before the Plenary debate on the SUCs, I was on the phone for no less than one hour with various officials para po mahanapan ng solusyon itong problema na ito. I agree with you, to my distinguished colleague, hindi po lip service, talagang gagawan po natin ito ng solusyon.

May I request, Mr. Speaker, ...

REP. HATAMAN. Mr. Speaker.

REP. DAZA. Para po ma-satisfy iyong colleague po natin, Vice Chair Bingo Matugas, I would like to also have him respond to the concerns.

REP. MATUGAS. Thank you, thank you, co-Chair, co-Sponsor.

Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, with regard to the issue na it was raised to me by Chair Popoy around three days ago, I immediately brought the matter to the attention of the Speaker. Ang issue now is actually iyong, you were asking kung ano iyong reason. Iyong CHED po or the SUCs cannot answer ano po iyong reason because the one who allocated zero is the DBM. Siguro iyong proper forum for that, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, is when we tackle again the DBM on September 30. You can ask the DBM, specifically, what is the basis of giving a zero budget (*inaudible*).

REP. HATAMAN. Mr. Speaker, wala bang taga-DBM na nandiyan? Kasi gusto lang—just for the record, Mr. Speaker. Kasi, nagtataka lang din ako, ang BARMM creation was in 2019, okay. Sa 2020, may mga budget pa rin iyong mga institution na iyan. In 2021, mayroon din. Nagtataka lang ako pagdating ng 2022 ay biglang nawala.

Alam mo, Mr. Speaker, just for the education and information of our distinguished colleagues, sa provision ng Bangsamoro Organic Law, may tinatawag silang “intergovernmental body.” In fact, kakausap ko kay Chair Popoy De Vera at tinanong ko rin, even si Chairman Iqbal, I mean iyong Chair ng IGRB, and at the same time, he is the Chief Minister for MBHT for education, Higher Education, tumawag din sa akin kasi hindi ito napag-usapan sa IGRB. Kumbaga, walang—ang process noong devolution, pati transfer of power and authority from national government to the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region, mayroon silang mechanism, at ang mechanism na ito ay iyong IGRB. Kaya, gusto kong malaman from the DBM kung mayroon na bang recommendation ang IGRB na dapat nang tanggalin ang budget na iyan for 2022.

Kasi, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, would you imagine apat na institution, more or less nasa P700 million iyan. Ilang mga empleyado, ilang mga estudyante ang hindi makakapag-aral dahil walang pondo at magsasara iyan.

In fact, kausap ko lang si Minister Iqbal kanina at ang sinasabi nyang problema nila ngayon tapos na ang proseso sa BARMM. Hindi na rin nila iyan malalagyan ng pondo.

Kaya, di sana kung pinag-usapan ito sa IGRB, hindi tayo, I mean sila-sila mismo nag-agree kung sa BARMM ba ito. E ngayon ang nangyayari distinguished Sponsor, nagkaroon ng assumption iyong DBCC at DBM, hindi, tapos na iyan. Interpretation lang nila iyon ng batas, walang sinasabi ang batas na dapat tanggalan ng budget dahil nasa supervision na nga ng BARMM.

Walang ganoon sa loob ng Bangsamoro Organic Law. Kaya iyon ‘yung gusto kong mayroong direct answer from the Department of Budget and Management, baka mayroon diyan, ano iyong pinaka-reason nila, or else, distinguished Sponsor, i-defer natin ang consideration dito. Hanapan natin ng solusyon, then ibalik natin, pag-usapan sa September 30.

Kasi mahirap ito. Halimbawa, katulad naming mga Bangsamoro legislator, payagan namin ito na pumasa at i-consider natin ito, mayroong ganyang problema at mayroon kayong commitment pero at the end of the day hindi tayo ang may say dito.

Tama iyan, we have the power of the purse pero ang totoo niyan nasa Executive at DBCC pa rin ang usapin na iyan. Kaya ako, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, baka puwede natin i-defer iyong consideration and at the same time, mag-meeting ang DBM pati IGRB, pag-usapan nila ito at kung ano iyong magiging solution nila tanggapin natin.

Pero at this point in time, na wala iyong ganoong concrete solution, hindi rin po ako, ako, to be honest, hindi rin po ako makakapayag na i-terminate natin ang consideration na mayroong ganyang hanging na problema ng aapat na institusyon sa loob ng Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, kami pong tatlo na Vice Chair ng CHED and SUCs, we agree and we join you. In fact, noong nalaman ko personally iyong situation, I immediately went to the Speaker to make sure na mayroon talagang budget dapat for this coming 2022.

In fact, the Speaker, nag-commit siya ng budget. Siguro, I do not know if full ang maibigay, but he committed already na magkakaroon ng budget ang apat na SUCs. But, iyong first of the problem is actually talaga DBM ...

REP. HATAMAN. Hindi.

REP. MATUGAS. ...which is beyond our scope, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. HATAMAN. Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, actually wala tayong problema sa Kongreso, walang problema sa CHED, walang problema kay Speaker. In fact, sumulat din kami kay Speaker, sa Committee on Appro, sumulat din kami sa DBM, iyong ilang Muslim legislators, purposely to address this problem.

Pero, kaya ang sinasabi ko dahil DBM and puwedeng magbigay ng solusyon dito, hindi ito about CHED, hindi ito about Congress. This is about the allocation of the four institutions which will affect the future of the young generations of the Bangsamoro.

Parang ninakaw natin sa kanila ang kinabukasan nila. Tinanggal natin *motu proprio* ang pondo, tinanggal ng DBM. Kaya, Mr. Speaker, ako nagmumungkahi ako baka puwede nating i-defer, ipatawag natin ang DBM, maupo tayo bukas, then i-consider natin ulit bukas iyong budget na ito.

Or else, kawawa kami rito, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, in my humble opinion, I think it is unfair to move to defer the budget of the CHED and the SUCs considering that wala po silang kinalaman sa problem na nangyari. If you, if I may, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, we will refer this matter to the DBM because the budget of the DBM is still deferred and they will be – their schedule will be on September 30. So, if, ...

REP. HATAMAN. Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, actually nakikiusap na ho ako para lang mapag-usapan natin. Anyway, hindi naman disapproval iyon. Kahit bukas puwede nating i-terminate pero dapat me klarong sagot tayo.

Mananagot din ho kami e. Tinerminate natin, may ganitong problema. Tapos hindi rin alam ng CHED kung ano iyong rason, ang sinasabi BARMM lang.

Kaya nga ang tanong ko ngayon, saang provision ng Bangsamoro Organic Law na sinasabing bawal i-subsidize iyong mga institution na iyan dahil under sila ng supervision ng Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao?

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, to respond, again, for the record we are not defending the DBM. But, there is a language in the BARMM Law, that indicated that state universities existing and new ones – had some language that these will be taken over, funded under the BARMM.

REP. HATAMAN. No, no. Mr. Speaker, there is no provision or words in Section 16, Article IX about funding. This is more on – about transfer of supervision.

REP. DAZA. Again, as I mentioned, we are not defending the DBM, but there is a Section 16 on Education and as we shared it with the honorable Gentleman, that we surmise that this Section 16 on Education was what the DBM had used.

Again, for the record, we do not support that and we do not agree with that, but just for the sake of discussion and for the record, we believe, and the officials here believe that was the section that they had used to justify putting in a zero budget in these four universities.

But, again, as I mentioned to the honorable Deputy Speaker, Congressman Matugas had spoken to the Speaker about this. I had spoken to Secretary Galvez who assured me that this will be discussed with Malacañang, and that is why we are assuring, Mr. Speaker, our distinguished colleague, that this will be resolved. This will be resolved. I think it

would be unfair to delay the CHED and the other 110 state universities and colleges of their budget.

So, would the Honorable ...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). I believe, we need a few minutes ...

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). ... to iron this out. What is the pleasure of the Majority Leader?

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. ROMUALDO. Yes, Mr. Speaker, with the indulgence of the Deputy Speaker Mujiv and our distinguished Sponsors, to allow us to address these concerns, I move that we suspend the session for a few minutes.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). The session is suspended.

It was 5:47 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:52 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). The session is resumed.
Majority Leader.

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, Deputy Speaker Hataman and the Sponsors have agreed to address the issues in the meantime, and so, noting also that he has consumed – Deputy Speaker Hataman has consumed 20 minutes and he still has 10 minutes of his time, which we will allow him to avail of later on. We move to continue with the next of our colleagues in the list of interpellators. I move that we recognize Rep. Sergio Dagooc of Party-List APEC to interpellate our Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). The good Representative of the APEC Party-

List is recognized. Congressman Dagooc? The Hon. Sergio Dagooc, are you present?

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). Majority Leader.

REP. ROMUALDO. Yes, Mr. Speaker, it would appear that Representative Dagooc is not yet available on Zoom, so, I move instead that we recognize, again, Rep. Mark Go to continue with his manifestation which was cut short earlier.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). Yes, once again, Chairman Mark Go is recognized via Zoom.

REP. GO (M.). Yes, Mr. Speaker, Majority Floor Leader. I would like to reiterate my manifestation on the 2022 budget of the SUCs contained in the NEP. As I stated, it is lower by P14.757 billion when compared with the Fiscal Year 2021 GAA budget. Such amount is only 38.53 percent of the proposed budget of the SUCs amounting to P184.8 billion. Upon review of the SUCs' budget, there were SUCs with zero or significantly reduced Capital Outlays, even their MOOEs suffered cut, with its total appropriation reduced by 6 percent.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that this would be detrimental to the operation of the SUCs which may affect the quality, relevance and responsiveness of the 114 SUCs in the country.

At the proper time, Your Honor, I would like to – I will propose for the additional budget on priority programs of the SUCs for Fiscal Year 2022. Mr. Speaker, this would include the following, of course, number one on the list is the appropriation of the four SUCs located in the BARMM, with a total proposed budget of P911 million. This is a very important addition to the current proposed budget of 2022.

I have talked with the Department of Budget and Management, and they said they have already submitted the NEP, and it is up to us to decide whether we would like to include this P911 million for the four SUCs in the BARMM. So, the solution to the problem is not left with the Department of Budget and

Management now, but it will be dependent on us. Probably, before we even submit our proposed budget to the Senate, we should already include the P911 million budget for the four SUCs located in the BARMM.

The second item is the Capital Outlays for priority programs and projects of the SUCs with a total amount of P11.68 billion. This is critically important in ensuring that the SUCs are consistently building their capacities, considering the demands of the new normal in higher education.

Number three, Mr. Speaker, this is the implementation of the NBC 461 for Fiscal Year 2022, that would require an additional funding of P10.6 billion, P4.6 billion for Cycle 8, or cut off of 2016 to 2019; and P6 billion for Cycle 9, or cut off of 2019 to 2022. It is worth emphasizing that NBC 461 was last implemented for cut off period June 30, 2016.

Extra special provision authorizing the SUCs to pay a more reasonable amount on specific and other purposes considering the limited Internet allowance provided by the DBM for faculty and staff in the amount of P300 per month. This special provision shall read as follows: "Cash allowance to faculty and staff—the amount appropriated herein for the MOOE shall be made available for use in the payment of P12,000 per faculty and P6,000 for nonteaching staff of every year for the purchase of teaching supplies and other materials for Internet and other communication expenses and for annual medical examination expense."

Mr. Speaker, I believe that this important additional budget for the SUCs for Fiscal Year 2022 should be addressed this coming September 30, before we even finalize our budget.

Again, thank you very much. And we will make the necessary motion on this during the appropriate time as indicated earlier. Again, thank you very much, and good afternoon.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian).
Thank you to our birthday celebrant.

Majority Leader.

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, we move again for the recognition of Rep. Sergio Dagooc of Party-List APEC.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian).
The distinguished Representative of APEC Party-List is recognized.

Can you hear us, Sir?

REP. DAGOOC. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
Good evening everyone, to my colleagues in the plenary.

I have only one issue, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, with MSU-IIT.

This is regarding, Mr. Speaker, with the other plan to stop the cooperative there—to occupy—the area that they are presently occupying. Distinguished Sponsor, can we get a comment from the Chancellor of the MSU-IIT?

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, we thank our esteemed colleague for bringing this up again. The CHED Chairman Popoy de Vera has spoken to the Chancellor of the MSU. They have agreed that—of status quo, meaning, there will not be any eviction. There will be a dialogue between the stakeholders, the Coop, the PASUC, the Board, the CHED, and the Chancellor. And, should my honorable colleague be interested in participating, the CHED and the PASUC can invite him, along with the honorable Gentleman from MAGSASAKA, Honorable Cabatbat.

So, we are assuring the Gentleman that the Coop will stay and there will be a dialogue with the stakeholders before any action will be taken.

REP. DAGOOC. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
Thank you, distinguished Sponsor.

My apologies, that I failed to hear the interpellation of my colleague because I am also attending to other meetings so, my apologies. I really appreciate, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, the gesture of the MSU-IIT on the matter.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker,
distinguished Sponsor.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian).
Thank you to the Honorable Dagooc.
Majority Leader.

REP. SANGCOPAN. Mr. Speaker, may

we recognize again Deputy Speaker Mujiv S. Hataman, Representative of the Lone District of Basilan for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). The honorable Deputy Speaker is recognized.

REP. HATAMAN. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, distinguished colleagues.

Just for the record, distinguished Sponsor, I did not move for – I mean, I was suggesting deferment, purposely, to call for a special meeting among stakeholders especially the BARMM government and the IGRB. However, Mr. Speaker, due to time constraints, I will just make a quick manifestation, if the distinguished Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, will allow me to do so?

REP. DAZA. Yes, Mr. Speaker, I yield to the Deputy Speaker.

REP. HATAMAN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to explicitly express in this Chamber that the Adiong Memorial Polytechnic State College, Cotabato State University, Sulu State College and Tawi-Tawi Regional Agricultural College are the SUCs in the Bangsamoro Region subsidized by our national government even long before the BARMM came to be.

Third paragraph of Section 16, Article IX of the Republic Act No. 11054, otherwise known as Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, reads, and I quote, “Any school, college or university existing in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region as of the effectivity of this Organic Law, and such other schools and institutions that may be established hereinafter shall be deemed integral,” *inuulit ko ho*, “integral components of the educational system of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region, and shall be governed by their respective charters.” – “shall be governed by their respective charters, as enacted by Congress.”

Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleague, this provision should not be construed that budget for these SUCs in the BARMM will now be funded by the autonomous region – regional government. Doing so would be a deviation

to the letter and spirit of Section 16, Article IX of R.A. No. 11054.

The absence of funds for the four state universities and colleges in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao is like robbing thousands of Moro students their chances to better their lives and those of their families.

The absence of funds for these institutions is like crushing thousands of dreams of our youth in achieving something for themselves.

The absence of funds would also mean the displacement of thousands of employees, faculty members and personnel of the said educational institutions in the region.

Kulang pa ba ang bilang ng mga empleyadong nawalan ng trabaho bunsod ng pandemya kung kaya’t dadagdagan pa natin? Kulang pa ba ang bilang ng mga estudyanteng napilitang tumigil sa pag-aaral dahil sa kawalan ng pang-matrikula kung kaya’t papadamihin pa natin?

This unhappy and outright removal of funding by the national government especially by the DBCC and the DBM will seriously threaten not only the operation and the very existence of these respected educational institutions in the BARMM, but also the very heart of the Constitution that expressly guarantees that, “The State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.”

Iyan lamang po, Mr. Speaker. Maraming salamat po.

Thank you, distinguished Sponsor. Thank you, distinguished colleagues.

And this Representation is hoping that in the coming days, before Friday, before our adjournment, that – hoping the Chairs, of course, through our Speaker, especially the DBM, will come to a solution to address this problem in this (*inaudible*).

Maraming salamat po.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). Thank you, Deputy Speaker Hataman and, likewise, thank you to the honorable Sponsor. Majority Leader.

REP. SANGCOPAN. Mr. Speaker, next to interpellate the Sponsor, may I move that we recognize Rep. Sarah Elago from Party-List KABATAAN.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). The honorable Representative from KABATAAN Party-List is recognized.

REP. ELAGO. Maraming salamat, Mr. Speaker.

We prepared a short presentation on the matter of huge budget cuts in the state universities and colleges.

Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsors, in the proposed 2022 National Budget, SUCs are given an immediately accessible budget of P71 billion. This is a decrease of P14 billion or 17.17 percent from the current P85 billion.

Further, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, a closer look reveals massive cuts in their budget for maintenance and other operating expenses as well as budget for Capital Outlays.

One hundred four (104) SUCs are set to incur cuts in their overall budget while about 102 state universities and colleges are set to sustain cuts in their MOOE. Ang ilan lang, Mr. Speaker, doon sa SUCs natin na may mga pinakamalalaking cut sa kanilang SUCs o sa kanilang MOOE rather ay ang Caraga State University, nasa 61.44 percent na pagbaba; ang Davao del Norte State College, nasa 60 percent; Leyte Normal University, nasa halos 60 percent din; ang Northern Negros State College of Science and Technology at University of Southeastern Philippines na aabot po sa may kaltas na 53.24 percent sa kanilang budget.

Ganoon din, G. Speaker, distinguished Sponsors, mayroon pong 18 na mga state universities and colleges na mayroon ding cuts sa kanilang pondo para sa personnel services. Ang ilan po sa mga pinakamalalaki rian bukod doon sa mga nabanggit na ng ating mga naunang interpellator na mga BARMM-based na SUC ay ang University of Southeastern Philippines na may bawas na -10 percent. Nandiyan din po ang Northern Bukidnon State College na may bawas naman na -8 percent. Ganyan po kalalaki iyong mga

pagbawas na ito pagdating sa MOOE at personnel services.

Pagdating naman, G. Speaker, sa pondo para sa Capital Outlays, there are 36 SUCs which have zero Capital Outlays budget for 2022, as well as 75 SUCs that have CO cuts. Ganyan po kalalaki iyong mga kaltas na pondo sa ating state universities and colleges sa panahon, G. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, na marami po rito ay nagpapalakas ng kanilang imprastruktura para sa ICT para tumugon sa mga pangangailangan sa distance education, iyong mga bagong mode po natin ng learning na kinakailangan upang maabot ang bawat isang iskolar ng bayan na nagsisikap na makapagpatuloy pa rin ng pag-aaral matapos iyong kurso sa kung saan sila naka-enroll sa panahon na kahit nasa gitna ng pandemya. Kinakailangan ng support ng Estado pagdating sa kanilang pondo kaya naman, G. Speaker, ang Representasyon po na ito ay sinasamahan din ang marami nating mga kapwa legislator na nananawagan na i-restore na ang mga cut na ito.

This youth Representation has filed House Resolution No. 2255, urging Congress to restore the P2.02 billion budget slashed by the Department of Budget and Management in the maintenance and other operating expenses of 102 state universities and colleges, and in the personnel services budget of 14 SUCs. We are also calling, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, for Congress to substantially augment budget allocation for Capital Outlays and the public tertiary education system.

Hawak po ng Representasyon na ito ngayon ang resolusyon na ito at ang ating hamon sa ating distinguished Sponsors at sa ating mga kasamahan dito sa kapulungan ay tanggapin itong malaking panawagan na ito na i-restore iyong cuts sa MOOE at sa personnel services at matugunan na rin, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, ang napakarami pang mga panawagan sa pagbabago ng mga polisiya, pagsasaayos ng mga polisiya ngayon sa ating mga SUC na may kinalaman sa pagpapatuloy ng edukasyon sa gitna ng pandemya.

Mr. Speaker, may we know the position and commitment of the distinguished Sponsors on this call?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). The honorable Sponsor may reply.

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, we support the advocacy of the Lady from KABATAAN Party-List. She is also correct that the MOOE, essentially for all 114 SUCs have been reduced by approximately 6 percent compared to the 2021 General Appropriations Act; Capital Outlays were severely slashed and we support—if she will at the right time, at the appropriate time, my esteemed colleague will sponsor a request for augmentation, we will support that. We will support her, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, may I just also read for the record the following proposed policies, projects and programs from our state universities and colleges. Ito po iyong mga partikular na mga hakbang na kanilang inihahapag sa kapulungang ito, hindi lang may kinalaman sa pondo na kinakailangan nila para sa 2022, kundi iyong pagsasaayos mismo ng kung paano natin matitiyak na iyong public resources natin sa state universities and colleges ay kanilang nagagamit para sa pangangailangan ng ating mga SUC stakeholder.

Unang-una mula po sa Cebu Normal University, ang fixing ng Internet allowance para sa faculty ng mga public HEI at mag-a-apply din ito sa marami pa nating mga SUC, ang timely release ng mga allowance na nagmumula sa Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Fund, nandiyan din po mula sa Davao de Oro State College the policy on the amendment of the transition period for the increase of tuition and other school fees, this also includes from the Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College iyong updates sa payment ng free higher ed billings—mamaya po tatanungin natin iyan mula sa CHED at sa SUCs. Nandiyan din po ang implementation ng Revised Organizational Structure and Staffing Standards sa ROSSSS na kanina nang nabanggit ng mga naunang interpellators, at gayon din mula sa Negros Oriental State University ang mga kailangan isaayos pagdating pa rin sa ROSSSS, Mr.

Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, at iyong mga disagreeing provisions o iyong mga hindi consistent sa pagitan ng ROSSSS at sa mga current standard na ginagamit ng Civil Service Commission.

Mula naman po sa Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology, iyong mga amendment sa R.A. No. 10931 o ang UAQTE Law na kasalukuyan ding pinag-uusapan ngayon dito sa House of Representatives sa panawagan natin na i-review na ang implementation ng R.A. No. 10931.

Nandito rin po ang panawagan ng Southern Luzon State University. Napakahalaga po noong kanilang mga request para sa Capital Outlays na mangangailangan ng suporta para sa mental health care facilities at services sa mga SUC. Ang construction ng isang mental health link hub.

At panghuli, mula po sa Zamboanga State College of Marine Sciences and Technology, iyong upgrade para sa maritime education laboratories and equipment for the Marine Engineering Program, and the construction of maritime training pool with installed artificial wave machine.

Iyon lamang, G. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, iyong ilan doon sa mga priority na programs, projects activities ng ating state universities and colleges. Kaugnay nito, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, may we be apprised of the implementation of the National Mental Health Law in relation to the CHED's mandate to have this implemented in our higher education institutions?

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. MATUGAS. Mr. Speaker, may I ask for a one-minute suspension.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). The session is suspended.

It was 6:17 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 6:18 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian).
The session is resumed.

What is the pleasure of the good Sponsor?

REP. MATUGAS. I would like to reply to the question of the Honorable Elago.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian).
Yes, please proceed.

REP. MATUGAS. With regard to the National Mental Health Law, as of now, there is already an IRR which was signed, I think, a few months ago and the lead agency with regard to the implementation of this law is the DOH and the CHED, and the—ang CHED po ay in coordination lang po roon sa implementation ng National Mental Health Law, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, manghihingi po ang Representasyon na ito ng ulat ng CHED sa kung ano na ba iyong naabot natin pagdating sa pakikipagtulungan sa ating public and private educational institutions na matiyak na kung ano po iyong mga pinapamunuan na programa ng DOH sa pambansa pagdating sa serbisyong pangkalusugang pangkaisipan ay nakarating po roon sa ating state universities and colleges.

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, the CHED and the SUCs will duly submit iyong status po.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, kanina rin po nabanggit na ang sinasabing dahilan ng DBM kung bakit malalaki iyong mga cut sa MOOE, PS, at CO ng ating mga SUC ay iyong kanilang underutilization. Ngunit, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, nakarating din po sa akin iyong ulat na napakarami pong For Later Release na items sa state universities and colleges.

E kung ganyan, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, paano po makakagamit ng mabisa ang ating mga SUC ng kanilang pondo kung marami doon sa kanilang mga item ay tagged na FLR o For Later Release. Ano po ang posisyon ng ating distinguished Sponsor dito?

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

This Representation agrees with the Honorable Elago na nakakaapekto talaga iyong FLR, but sad to say, iyong CHED and SUCs wala po sa kanila iyong kontrol ng FLR because it is with the DBM and the Office of the President, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, may we know the total FLRs of the SUCs?

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. MATUGAS. Mr. Speaker, may I ask for a one-minute suspension?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian).
The session is suspended.

It was 6:21 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 6:22 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian).
The session is resumed.

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, the FLR, for CHED, the total is—the remaining balance of FLRs is about P900 million while sa SUCs mga around P4.7 billion, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, mayroon palang limang bilyon na pondo na tagged as FLR o For Later Release sa ating state universities and colleges. Parang nagmukha po itong red light, green light na survival game sa ating mga state universities and colleges na kung hindi bibigyan ng green light itong pagpapatuloy ng mga proyektong ito, mga napakahalagang programa na ito ay napakalaki po ng epekto sa kanilang operasyon at doon sa kinakailangan na facilities, equipment, gadgets, iba't ibang allowances at subsidies para magampanan nila iyong kanilang mga tungkulin.

Kaya, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor,

kailangan po natin itong dalhin, distinguished Sponsor, sa harap ng DBM at huwag po nating payagan na iyong mahabang oras na ginugugol natin dito para pag-usapan iyong pondo ng CHED, ng SUCs ay mawalan ng saysay dahil hindi rin pala natutuloy o hindi rin po naisasakatuparan iyong hangarin ng Kongreso na reflected doon sa ating General Appropriations Act.

Mr. Speaker, with this power, the President can easily subvert the will of Congress as expressed in the GAA and this essentially, we believe, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, widens the discretion of the Executive over the National Budget. This in effect clips the congressional power of the purse and unfortunately, parang nagiging palakasan po. This type of system, ito pong practice ng mga FLR, it hosts a system of patronage politics, kung sino iyong makakakuha o sino iyong hindi makakakuha. Ang banggit nga po sa atin ng SUCs hindi sila sigurado kung mare-release pa itong mga ito from FLR to NLR o hindi na mare-release talaga or Not for Later Release.

Ito po iyong ikinakabahala natin na situation na malalagay ang ating mga SUC at ang CHED. Sa kasalukuyan po ba ano na iyong ginagawang mga hakbang ng CHED at ng SUCs para matiyak na hindi na po mauulit muli sa 2022 itong tipo ng gawain na ito na sa paninindigan po ng Representasyon na ito ay grossly unconstitutional?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, the essence of the FLR is that the agency needs to submit certain requirements that are required by the DBM and Office of the President. So, I think, with regard to their budget, I think, it is very important that once they prepare their budget, kailangan po kumpleto iyong detalye para hindi siya maging FLR. So, maybe, doon po ang problema sa details and –kaya na-consider iyong particular items na FLR, na subject for evaluation, kaya “For Later Release” po, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Pero, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, ang ulat po sa atin at ang binabahagi sa atin ng maraming SUCs,

marami po rito sa mga FLR na ito, ready na po sana na maisagawa, ngunit dahil tagged “For Later Release” ay hindi po naisasakatuparan o hindi po natutuloy. Kaya po kasama po ng mga SUC ang Representasyon na ito na iharap itong napakabigat na concern pagdating sa FLRs. ‘Pag bumalik dito sa Kapulungang ito ang DBM para matugunan po ang lahat po ng isyu na may kinalaman sa FLR, hindi lang ng SUCs, kundi ang CHED, pagkalaki-laki din po ng mga FLR at gayundin sa ibang mga departamento natin.

Ngayon, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, nais ko po humingi ng balita mula sa CHED tungkol doon sa kanilang inisyatiba o mga hakbang, upang mapalawig iyong mga kurso na pinapayagan na maglunsad ng limited face-to-face classes.

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, please repeat – can you repeat your question? Medyo hindi ko nakuha po.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, may we be apprised of the current CHED initiatives on widening the scope of SUCs, public and private education institutions that can conduct limited face-to-face classes in the upcoming academic year.

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, as of now, pinapalawig po ng CHED iyong courses, guidelines para mas marami pa pong courses ang puwedeng mag-conduct ng limited face-to-face classes, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, ang sabi po sa atin ng CHED noong budget briefing, bukod doon sa courses na sa ngayon na puwede na mag-conduct ng limited face-to-face classes, nagkaroon sila nitong mga nakaraang linggo ng pagpupulong, kasama ng IATF, kasama po ang DOH para palawigin iyong mga kursong puwede. Puwede po bang isa-isahin ng ating distinguished Sponsor kung ano pa iyong mga nadagdag na kurso na mayroon ng approval para sa pagsasagawa ng limitadong harapan o face-to-face na mga klase.

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, for the information of Honorable

Elago, there are already 181 schools wherein they are conducting preparations for face-to-face—limited face-to-face classes. As to the courses, with the indulgence of—iyong health, iyong courses on health, engineering and technology, medicine, nursing, physical therapy, midwifery, medical technology, speech language, pathology, dentistry, respiratory therapy, pharmacy, radiologic technology, and maritime engineering, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

Mayroon pa po palang—kasama rin po from the memo na ni-release ni ES Medialdea, kasama po ang mga courses na engineering and technology programs, hospitality, hotel and restaurant management, tourism, travel management, marine engineering and marine transportation, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, wala po bang balak ang CHED na sundan iyong kanilang ginawang memorandum kasama ng Department of Health na ang kanila pong pamantayan sa pagbubukas ng mga campus, ng mga pamantasan at kolehiyo ay nakabatay po roon sa risk assessment sa mga lugar? Sa kanila pong Joint Memorandum Circular, ang mga campus na nasa GCQ areas ay puwede na pong magbukas basta po susunod doon sa mga rekisito na kinakailangan para tiyakin na ligtas na makakabalik eskuwela ang mga education stakeholder.

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, ito po iyong—iyan po ang operative framework ngayon ng CHED na palawigin iyong memorandum na iyon para iyon po ang maging basis para doon po sa paggawa ng limited face-to-face classes, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, noong humarap po rito iyong DepEd, mayroon na silang mapping noong mga eskuwelahan na plano ng magbukas o konti-konti nang magbukas para po sa susunod na academic year. May ganoon din po bang roadmap ang CHED para matulungan, masuportahan, at mabigyan ng gabay ang

lahat ng educational institutions dito sa bansa sang-ayon sa kanilang mandato na ligtas na makapagbukas ng mga pamantasan at kolehiyo?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, ang CHED po ay ginagawa po nila on a per degree program para mas safer po. Iyon po ang approach nila as compared to DepEd na mapping, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, paano po iyon, ano po ang batayan para sabihin ng CHED na mas ligtas iyong kanilang pamantayan na kada kurso, iyong pagdedesisyon ng pagbubukas ng klase? Samantalang ang nakita po natin sa maraming praktika sa buong mundo, talagang risk assessment po na batay doon sa overall public health consideration sa mga locality. Nakadepende po iyan sa lugar, doon sa area kung gaano kataas o kababa iyong risk at kung gaano ba kahanda pagdating sa ligtas na pagbabalik eskuwela. Hindi po ba iyon ay mas siyentipiko, napatunayan na na gumagana? At, sa ganoong paraan, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, hindi ba mas marami tayong mabubuksan na mga pamantasan?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, kasama po iyon, iyong sinasabi ninyo, iyong environmental assessment as to the health situation of each locality. Iyong sinasabi lamang na degree program is, tinitingnan din iyong mga requirement ng each degree. Halimbawa, iyong mga, kailangan ba nila ng laboratory? So, if may laboratory ba itong particular na school, kaya ba nilang mag-conduct ng face-to-face classes na mag-implement ng limited protocol like social distancing? So iyon, doon po na mga aspeto ang tinitingnan ng ating CHED family, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, sa ngayon po ba available na ang roadmap na iyan para po sa lahat ng educational stakeholders, makatulong po sila na makapag-ambag para mapaunlad pa iyan at maitulak natin nang sama-sama iyong

ligtas, boluntaryo, konti-konti na pagbabalik eskuwela?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, available po iyong program nila, iyong roadmap nila and puwede po nilang bigyan kayo, Honorable Elago.

REP. ELAGO. Yes, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, hihingin po natin iyan agad ngayon para po matalakay pa natin sa susunod na mga araw na – ngayon po nagkakaroon na kasi ng mga konsultasyon dahil pinayagan na iyong pilot implementation sa basic education. Lalo pong mas sumigla iyong pag-uusap hinggil dito pagdating naman po sa higher education.

Ngayon, kaugnay niyan, Mr. Speaker, iyong usapin ng student aid. Ang CHED po ay umupo sa isang dayalogo kasama ng Student Aid Network. Ang kanila pong Executive Director ang humarap diyan at sila po ay nagbigay ng commitment, na pag-aaralan nila ang posibilidad ng pagbibigay ng dagdag na mga ayuda para doon sa mga estudyanteng nangangailangan ng gadget subsidies o Internet allowances. Ano na po ang pinakahuling hakbang ng CHED tungkol dito?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, with regard to student aid, iyong pinaka-number one na agad-agad magawa ng CHED is iyong TES, especially for the need of the students for gadgets to be used for online education. So, ito po ay naka-ready na po iyong programa under TES, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Ibig sabihin, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, bukod po sa TES wala nang ibang bago na COVID-19 relief or related aid or subsidy to help our students?

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. MATUGAS. Mr. Speaker, may I ask for a one-minute suspension.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). The session is suspended.

It was 6:35 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 6:37 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). The session is resumed.

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, as regards to other programs for student assistance or student aids, ang sinasabi po ng CHED is, kailangan po na mayroon po tayong batas na ma-institutionalize, especially at this time of pandemic, to give appropriation or assistance to all the students, tertiary students, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, iyan na nga po, ano, iyong ating sinasabi noong budget briefing pa lang.

Ang Kapulungan po na ito ay nagpasa ng Bayanihan 3 na naglalaman ng P4.5 billion na suporta sa basic at higher education sector, lalong-lalo na po iyong mga diversely affected natin na mga teaching and nonteaching personnel. Kumbaga, ang makikinabang po sana dito hindi lang estudyante, mga kawani, iyong mga faculty member na nawalan ng trabaho o naapektuhan iyong kanilang trabaho ng dahil sa pandemya. Ngunit hindi po iyan binigyan prayoridad ng Malacañang. Kaya, ang nais pong malaman ng Representasyon na ito, sa bahagi ba ng CHED, ano po iyong ginagawa ninyo para naman itulak ito na bigyan ng prayoridad iyong ayuda para sa education sector?

Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, if I may just add. This also includes institutional subsidy for private schools. Iyong mga private school na may mga kurso na o may mga programa na nagsara at hindi na talaga kinaya itong epekto ng sobrang pagbaba ng kanilang mga enrollment, isa rin po iyan doon sa mga tinutulungan ng mga estado sa iba't ibang bahagi ng mundo para matiyak na iyong kanilang mga estudyante, hindi naman po sila iyong maaapektuhan nitong napakalaking impact sa education sector ng pandemya.

REP. MATUGAS. Yes, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

Ang isa sa pinakapangunahing ginagawa ngayon ng CHED is to push for the restoration of the budget cut doon sa TES. Kasi, if ma-restore po iyan, makakatulong po iyan ng malaki sa ating mga student. And this Representation has already pushed the same with the Speaker, na sana ay ma-restore iyong mga vital budgetary item na nawala sa CHED or hindi napondohan, particularly, like Doktor Para sa Bayan, medical ano, other student assistance programs na hindi napondohan or na-reduce from their proposed levels, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, kung maibibigay na ngayon iyong roadmap ng CHED e, puwede po natin iyan sanang magamit para batayan noong isinusulong natin na Ligtas na Balik Eskwela Fund. Kasi hindi po talaga biro na muling magbukas ng paaralan. Hindi po iyan kasing simple ng buksan mo iyong gate, hayaan na makapag-klase ulit sa mga classroom iyong ating mga iskolar ng bayan at mga estudyante.

Iyong mga pangangailangan para sa dagdag na water, sanitation, hygiene facilities, school-based or campus-based na health facilities and personnel ay mga kinakailangan bilang prevention at mitigation strategies na nasa loob mismo ng mga campus. Kailangan po iyan para doon sa ligtas na pagbabalik eskuwela.

Kaya po, ayan po ang dapat nating singilin pagdating sa Duterte administration pagdating dito. Hindi po natin maasahan na makapagbukas iyong mga klase nang ligtas kung wala namang pondo na pang suporta na para po magawa iyan.

Ngayon, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, tungkol lang po doon sa road map, kailan po ba inaasahan ng CHED na magkaroon noong muling pagbubukas ng mga paaralan na nakabatay sa risk assessment ng mga area, iyong nakabatay po doon sa lugar, doon sa levels ng community quarantine natin sa mga lugar?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, last January pa po nag-start na ang limited face-to-face sa 181 schools. So, ito po iyong, nag-umpisa na po and then they

are still continuing to assess other schools, other localities para po mas ma-expand pa iyong mga school na puwedeng mag-conduct ng face-to-face classes under those degree programs that I mentioned a while ago, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Ngunit, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, iyan po iyong nakabatay sa kurso na pinayagan ninyo na magbukas. Ang tinatanong ko po, kung kalian tayo magsisimula noong nakabatay doon sa risk assessment po ng mga area according to their community quarantine level?

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, iyong—iyon talaga is part noong ano, ng, sa tanong mo kino-consider talaga ng CHED iyong mga existence ng mga laboratory ng mga school before nila i-allow, ma-open iyong particular courses.

So, it is really based on the guidelines that they set up, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. So, ngayon, G. Speaker, wala pa tayong inaasahan na partikular na plano na risk-based according to the community quarantine level. Iyon po ang nakuha ko mula roon sa sagot ng ating distinguished Sponsor. Sa kasalukuyan, based pa rin talaga sa kurso at hinihikayat po natin iyong CHED na muling magpatawag based sa development na iyon sa basic education. Kasi marami ding SUC na may basic education po di ba, na pag-usapan muli ito at magkaroon ng malinaw na road map, guidance sa lahat ng mga SUC, sa lahat po ng higher educational institutions kung paano sila magpapalano at magpopondo para sa ligtas na balik eskuwela.

Now, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, on to another matter, part of the accomplishment report of the CHED is the completed IRR of Republic Act No. 11053 or the Anti-Hazing Act of 2018. Doon po sa panahon na mula nang maipasa ang batas hanggang po ngayon, mayroon po bang mga naitala na mga insidente ang CHED, ang ating mga SUC, at natitiyak po ba natin na lahat ng mga SUC natin ay may mekanismong nakalagay o nasusunod para tiyakin na masusunod ang batas? O kaya naman, kung may mga

insidente, ito ay maiimbestigahan agad at natitiyak po natin na may pananagutan kung sino man po iyong mapapatunayang may sala.

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, so, iyong sa Anti-Hazing Law mayroon na pong IRR, but since the pandemic started, iyong lockdown started last year, wala pong nare-report na hazing sa mga school kasi wala na pong pasok.

So, from 2020 until today, wala pong – zero po iyong mga hazing incident, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, nitong July 20, 2021 lang po mayroong naiulat na insidente sa PMMA, ang untimely death po ni PMMA Cadet Jonash Bondoc. At isa po ang Representation na ito roon sa talagang nanawagan ng daglian na imbestigasyon at magkaroon ng pagtitiyak ng pananagutan na hinding-hindi na ito mauulit muli sa ating mga lugar ng eskuwelahan, kung saan dapat pinakaligtas iyong ating mga estudyante.

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, iyong incident sa PNPA hindi po saklaw ng CHED. It is really under the jurisdiction of the Philippine National Police, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, this happened in PMMA ...

REP. MATUGAS. I am sorry, Your Honor.

REP. ELAGO. ... in July 2021.

I remember reading a statement from the CHED on this, that they vowed to have an urgent, fair and independent probe on this so that we can ensure that our campuses are safe spaces, safe and protected spaces for all our education stakeholders.

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, current status po ng ano—I am sorry kanina, akala ko, PNPA, pero iyong sa PMMA, ang status po ngayon is, it is under investigation sa Board of Trustees nila, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, kailan po inaasahan na matapos ang isinasagawa nilang probe at mayroon na po bang napatunayang may sala kung sa bahagi naman po ng nag-iimbestiga dito na law enforcement agencies natin?

Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, maaari po bang humingi na lang ng ulat mula sa CHED at sa PMMA, hinggil po sa nangyari na ito at hindi po talaga madali iyong nangyari sa ating mga SUC, sa ating mga HEI na hanggang ngayon, nagpapatuloy pa rin ito.

At, ito pa lang iyong naulat, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, paano pa iyong mga unreported na mga incident na magpasahanggang ngayon po ay hindi naiimbestigahan at walang nananagot?

Kaya ganoon na lang kailangan, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, na iyong natapos na IRR ng CHED, kung ano ang kailangan para matiyak na magagawa nila iyong kanilang mandato na mapatupad iyan, masunod ng ating mga HEI at malagay nila iyong mga mekanismo para may system of transparency and accountability in place.

Iyan po ang pinapanawagan ng Representasyon na ito.

REP. MATUGAS. Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, as regards to the case, the hazing case in PMMA, ang update sa status is, na-file na po sa court iyong kaso. So, the school filed a case against those responsible for the hazing, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, iyon na lang po. Hihingi pa rin ang Representation na ito ng ulat doon sa mga ginagawa na ng CHED para matiyak na ito ay maipapatupad at nalalaman ng mga SUC, ng HEIs iyong kanilang responsibilidad para sa full implementation ng ating mas pinalakas na Anti-Hazing Law.

Ngayon, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, tungkol naman po sa nabanggit na rin kanina ni Congressman Zarate, iyong hinggil doon sa mga turnover ng mga partikular na mga SUC doon sa mga sinasabi nilang mga subversive material, magre-require na lang po ang Representation na ito ng findings ng mga SUC na ito. Ano po ba iyong mga

material and factual basis ng mga turnover na ito na isinagawa ng mga eskuwelahan na ito? We expect, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, a written submission from these state universities and colleges on the basis of their turnover of these so-called subversive materials. Bakit ito hinihingi, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, ng Representation na ito? Tayo po ay sobrang nababahala na para po itong throwback ng mga book burning sa Nazi Germany noong 1930s. Nandiyan din po iyong – o mula pa sa 35 A.D., ‘no, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, mula sa pagbabawal na basahin iyong the Odyssey ni Homer ni Roman Emperor Caligula, hanggang sa 1624 na ipinagbawal po iyong German translation ng Bibliya by the order of the Pope. Nandiyan din po iyong 1961 na nangyari din na pag-iimbestiga sa University of the Philippines pagdating sa mga sinasabing un-Filipino na activities, na katulad po noong ginawa na book burning ng Nazi Germany na sinasabing mga un-German na mga libro at mga babasahin. At pinakahuli, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, hindi din po natin nakakalimutan iyong nangyari din noong 1973, na mismong sa U.P. Library mayroon pong mga ipinagbawal na mga libro ng mga partikular na author.

Kaya hindi po natin maaalis doon sa mga iskolar ng bayan at sa taumbayan na manghingi, ‘no, ng hindi lang ng paliwanag kundi ng pananagutan ng dahil sa napakatinding epekto nito. Hindi lang po sa academic freedom kundi – academic freedom na napakahalaga doon sa pagtataguyod ng demokrasya dito sa ating bansa.

May we get the commitment, Mr. Speaker, of the distinguished Sponsor on this demand from this Youth Representation to immediately convene that space for dialogue, debate of the SUCs and other stakeholders, most especially po, the students on this matter?

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, yes, we are assuring the Lady from KABATAAN. The CHED will initiate a multisectoral stakeholders dialogue with the respective Board of Regents, the officials. I will make sure that your office will be invited along with the office of the Honorable Zarate, who had similar concerns.

We assured him also na magkakaroon po tayo ng dialogue tungkol diyan.

We support your – iyong sinabi po ninyo, iyong academic freedom, but as you know, the individual SUCs have the power and authority to determine. Ang CHED po is just a – will enable, will engage them in a dialogue, but ang decision po is really each individual state university.

So, iimbitahin po namin kayo. We support your concerns on this. Dapat po talaga magkaroon ng magandang community involvement and discussion on this.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, kapag ang kinokontrol na ng pamantasan o kolehiyo kung ano lang iyong puwedeng basahin, kung ano lang iyong puwedeng maitanong, kung ano lang iyong puwedeng sabihin ng mga stakeholder nito mula sa ating iskolar ng bayan, sa ating kaguruan, sa ating mga kawani, ay hindi na po iyan demokrasya, hindi na po iyan pagtataguyod ng kalayaang pang-akademiko, diktadurya na po iyan. Kaya huwag po nating payagan na magkaroon ng ganitong tipo ng mga gawain sa ating state universities and colleges, lalong-lalo na sa atin pong kasaysayan, sobrang laki ng ginagampanan ng mga higher education institution sa pagtataguyod ng mga pagpapahalagang demokratiko, sa pagtatanggol ng karapatang-pantao, at higit sa lahat, sa pagtitiyak na may nananagot sa kahit anong tipo ng abuso sa kapangyarihan.

Iyon lamang, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. Huli na lang po na request pala from the CHED.

Noong December 2019 nag-present po sa harapan ng CHED ang iba’t ibang grupo ng mga kabataan, ng mga estudyante para matugunan iyong mga threat sa kanilang students’ rights and welfare. Sa ngayon po ba ay natugunan na ito ng CHED?

At kung hindi pa, muli, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, manghingi po tayo bago ang September 30, bago po ang Huwebes, ng pormal na sagot ng CHED tungkol sa mga threat na ito on students’ rights and welfare. Gayundin, iyong matagal na po naming ipinapanawagan na kasabay nitong issue on

academic freedom, matugunan n'yo na po iyong napakalalang red-tagging, vilification sa mga outspoken youth and student leader.

REP. MATUGAS. Okay.

REP. ELAGO. Nangyayari po iyan, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, kahit online na lang iyong classes ngayon. These vilification, red-tagging, threat, harassment and intimidation on outspoken youth and student leaders are happening online. At ang pinakababahala po natin mula online threats, napakalaki po ng posibilidad, at nangyari na sa iba't ibang mga sektor na iyong online threat, nagiging aktuwal na pisikal na banta sa buhay at seguridad ng ating mga education stakeholder. Kaya gano'n na lang kalakas po iyong panawagan namin na itigil ang lahat ng mga nakikita nating mga paglabag sa karapatang pantao sa loob ng mga pamantasan, at itaguyod natin iyong kalayaang pang akademiko. Nasimulan na po iyan ng House sa pagpasa ng institutionalization ng UP-DND Accord sa pag-amyenda sa UP Charter.

Ngunit ang panawagan po ng Representasyon na ito, hindi lang sa UP o PUP na may similar accords, kung 'di yan po ay nararapat lamang para sa lahat ng educational institutions.

Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, there being no other Member of the Minority who wishes to interpellate, I move to terminate the period of sponsorship and debate on the proposed budget of the Commission on Higher Education, and state universities and colleges.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). Thank you to the Honorable Elago.

And, likewise, thank you to the good Sponsor.

What is the pleasure of the Majority Leader?

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, the Majority joins in the motion of the Minority to terminate sponsorship and debate on the proposed budget of the Commission on Higher Education, and state universities and colleges.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) Hearing none, the motion is carried.

Congratulations to the CHED, and, likewise, to the state universities and colleges. Thank you.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Gatchalian). The session is suspended.

It was 6:57 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 7:03 p.m., the session was resumed with Deputy Speaker Divina Grace C. Yu presiding.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). The session is resumed. Majority Leader.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 10153

REP. ROMULADO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we suspend the consideration of House Bill No. 10153.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

Majority Leader.

REP. ROMULADO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we proceed with the Additional Reference of Business.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Secretary General will please read the Additional Reference of Business.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

The Secretary General read the titles of the following Resolutions on First Reading, and Committee Reports, and the Deputy Speaker made the corresponding references:

RESOLUTIONS

House Resolution No. 2245, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION STRONGLY URGING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO INCREASE THE FUNDS TO BE APPROPRIATED TO THE PHILIPPINE COAST GUARD (‘PCG’) FOR FISCAL YEAR 2022”

By Representative Matugas

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

House Resolution No. 2246, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION STRONGLY URGING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO INCREASE THE FUNDS TO BE APPROPRIATED TO THE TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (TESDA) FOR FISCAL YEAR 2022”

By Representative Matugas

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

House Resolution No. 2247, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION STRONGLY URGING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO INCREASE THE FUNDS TO BE APPROPRIATED TO THE CYBERCRIME INVESTIGATION AND COORDINATING CENTER (‘CICC’), AN ATTACHED AGENCY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (‘DICT’), FOR FISCAL YEAR 2022”

By Representative Matugas

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

House Resolution No. 2248, entitled:

“RESOLUTION OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES EXPRESSING PROFOUND CONDOLENCES ON THE DEMISE OF FORMER REPRESENTATIVE EMIL L. ONG OF THE NORTHERN SAMAR”

By Representative Tambunting

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 2249, entitled:

“RESOLUTION OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES EXPRESSING PROFOUND CONDOLENCES ON THE DEMISE OF FORMER DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT (DSWD) SECRETARY DINKY SOLIMAN”

By Representative Tambunting

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 2251, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION URGING THE DEVELOPMENT BUDGET COORDINATION COMMITTEE (DBCC), THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS, AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - THROUGH THE ABLE LEADERSHIP OF THE HONORABLE SPEAKER LORD ALLAN JAY Q. VELASCO, TO PROVIDE FUNDING FOR STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES (SUCS) WITHIN THE JURISDICTION OF THE BANGSAMORO AUTONOMOUS REGION IN MUSLIM MINDANAO (BARMM) FOR FISCAL YEAR 2022”

By Representatives Hataman and Sangcopan

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

House Resolution No. 2252, entitled:

“RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE PROFOUND CONDOLENCES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO THE FAMILY OF THE HONORABLE ERINEO S. MALIKSI, FORMER REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECOND AND THIRD LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS OF CAVITE DURING THE ELEVENTH AND FIFTEENTH CONGRESSES, RESPECTIVELY, AND FORMER GOVERNOR OF THE PROVINCE OF CAVITE”

By Representatives Velasco, Romualdez (F.M.) and Paduano

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 2253, entitled:

“RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE

PROFOUND CONDOLENCES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO THE FAMILY OF HONORABLE EMIGDIO L. LINGAD, FORMER REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECOND LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT OF PAMPANGA DURING THE EIGHTH AND NINTH CONGRESSES”

By Representatives Velasco, Romualdez (F.M.) and Paduano
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 2254, entitled:

“RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE PROFOUND CONDOLENCES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO THE FAMILY OF THE HONORABLE JECI A. LAPUS, TRUSTEE AND ACTING ADMINISTRATOR OF THE LOCAL WATER UTILITIES ADMINISTRATION AND FORMER REPRESENTATIVE OF THE THIRD LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT OF TARLAC DURING THE FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH CONGRESSES”

By Representatives Velasco, Romualdez (F.M.) and Paduano
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Concurrent Resolution No. 22, entitled:

“CONCURRENT RESOLUTION GRANTING CONSENT TO THE HONORABLE DELFIN N. LORENZANA, SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENSE, TO RECEIVE THE PEACE MEDAL AWARDED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA”

By Representative Hofer
TO THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Report of the Committee on Basic Education and Culture and the Committee on Appropriations (Committee Report No. 1258), re H.B. No. 10290, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE DULOP NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL - BAG-

ONG VALENCIA EXTENSION IN BARANGAY BAG-ONG VALENCIA, MUNICIPALITY OF DUMINGAG, PROVINCE OF ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR FROM THE DULOP NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS THE BAG-ONG VALENCIA AGRICULTURAL NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 6175

Sponsors: Representatives Romulo and Yap (E.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report of the Committee on Basic Education and Culture and the Committee on Appropriations (Committee Report No. 1259), re H.B. No. 10291, entitled:

“AN ACT CONVERTING THE KINANGAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN BARANGAY KINANGAN, MUNICIPALITY OF MALITA, PROVINCE OF DAVAO OCCIDENTAL INTO AN INTEGRATED SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS KINANGAN INTEGRATED SCHOOL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 4838

Sponsors: Representatives Romulo and Yap (E.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report of the Committee on Basic Education and Culture and the Committee on Appropriations (Committee Report No. 1260), re H.B. No. 10292, entitled:

“AN ACT CONVERTING THE MOLMOL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN BARANGAY MOLMOL, MUNICIPALITY OF JOSE ABAD SANTOS, PROVINCE OF DAVAO OCCIDENTAL INTO AN INTEGRATED SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS THE MARIANO ANOY SANGAY INTEGRATED SCHOOL,

AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 4835

Sponsors: Representatives Romulo and Yap (E.)

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report of the Committee on Basic Education and Culture and the Committee on Appropriations (Committee Report No. 1261), re H.B. No. 10293, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE DATU DANWATA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - AGIK-IKEXTENSION IN BARANGAY DATU DANWATA, MUNICIPALITY OF MALITA, PROVINCE OF DAVAO OCCIDENTAL FROM THE DATU DANWATA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS THE AGIK-IKELEMENTARY SCHOOL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 4836

Sponsors: Representatives Romulo and Yap (E.)

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report of the Committee on Local Government (Committee Report No. 1262), re H.B. No. 10295, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE SITIOS OF NAIBUAN, LAGNAS, IBANAG, HOBKOB, ABONG, MALUMAK, KIANAY, LIBERTAD, LOWALIW, ILYA, YABAT, SALIDANG, UPPER KAYWAN, DAYAGA, AND TIMBANGAN FROM BARANGAY BATASAN IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SAN JOSE, PROVINCE OF OCCIDENTAL MINDORO TO CONSTITUTE A DISTINCT AND INDEPENDENT BARANGAY TO BE KNOWN AS BARANGAY NAIBUAN”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 4936

Sponsors: Representatives Villanueva (N.) and Ramirez-Sato

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report of the Committee on Local Government (Committee Report No. 1263), re H.B. No. 10296, entitled:

“AN ACT INTENSIFYING LOCAL GOVERNMENT PARTICIPATION IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT BY INCREASING THE SHARE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS IN NATIONAL TAXES, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTION 284 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7160, AS AMENDED, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE OF 1991”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bills Numbered 1247, 2619, 3447 and 7430

Sponsors: Representatives Villanueva (N.), Villafuerte and Rodriguez

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report of the Committee on Health and the Committee on Appropriations (Committee Report No. 1264), re H.B. No. 10297, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF KALIBO, PROVINCE OF AKLAN, A GERIATRIC MEDICAL CENTER TO BE KNOWN AS THE AKLAN GERIATRIC MEDICAL CENTER, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 3552

Sponsors: Representatives Tan (A.), Yap (E.) and Marquez

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

Message dated September 27, 2021, informing the House of Representatives that the Senate on September 21, 2021 adopted House Bill No. 9950, entitled:

“AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE TO PROVIDE FOR DIRECT CASH ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS WHO ARE TILLING TWO (2) HECTARES AND BELOW OF RICE LAND UNTIL 2024, AND USE FOR THE PURPOSE

THE ANNUAL TARIFF REVENUES IN EXCESS OF P10 BILLION OF THE RICE COMPETITIVENESS ENHANCEMENT FUND CREATED UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11203, ENTITLED AN ACT LIBERALIZING THE IMPORTATION, EXPORTATION AND TRADING OF RICE, LIFTING FOR THE PURPOSE THE QUANTITATIVE IMPORT RESTRICTION ON RICE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES"

as an amendment to Senate Bill No. 1927.
TO THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

Message dated September 27, 2021, informing the House of Representatives that the Senate on even date adopted House Bill No. 10261, entitled:

"AN ACT FIXING THE LAST DAY OF REGISTRATION OF VOTERS FOR THE 2022 NATIONAL AND LOCAL ELECTIONS"

as an amendment to Senate Bill No. 2408.
TO THE COMMITTEE ON SUFFRAGE AND ELECTORAL REFORMS

Message dated September 27, 2021, informing the House of Representatives that the Senate on even date passed Senate Bill No. 2332, entitled:

"AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FOR DETERMINING STATUTORY RAPE AND OTHER ACTS OF SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION TO PROTECT CHILDREN, AMENDING FOR THIS PURPOSE ACT NO. 3815, AS AMENDED, ALSO KNOWN AS THE REVISED PENAL CODE, REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8353, ALSO KNOWN AS THE ANTI-RAPE LAW OF 1997, AND REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7610, ALSO KNOWN AS THE SPECIAL PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AGAINST ABUSE, EXPLOITATION AND DISCRIMINATION ACT"

in which it requests the concurrence of the House of Representatives.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON REVISION OF LAWS AND THE COMMITTEE ON WELFARE OF CHILDREN

Message dated September 27, 2021, informing the House of Representatives that the Senate on even date passed Senate Bill No. 2408, entitled:

"AN ACT EXTENDING THE REGISTRATION OF VOTERS FOR THE 2022 NATIONAL AND LOCAL ELECTIONS"

in which it requests the concurrence of the House of Representatives.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON SUFFRAGE AND ELECTORAL REFORMS

Message dated September 27, 2021, informing the House of Representatives that the Senate on even date passed Senate Bill No. 2407, entitled:

"AN ACT AMENDING SECTION 27(B) OF THE NATIONAL INTERNAL REVENUE CODE OF 1997, AS AMENDED, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES"

in which it requests the concurrence of the House of Representatives.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Message dated September 27, 2021, informing the House of Representatives that the Senate on even date passed Senate Bill No. 2376, entitled:

"AN ACT STRENGTHENING PROFESSIONALISM AND CONTINUITY OF POLICIES AND MODERNIZATION INITIATIVES OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES"

in which it requests the concurrence of the House of Representatives.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL DEFENSE AND SECURITY

Message dated September 27, 2021, informing the House of Representatives that the Senate on even date passed Senate Bill No. 2364, entitled:

"AN ACT RECOGNIZING CCF LIFE ACADEMY FOUNDATION INC. AS AN EDUCATIONAL

INSTITUTION OF INTERNATIONAL CHARACTER, GRANTING CERTAIN PREROGATIVES TO HASTEN ITS GROWTH AS SUCH, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

in which it requests the concurrence of the House of Representatives.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Majority Leader.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 10153
Continuation

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we resume consideration of House Bill No. 10153 as contained in Committee Report No. 1230, and direct the Secretary General to read the title of the said measure.

I so move.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the Secretary General is directed to read the title of such measure.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 10153, entitled: “AN ACT APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR THE OPERATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES FROM JANUARY ONE TO DECEMBER THIRTY-ONE, TWO THOUSAND AND TWENTY-TWO.”

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Majority Leader.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, I now move that we begin consideration of the budget of the Department of Health, and for this purpose, recognize the distinguished Vice Chair of Appropriations, the Gentleman from the Fifth District of Cebu, Cong. Duke Frasco to sponsor the said budget.

I so move.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; Representative Frasco is recognized as Vice Chairman of the Committee on Appropriations to begin the sponsorship of the said measure.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH
OF REP. FRASCO

REP. FRASCO. Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker.

Mme. Speaker, distinguished colleagues and Members of the House of Representatives, maayong gabii kanatong tanan.

The Filipino people’s right to health is a constitutionally ordained right that mandates the promotion and protection by the State. Now, more than any other time in recent memory, the government’s exercise of its duty to promote and protect the public health is both urgent and imminent as our nation continues to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic. Quality health care that is reliable and responsive has become and should continue to be at the forefront of our government’s priorities if we are to afford our people the best chance to recover from this crisis of global proportions.

It is, therefore, my honor to sponsor the proposed 2022 Budget of the Department of Health. In the frontlines of the perilous journey of the past year have been the hundreds of thousands of health care workers across the Philippines, in government and in the private sector: doctors, nurses, and hospital staff, as well as our rural health and barangay health workers who have served our people bravely and tirelessly—some of whom have sadly perished. It is to our frontliners and their families that I express my profound gratitude because of the courage of their conviction to serve the Filipino people, we dared to hope and we are saved.

The Health budget presented before you today aims to be responsive and comprehensive, capacitating our health care systems across the country to be both promotive and preventive, building social protection and resilience in our communities so that our people may prevail in these extraordinary times.

The Department of Health's major thrust in its proposed P242 billion budget are divided into three major types of activities:

Priority 1, composed of the Universal Health Care Act-related programs, activities and projects, COVID-19 initiatives and health system resilience, including assistance to LGUs in anticipation of full devolution;

Priority 2, composed of activities pursuant to the implementation of other health-related laws; and

Priority 3, composed of activities that are considered urgent and very much needed where the nonimplementation of the program or project would pose a risk to public safety and/or result to serious public inconvenience.

Mme. Speaker, my esteemed colleagues, as Congress exercises the power of the purse and deliberates on the proposed budget for the Department of Health, I pray that the exercise of this awesome power may be tempered with compassion, so that the people's needs are placed front and center of the appropriations of the coming year and guided by the vision of attaining the level of health care that assures the Filipino people the full enjoyment of the right to life and the right to good health.

With that, Mme. Speaker, I am ready to take questions.

Daghang salamat.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu).
Majority Leader.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, before we proceed with the period of interpellation, I would like to acknowledge the presence of our guests from the Department of Health family, of course led by Sec. Francisco T. Duque III. We also have Usec. Leopoldo Vega, OCS and AFMT; Usec. Mario C. Villaverde, HPSDT; Usec. Myrna Cabotaje, FICT-NCRL and NVOC; Usec. Roger Tong-an, FICT-SL and MPO; OIC-Usec. Maria Rosario Vergeire, PHST; OIC-Asec. Maylene Beltran, AFMT; Dir. Leonita Gorgolon, HFEP; OIC-Dir. Rowena Lora, FMS; OIC-Dir. Frances Rose Elgo-Mamaril, HPDPB; Atty. Fatima Laperal, OSEC HEA; and Mr. Lindsley Jeremiah Villarante, HPDPB-LLD.

From PhilHealth we have the PCEO Dante Gierran, SVP Nerissa Santiago, SVP Emily Roque, and SM Bernadette Lico.

From the DOH-LLD, Mr. Justine Dale Soriano and Julius Caesar Castillo.

The guests in the holding area via Zoom and also in the Aquino-Makalintal Hall, South Wing Annex, we have: Dr. Bianca Mabanag, AFMT; Dr. Anton Cu, AFMT; EnP. Raemond Angelo Karagdag, AFMT; Mr. Roderick Napulan, HFDB; Dr. Shaymae Ufano, FICT-NCRL and NVOC; Ms. Wafa Bilao, HFEP; Ms. Robbie Vargas, HFEP; Mr. Christian Escartin, HFEP; Mr. Julius Caesar Castillo, HPDPB-LLD; Mr. Quim Allystaire Morales also from the HPDPB-LLD; Ma. Eloisa Cuenco from the same group; Mr. Justine Dale Soriano, also from the same group; Mr. Lorenzo Maderazo, HPDPB-OD; and Dr. Rizza Majella, PHIC; as well as Drs. Anne Remonte and Lemuel Untalan.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). We acknowledge the presence of the heads and officials of the Department of Health including its attached agencies and corporations, of course, headed by Secretary Duque. Welcome to the House of Representatives.

Majority Leader.

REP. DE VENECIA. First to interpellate the distinguished Sponsor is the Gentleman from the Third District of Camarines Sur, I move that we recognize Cong. Gabriel Bordado Jr.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Honorable Bordado is recognized to interpellate the Sponsor.

REP. BORDADO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Majority Floor Leader.

A pleasant evening to the DOH headed by Sec. Francisco Duque.

I have here questions and comments coming directly from my constituents. This is simply about the vaccine equity situation. Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, Camarines Sur and the Bicol Region have not been getting enough vaccines from the national government. Only 7 percent or 130,000 plus of the 1.9 million people in Camarines Sur

have been fully vaccinated. The number of fully vaccinated people in Camarines Sur, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, is lower than the regional rate of 9 percent and only a third of the national rate of around 20 percent.

In fact, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, if we use the average rate of vaccination over six months in Camarines Sur, our estimates suggest that it will take the province up to April 2026 to achieve herd immunity. In the city of Naga, at least it will take up to May 2023.

Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, advocates of vaccine equity known here as Tarabangan Kontra COVID-19 or helping each other against COVID-19 say that this is because of three reasons: First, the national government has not distributed enough vaccines to local government units; second, the national government has been so slow to act on the multiparty agreements on vaccines; and third, the national government has not been transparent with its vaccine data at the city, municipality, and provincial level and its planned deliveries.

Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, in the latest national vaccines stock and delivery data as of September 23, 66 million doses had arrived, 53.1 million had been delivered, but only 42.7 million had been administered. Now, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, why is not the Department of Health giving more to the provinces even when there are millions of vaccines available at the national level, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, distinguished interpellator, Mme. Speaker.

To date, the Bicol Region has administered over one million vaccines. The total of first and second doses received is over 1.7 million, specifically for Camarines Sur, the total of first and second doses received is 456,412 and the total of vaccines administered is 289,000 with a vaccine utilization rate of 63 percent, Mme. Speaker, distinguished interpellator.

REP. BORDADO. Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, my data here show that only 7 percent or 130,000 people in Camarines Sur

have been fully vaccinated, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor.

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, distinguished interpellator, the figures I gave earlier were as of September 27 and they are up-to-date, however, we acknowledge the concern of our distinguished interpellator with respect to vaccines in the region, in particular Camarines Sur. And, we commit, Mme. Speaker, distinguished interpellator, to provide more vaccines to your region.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BORDADO. Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, what are the criteria in the distribution of vaccines?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, distinguished interpellator, we have the prioritization.

Priority Group A - frontline health workers, indigent senior citizens, remaining senior citizens, remaining indigent population, and uniformed personnel for Priority Group A.

Priority Group ...

REP. BORDADO. I beg your pardon, Mr. Sponsor. I am, actually, asking you the criteria in the manner of distributing vaccines to the districts, to the provinces, and to the regions.

REP. FRASCO. Yes, thank you, Mme. Speaker. With respect to the criteria, first, what is considered, are epicenters of COVID-19 cases; second, drivers of economic activities; and third, concentration and density of health care workers.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BORDADO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor. Just a while ago, you committed, Mr. Sponsor, that vaccines will be delivered to Camarines Sur and Bicol. When, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor? Will it be done, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, within the next few weeks or within the next three months?

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Yes. Definitely, we consider Camarines Sur, and of course, Bicol Region to be a priority

of the DOH. The DOH has committed to deliver whatever available vaccines to the region as they arrive, because they arrive in tranches.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BORDADO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor. You know, there are many local government units in the country which have allocated millions of pesos to purchase their own stocks of vaccines. Here in the city of Naga, it actually allocated P63 million to purchase the Covaxin, but up to now, I think the application was made by the local government unit of Naga way back on June 24, 2021, but up to now, the local government unit of Naga has not received any notification or direction coming from the DOH or the IATF. Now, will this multiparty vaccination agreement ever be signed, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. With respect to the concern of our distinguished interpellator, the DOH can commit to delivering the vaccines, however, the documents are still considered incomplete and will not get approval with respect to the emergency use authorization by the FDA.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BORDADO. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, but according to the Mayor of Naga City, Atty. Nelson Legacion, the local government unit of Naga has submitted all the necessary requirements, all the necessary documents, so, what is the problem, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, distinguished interpellator, the DOH will commit to look into the documents as soon as possible. Tomorrow is the commitment. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BORDADO. Thank you very much for that commitment, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor.

So, we will know tomorrow what will be the action taken by the Department of Health and even the IATF, Mme. Speaker,

Mr. Sponsor. So that will be tomorrow, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, distinguished interpellator.

Yes, the DOH will look into the gaps with respect to the documents that have been submitted and will coordinate with the local government unit. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BORDADO. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

Now, could the Department of Health submit to the House of Representatives and upload on a central dashboard for transparency the daily vaccination statistics at the city, municipality and provincial levels? Is that possible, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, distinguished interpellator, yes, we can commit to that up to the regional level, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BORDADO. No, no, no. What I was asking for a while ago was, if the DOH can come up with the daily vaccination statistics at the city, municipality and provincial level. Because at this stage, we have the regional level, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor.

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, we can commit to that within the next one or two weeks, Mme. Speaker, and we will rely on the submissions of the local government units.

REP. BORDADO. Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, this central dashboard should reflect the following: number of people partially vaccinated, number of people fully vaccinated, percent of population partially vaccinated, percent of population fully vaccinated; the number of vaccines to be delivered over the next four weeks, three months and six months. Is that possible, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, yes, we commit to all of the above.

REP. BORDADO. And that can be done, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, within how many days?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, within two weeks.

REP. BORDADO. Can you shorten the time line, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, we will do our best to provide the data within two weeks. However, we still will be relying on the submissions of the local government units.

REP. BORDADO. For as long as I have the commitment of the Department of Health, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, that this can be done as soon as possible.

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, yes, we will commit to that, as soon as possible.

REP. BORDADO. Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker. Thank you very much, Mr. Sponsor. I am winding up my interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Majority Leader.

REP. DE VENECIA. Next to interpellate the distinguished Sponsor is the Lady from the Second District of Marikina, I move that we recognize Cong. Stella Luz Quimbo.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Honorable Quimbo is recognized to interpellate the Sponsor.

REP. DE VENECIA. By the way, Mme. Speaker, the distinguished Congresswoman from Iloilo, Rep. Janette Garin, has yielded 15 minutes of her time to Congresswoman Stella, so she will be interpellating for 45 minutes.

Thank you.

REP. QUIMBO. Mme. Speaker, will the good Sponsor yield to some questions?

REP. FRASCO. Of course, Mme. Speaker.

REP. QUIMBO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. We have actually heard the budget presentation of the DOH a number of times – before that, good evening to Secretary Duque

and Atty. Gierran, as well as the entire DOH Family, Undersecretary Mar. So, we have heard your budget presentation a number of times. Alam naman natin na kulang na kulang pa ang budget para sa COVID response. So, my interpellation is precisely about that, susubukan po natin pagtulungan kung paano natin mapapataas ang ating budget para sa COVID response.

So, let me start by asking about your fund utilization. For 2021, out of your total allotment of about P241 billion, magkano na po ang disbursed and obligated as of your latest report? Based on the June 30 SAOB, ...

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, may ...

REP. QUIMBO. ... Mme. Speaker, disbursed is 70.8 billion, obligated is 116.5 billion. May we know if there is a more current figure?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, distinguished interpellator, for the Calendar Year 2021 Budget Utilization, we have here fund source, current allotment worth P203 billion: obligated, P84.89 billion; disbursement, P48.6 billion, with a balance of P119 billion; percentage of obligation per allotment is 42 percent; percentage of disbursement per obligation is 57 percent.

For CONAP, allotment worth P40.21 billion: obligated, P31.54 billion; disbursement, P22.15 billion, with a balance of P8.67 billion. The obligation per allotment is 78 percent and the percentage of disbursement per obligation is 70 percent. For a total of P244 billion allotment: obligation total P116.4 billion; disbursement, P70.75 billion; and a total balance of P127.68 billion. The percentage of obligation, Mme. Speaker, per allotment is 48 percent; and the percentage of disbursement per obligation is 61 percent.

REP. QUIMBO. Mme. Speaker, ...

REP. FRASCO. However, as of August, Mme. Speaker, as of August 31, 2021, I will just – the grand total for the allotment is P246.9 billion: obligation, P168.3 billion; disbursement, P94.26 billion; unobligated balance of P80.59 billion; percentage of

obligation per allotment, 67 percent; and percentage disbursement per obligation is 57 percent. That is the latest as of August 31, 2021, Mme. Speaker.

REP. QUIMBO. Mme. Speaker, mukhang napakababa ng fund utilization, effective utilization as of August 30, if we multiply the obligation rate and the disbursement rate it is only about 38 percent. In other words, for every P1 of allotment, sa ngayon po 0.38 centavos pa lang ang disbursed. So, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, would you agree with me na me problema ang DOH sa kanilang absorptive capacity?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, the bulk of the disbursement beginning third quarter up to fourth quarter, the bulk of the expenditures, Mme. Speaker, occur in September to October of the year.

REP. QUIMBO. Mme. Speaker, can we just, I would like to seek confirmation that in 2019, out of the P110 billion allotment, as of end 2019, undisbursed was P37 billion? Whereas, for year 2020, out of the P200 billion allotment, undisbursed was P59 billion.

So, ang gusto ko lang maitanong dito, Mme. Speaker is, hindi ba talagang napakalaki ng natitirang pondo mula sa DOH budget every year? So malaki ang inilalagay natin na budget dahil malaki ang pangangailangan natin sa kalusugan pero nakikita naman po natin base sa financial reports na ang dami ring natitira, tama po ba?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, distinguished interpellator, with respect to CY 2019, for the information, Mme. Speaker, the total allotment was P110 billion; obligation, P97 billion; disbursement, P71.6 billion; and, unobligated allotment was only P13.2 billion.

Percentage of obligation per allotment was 88 percent and percentage of disbursement per obligation was 73 percent. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. QUIMBO. Mme. Speaker, good Sponsor, we are indeed looking at the same figures. Pasensiya na po pero iyan ang aking

conclusion dahil alam naman po natin na magkaiba ang ibig sabihin ng obligation at disbursement. Kapag sinabing obligation, as long as bidded out na po o kaya'y downloaded, okay na o ibig sabihin me kontrata na.

Pero ang mas mahirap talaga riyon, mas malaking challenge ay i-disburse iyong isusulat mo yong tseke doon sa kailangan mong bayaran. At nakikita po natin na mababa talaga ang disbursement rate.

So, let me now move on ...

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, distinguished interpellator. It is actually based on the deliveries. So, usually once the – when the deliveries arrive that is when we can proceed with the disbursements.

REP. QUIMBO. Thank you for that clarification, Mme. Speaker. I would like to show a slide if the ComSec is ready. I have here budget utilization by major programs in 2020. So, the figures are quite small, but this would show appropriations, obligations, and disbursements for the major programs of the DOH including Health Systems Strengthening Program, Public Health Program, Epidemiology and Surveillance Program, Health Emergency Management Program, Health Facilities Operation Program, at makikita po natin dito kung gaano kalaki ang variations in the disbursement rates sa bawat programa.

At makikita natin na some of them, some of the disbursements – disbursement rates go as low as 27 percent, and this is for Family Health Sub-Program. So, kapag titingnan natin ang obligation rate, masasabi naman po natin ay kahit paano pasang-awa dahil lagpas 75 percent naman. Some of them would reach 99 percent which is good and 100 percent in fact, for Curative Health Care.

But there is a number, for example, like the National Immunization Sub-Program that had an obligation rate of 48.5 percent. And if we move to the disbursement rate column, then we would see even smaller numbers and as pointed out, 27 percent for Family Health, there is 28 percent for the Operation of National Laboratories, there is 40 percent for Service Delivery, 45 percent for Health

Promotion. So, again, my point being, mababa talaga ang absorption ng DOH.

So, let me move on to my next point, Mme. Speaker.

Magkano po ba ang proposed COVID response budget ng DOH para sa taong 2022? And the reason why I ask this – we have asked – I have asked this many, many times, at nasagot na rin ng DOH, ang sabi po ng DOH is, it is P19.67 billion, and this was reported in the presentation. But, when I checked the submissions of the DBM to the Committee on Appropriations, as a result of queries from Cong. Edcel Lagman, as well as Cong. Kit Belmonte, ang sagot po ng DBM is, ang kabuuang budget is P48 billion, and this refers to the DOH interventions. So, maaari ba nating malaman kung ano ba talaga ang totoong number, is it P19 billion, is it P48 billion?

Nakakapagtaka po because I am sure you are looking at the same document which is the NEP. So, why is there such a big variation? Kapag titingnan po natin, only P10.1 billion would match, and this would refer to the Lab Network Commodities amounting to P5.09 billion, the HRH Emergency Hiring amounting to P3.8 billion and the Foreign-Assisted Projects amounting to P1.29 billion.

But, there are other items for which both agency reports do not match. For example, for PPEs, according to the DOH submission, we are budgeting P3.44 billion, but according to the DBM, it is only P819 million. For the BOQ requirements, and this is the Bureau of Quarantine requirements, it is P320 million in the DOH report, but it is P27 million only in the DBM. So, ano po ba talaga ang ating kabuuang budget?

In addition, the DBM submission includes HFEP amounting to P19.478 billion as well as the MAIP or Medical Assistance to Indigent Patients amounting to P16.9 billion. In other words, that is probably the bulk of the discrepancy of the two reports.

So, sa inyong pananaw, bottom line, short question, magkano po ba talaga ang nakalaan para sa COVID response, and this is very important because iyan po ang pinanggagalingan ng kumpiyansa ng ating mga kababayan, hindi ba? Kapag sinabing

napakaliit, paano natin susugpuin ang COVID, hindi po ba?

REP. FRASCO. Thank you for that, distinguished interpellator, Mme. Speaker. With respect to COVID-19 initiatives, it is actually part of Priority 1 of the DOH, and the total allotment for Calendar Year 2022 is P92.95 billion.

With respect to the health care workers, the DOH proposes that a singular allowance will be offered which will cover and substitute for all the benefits enumerated in the bills, and that the rate would vary according to risk of exposure of health care workers, in particular work settings.

For the year 2022, proposed costing on health care worker benefits amounts to, with respect to the allowances, P49.4 billion and this should cover 526,727 health workers.

And, contingency in case of COVID-19 surge, there is an allotment of P1 billion, for a grand total, for the proposed costing on health care worker benefits, of P50.4 billion, Mme. Speaker.

REP. QUIMBO. So, Mme. Speaker, and Mr. Sponsor, what you are saying is, it is not P48 billion but rather only P19 billion as proposed. Iyon lang po iyong simpleng tanong. Paglilinaw lang. Tinanong ko magkano ba ang COVID budget, ang sagot ng DOH, P19 billion, ang sagot naman po ng DBM, P48 billion. Ano po doon ang correct number? Kayo po ang eksperto sa health.

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. What was approved by the DBM was actually P19.68 billion.

What we requested was P92.95 billion. However, we are appealing this amount. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. QUIMBO. Salamat sa paglilinaw. Hindi pa rin ako ganoon ka-sure, 'no, dahil parehong – submissions would have sufficient detail. But anyway, nonetheless, ang maliwanag, hindi tayo masyadong sure kung magkano ang total pero pinakamaliwanag po ay hindi kasama sa parehong listahan ng DOH at DBM ang: number one, benefits para

sa medical frontliners; number two, wala pong booster shots; at number three, wala pong budget para sa contact tracing.

Kasi po, mayroong maliit na note doon sa DBM submission na ang inaasahang pumondo para sa contact tracing ay hindi ang national government kundi ang LGUs. And I would like a confirmation on that, Mme. Speaker.

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. The contact tracing budget is supposed to be requested by the DILG considering that it is the lead agency. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. QUIMBO. Thank you for that clarification, Mme. Speaker, and Mr. Sponsor.

Pagdating naman po sa SRA allowances ng frontliners at booster shots para sa bakuna, confirmed na wala sa budget, tama po? And as explained by your good Sponsor, humihingi po kayo ng dagdag na budget para sa SRA ng frontliners, and this amounts to P49 billion. Tama po?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, yes. That is what we are requesting and appealing.

REP. QUIMBO. And as you have pointed out, Mr. Sponsor, this covers 526,000 health care workers. In other words, lahat po ng nasa imbentaryo ng DOH pagdating sa frontliners ay kasama?

REP. FRASCO. Yes.

REP. QUIMBO. Nandiyan po ang doctor, nandiyan ang nurse, kasama ang barangay health workers, kasama rin po si Secretary Duque. In other words, some employees of the DOH who are deemed to be exposed to risk. Tama po ba?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, yes. The health care workers that will be covered by the benefits is a total of 526,727. And this covers several hospitals, employees, health workers in several hospitals, health employees in local government units, and health workers in private hospitals, and even in military hospitals, Mme. Speaker.

REP. QUIMBO. Salamat po sa paglilinaw. In Bayanihan 2, ang naka-indicate po ryan kung sino ang qualified to receive SRA would be those workers in direct contact with COVID patients. Tama po ba?

So, ang tanong ko po is dito po sa inyong additional na hinihingi na P49 billion, kasama po ba pati ang frontliners na hindi in direct contact with COVID patients pero exposed din to some risks? Halimbawa po iyong ating mga kuya janitor, halimbawa, na hindi naman po directly nagha-handle ng pasyente ngunit humahawak po ng, halimbawa, ng hospital waste na maaari rin namang may source of infection. So, kasama po ba sila?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, yes, kasama sila. The health care workers are actually categorized as either low-risk, medium-risk, or high-risk. Low-risk will receive P3,000; medium-risk, P6,000; and high-risk, are those who are in direct contact with COVID-19 patients, they will receive P9,000.

REP. QUIMBO. So, maganda po iyong panukala na mayroong P3,000 kapag low-risk, and this is per month, tama po?

REP. FRASCO. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. QUIMBO. And then P6,000 per month for those medium-risk, and P9,000 per month for high-risk, and by high-risk we mean directly attending to COVID patients, and the total is P49 billion. So ang lumalabas po niyan, on the average, it is over P90,000 for one year. So, kulang-kulang mga P8,000 per month, which means you are assuming that there are more high-risk frontliners than low-risk, which means, it is sufficiently generous so that we are actually able to cover our frontliners. Tama po?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, for the Fiscal Year 2022, the proposed costing on health care worker benefits are as follows:

For low-risk, 79,962 health workers, for a percentage total of 15.18 percent, amounting to P2.8 billion;

For medium-risk, total health workers are 47,173, for a percentage of 8.96 percent, and they will receive an amount of P3.3 billion; and

For the high-risk health care workers, those in direct contact with COVID-19 patients, a total of 399,592 health workers, for a percentage of 75.86 percent, the total being P43.1 billion.

Total amount of One COVID-19 Allowance, P49.4 billion, and of course, the contingency of P1 billion; and COVID-19 sickness and death composition worth P831 million, for a grand total of P51.2 billion, Mme. Speaker.

REP. QUIMBO. So, maganda naman po ang panukala. Ang tanong ko lang po, is there sufficient legal cover to pay all of those kinds of payments. So, to begin with, again, kaya maganda na mayroong Bayanihan 2 dahil kasama po sa Bayanihan 2 ang both public and private workers.

Sa ngayon po, wala ng Bayanihan 2, so ang tanong is, is there sufficient legal cover? Will you be authorized by any law to actually, to be able to pay allowances to private health workers?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, we can put this in the Special Provision that is being deliberated, the 2022 Budget. And we can also push this in the Senate, Mme. Speaker.

REP. QUIMBO. Mme. Speaker and Mr. Sponsor, I would appreciate a copy of that and would certainly support that initiative. Tingin ko, kailangan talaga ng isang special provision.

Next question po, Ma'am, can you, Mme. Speaker, can you please confirm that the DOH released P311 million for payment of SRA for 20,208 health care workers on August 26, and an additional P888 million to cover 97,560 workers, and this was on September 4. Is this — are these figures correct, Mme. Speaker?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, yes, these figures are correct.

REP. QUIMBO. Ang tanong ko po, Mme. Speaker, is, saan po kinuha ang pondo na iyan?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, the allocation is from the DBM.

REP. QUIMBO. And would the good Sponsor know what particular mechanism. Ito po ba ay nanggaling sa savings na idineklara. Kasi, sa pagkakaalam ko ang natirang pondo para sa SRA, under Bayanihan 2, got reverted back to the Treasury.

REP. FRASCO. Yes.

REP. QUIMBO. So, wala nang natirang pondo after June 30. But these payments were done after June 30, in which case, tama po ba na galing sa savings?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, per our DOH, the allotment came from the DBM Contingency Funds.

REP. QUIMBO. DBM Contingency Funds.

REP. FRASCO. Yes, Mme. Speaker. OP Contingency Funds, sorry, Mme. Speaker.

REP. QUIMBO. So, kaya ko po tinatanong iyan dahil iyong kailangan nating bunuin na P49 billion ay hindi biro, alam naman po natin iyan kaya't kailangan natin maghanap ng lahat ng possible fund sources kung paano natin mapupuno ang P49 billion na kailangan natin idagdag sa budget ng DOH para sa 2022.

But, before we go to that, ang naging findings ng COA noong 2020 ay ang dahilan kung bakit nahirapan, at least, initially sa pagbayad ng P13 billion na allotment under Bayanihan 2 para sa SRA ay dahil sa kawalan ng guidelines. Marami po sa mga private hospitals, ang mga frontliner natin doon, ay hindi naging maliwanag sa kanila kung sila ba ay qualified to receive allowances under Bayanihan 2.

And, in fact, one of the recommendations of the COA is for the Secretary of Health to provide policies, guidelines that clearly provide the true intention of the government in granting additional benefits to health workers and without further interpretation. Iyon nga po ang naging dahilan kung bakit may confusion as to whether or not qualified sila.

So, sa ngayon po, kung sakali man po na mahanap natin itong P49 billion na pambayad

ng SRA ay handa po ba ang DOH na mag-improve, magdagdag ng mga—dagdag na mekanismo nang sa ganoon ay mapabilis at mapasigurado ang pagbayad ng SRA?

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Yes, the DOH will commit to clear guidelines, Mme. Speaker.

REP. QUIMBO. And, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, this Representation would request a copy of those guidelines.

REP. FRASCO. We would be delighted, Mme. Speaker.

REP. QUIMBO. Salamat po, Mme. Speaker. Let me move on to my next question which is on vaccination. Sa ngayon po, again, P45 billion is allotted for booster shots kaya nga lang po unprogrammed. So, narining na natin ang paliwanag ng DBM kung bakit naging unprogrammed, hindi naman po—hindi pa naman daw po klaro at this point kung iyan na po ay ia-adopt ng DOH as a policy dahil wala pang recommendations mula sa ating expert panel kung kinakailangan nga ng booster shots.

Pero, sa ngayon po, USFDA has already authorized Pfizer booster doses, and this is in the US, of course. In other countries, booster shots are already being provided, kasama po riyan ang Bahrain, Cambodia, Indonesia, Israel, South Korea and Thailand. And, for Thailand, AstraZeneca booster shots are being administered to those who received Sinovac shots. Ganoon din po sa UAE, it is mandatory for people inoculated with Sinopharm vaccine.

So, tila po ang pagtingin ko, hindi naman po ako eksperto sa health, pero ang pagtingin ko, iyon pong tumanggap ng vaccines na medyo mababa ang efficacy rates, iyon po iyong pina-prioritize for booster shots. At, alam naman po natin na karamihan sa ating mga kababayan ay Sinovac po ang natanggap. So, malamang po, iyon po ang direksiyon na tatahakin natin in the near future. Malamang sa malamang, papunta na tayo roon sa punto na magbu-booster shots din tayo lalong-lalo na sa tumanggap ng Sinovac shots.

So, iyan ang tanong ko, handa po ba tayo roon?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, yes, we agree with the distinguished interpellator that, definitely, for the weaker vaccines or with lower efficacy, booster is needed. However, we are just waiting for the expert—vaccine expert panel to provide us with the advisory before we can proceed with the booster shots.

REP. QUIMBO. And, how much do you think do we need for that purpose, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor? Is this something that is in your wish list as well?

Tama po ba ang nabalitaan ko na ang total na hinihingi ninyong dagdag o iyong tinatawag na huling hirit sa budget ay P92 billion. Tama po ba iyon?

REP. FRASCO. For the ...

REP. QUIMBO. At doon sa P92 billion na inaasahang huling hirit, kasama po ba riyan ang programmed funds para sa booster shots?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, for the Calendar Year 2022, there is a P45 billion unprogrammed fund for booster doses, which should cover an estimate of 30 million of our population.

REP. QUIMBO. But, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, is there a request from the DOH to increase programmed funds for purposes of booster shots? Ito po bang—is there a portion of that P45 billion which you feel you might need earlier and in a more certain way, again, for purposes of ensuring that booster shots are made available as soon as that expert panel makes that recommendation?

REP. FRASCO. Yes, Mme. Speaker. In addition to the figures I mentioned earlier, there is an allocation of P4.2 billion from programmed funds that will be used for the booster shots.

REP. QUIMBO. Sapat na po ba ang P4.2 billion? Mme. Speaker and Mr. Sponsor, please correct my simple computation. Sa

pagkakaalam ko po so far, we have 26.5 million Sinovac doses, so if you divide that by two and you multiply that by a unit cost of P700, that is about P9.3 billion. Hindi po ba iyan ang ballpark amount na kailangan para sa booster shots? Hindi kaya kukulangin ang P4.2 billion para sa programmed funds for booster shots?

REP. FRASCO. The proposed allocation for booster shots for next year, Mme. Speaker, yes, correct, P4.2 billion from the programmed funds. However, there is also an additional P45.3 billion from unprogrammed funds.

REP. QUIMBO. I suppose, Mme. Speaker and Mr. Sponsor, at this point, ang pinaguusapan naman natin ngayon ay talagang wish list lang, kasi sa totoo lang ang pinakamalaking problema ay wala pa siya sa proposed budget sa ngayon. So, the most important question that we face today really is, saan tayo kukuha ng more or less about P49 billion for SRA for frontliners and about let us say P5 to P10 billion if we want to program funds for booster shots? So, naghahanap tayo ng more or less in the vicinity of P60 billion, hindi po ba? And as we know, that is a tall order.

So, ang tanong ko po, tama po ba na — kung naalala po ninyo during the budget briefing, ang naging recommendation po is for the DOH to rethink their budget and to see if there are activities which can no longer proceed because of the pandemic, and I believe that you had undergone this exercise. And tama po ba na by your assessment, you can free up about P4 billion for that purpose? Tama po ba na by — in your reassessment of which programs can proceed or not, you made a determination that P4 billion can be saved?

REP. FRASCO. Yes, Mme. Speaker. There is a total of P4.2 billion that can be realigned from the programmed funds for the booster shots.

REP. QUIMBO. So, when you did this exercise, ang tanong ko po, did you consider, for example, looking at programs which historically has very low utilization rates but which, for whatever reason, received a higher

budget for 2022? Hindi niyo ba kinonsider na huwag na muna natin taasan ang mga budget for those programs? As I said, at iyon ang dahilan kung bakit pinakita ko po ang listahan ng mga program ng DOH at pinakita ko po ang mga programa na may mababang utilization rates. And I actually saw when I did the exercise myself, I actually saw a number of those programs with low — with historically low utilization rates, but for whatever reason had a huge increase in their proposed budget for 2022.

Can the ComSec flash the slide here? This is an illustration of that exercise, so looking at the main programs of the DOH and assuming for example that those with less than 50 percent utilization rate, then why do you not just take 80 percent of their proposed budget for 2022? Maybe those that had 50 to 70 percent utilization rates in the past then maybe have, let us say 90 percent of what is proposed and those with good performance meaning over 70 percent utilization rates, then you can retain the 2022 proposed budget and this simple exercise yielded something like P21 billion.

Kaya sa madaling salita, bakit natin pinipilit dagdagan ang budget ng mga programa na historically hindi naman natin nauubos ang pondo noon? At ngayon po na may pandemya and there are more urgent needs like paying our frontliners sufficiently, protecting our frontliners, hindi po ba this is some kind of exercise na puwede pa pong daanan ng DOH nang sa ganoon baka naman sakaling makahanap tayo by some miracle ng about P60 billion na puwede po natin gamitin para sa SRA at pati na rin sa booster shots?

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, distinguished interpellator. Yes, we agree that there are some allocations, line items, in the previous budgets that have low utilization rates and some of the explanation for some of these low utilization rates are due to COVID restrictions in the past year. So, the reason why they are still allocated with the same amount for the next year is in the hope that there will be less restrictions with respect to COVID.

With respect to finding additional budget and allocation, which is particularly close to the heart of our distinguished interpellator, the

risk allowances for our health care workers, definitely, the DOH can commit to providing allowances for these health care workers as I mentioned earlier and we acknowledge the assistance and help of our distinguished interpellator for – in fact, helping us formulate the risk exposure categorization that I had mentioned earlier – the low-risk, medium-risk and high-risk.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. QUIMBO. Salamat din po, Mme. Speaker. But again, nandito po ako para suportahan ang ating DOH para sa paghanap nga ng dagdag na pondo na talagang kailangan na kailangan. Pero ang sa tingin ko po bago tayo humingi or kumuha ng dagdag na pondo mula sa ibang ahensiya, ang pinakamaganda talaga is kumuha from within our agency dahil alam naman po natin – alam natin deep inside us na hindi mauubos talaga lahat ng budget.

So anyway, I have a few more minutes left. I would like to move on to primary care which is a very important topic as Undersecretary Mario would know. This is very close to my heart. Alam po natin na isa ito sa pillars ng Universal Health Care Law, napakaimportanteng provision ay ang bawat Pilipino ay dapat mayroong primary health care provider na siya pong tutulong sa pag-navigate ng isang pasyente through the health care system. In other words, kung may sakit ka, hindi ka sure kung may sakit ka pero may sintomas ka, kung gusto mong magtanong tungkol sa wellness or kung paano magpabakuna, mayroon kang pupuntahan na isa lamang na tao at siya ang iyong primary care provider na assigned sa'yo. Napakaganda po ng aspiration na iyon.

So ang tanong ko po, this year po magkano po ang nakalaan para sa primary care provision? Tama po ba na it is P18.024 billion? Is that the correct number po? And if so, may we ask the good Sponsor to tell us what are the elements of this program.

So, habang hinahanap po ang numero, just a little bit of context, napansin ko po in the last three years na ang naging estratehiya ng DOH is ipasa sa PhilHealth ang funding requirements para sa primary care. Mayroon

pong Konsulta package na every year po pino-propose ng PhilHealth. I believe this year it is something like P55 billion, last year, I believe it was P68 billion, but every year, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, dini-disapprove yan ng DBM every year.

So, ang tanong ko is paano kaya iyong moving forward kung taon-taon na lang inaasahan natin na ang PhilHealth ang magfa-finance ng primary care pero taon-taon din naman nire-reject o dini-disapprove ng DBM. Ano po kaya ang moving forward ng DOH? Will DOH decide to finally foot the bill for primary care? At ano po ang naiisip natin po riyan? Are we going to hire more primary care providers? Are we going to train them? Ano po ang plano moving forward?

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

The figure stated earlier by our distinguished interpellator was correct. The investment in primary care addresses more than 80 percent of peoples' common health needs throughout their lives.

REP. QUIMBO. Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, is this the program that precisely addresses that particular provision of the Universal Health Care Law that mandates the registration of every Filipino to a private care provider whether in the private sector or public sector?

REP. FRASCO. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. QUIMBO. Ano po ang plano po riyan, Mme. Speaker, are you going to recruit? Are you going to directly provide the service? Ano po ang naiisip ng DOH, are you going to recruit more primary care providers? Ano po ang expectation ng ating mga kababayan diyan? Ang mga dagdag na primary care providers mahahanap ba sila sa RHUs? Magkakaroon po ba ng sistema ng registration?

REP. FRASCO. Yes.

REP. QUIMBO. Ilan po ba ang target primary care providers na ide-deploy sa taong 2022, Mme. Speaker?

REP. FRASCO. Yes, Mme. Speaker, one of the considerations would definitely be the population, so it is population-based, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). May I remind the Honorable Quimbo to please wind up.

REP. QUIMBO. Salamat po, Mme. Speaker.

I have two minutes, hihirit pa po ako ng isang tanong na lang. But before I go to mental health, puwede na lang pong humingi ng report mula sa DOH kung ano na po ang plano para sa primary care provision. Again, very important—I know that you are grappling with the issue as to who is responsible for the provision of primary care, because primary care seems to fall between individual-based services and population-based services, and at this point, it would seem to me that you are grappling with the legal interpretation of the Universal Health Care Law. Sino ba talaga ang dapat magbayad para diyan? Ako po ay—haka-haka ko lang po iyon based on our conversations, pero sana po magkaroon po ng policy position ang DOH patungkol dito.

It is somewhere in between, but as we know it is a very important service. And today, the reason why lumolobo ang COVID cases is because our kababayans do not have access to primary care. Kung nagkaroon sila ng sintomas ng COVID, dumederetso sila kaagad sa ospital, dahil wala silang primary care provider. Kung lahat tayo mayroong sariling doktor we need not go to the hospital when we have COVID. Maaari pong maging tenable, maaari maging feasible ang homecare. And for homecare to be possible, you need to have your own attending physician; you need to have your own doctor.

So, this is a very important issue, it, unfortunately, always falls through the cracks because we are so focused on curing rather than preventing disease and at this point in time, sana po mapag-isipan pa lalo ng DOH, that I believe that this is actually the weakest link at this point in time and the very reason why the pandemic is still here.

So, sana po, again—my time is up—iyon na lang po, isa pong policy position at kung

may report on progress at kung ano ang plano moving forward. Again, I am with you, suporta po ako sa DOH lalong-lalo na po sa ating fight against COVID. Hang in there, alam kong pagod na po kayo, kami naman po, nandito po kami, kakampi ninyo po kami at sa abot ng aming makakaya hahanap po kami ng pondo para—lalong-lalo na po sa SRA ng ating frontliners.

Maraming salamat po, Mme. Speaker and Mr. Sponsor.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Majority Leader.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, next to interpellate the distinguished Sponsor is the Gentleman from the First District of Albay. I move that we recognize Cong. Edcel Lagman.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Honorable Lagman is recognized to interpellate the Sponsor.

REP. LAGMAN. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

At the outset, I would like to manifest that I am supportive of the DOH budget and any reasonable augmentation. Will the distinguished Sponsor yield to a few questions?

REP. FRASCO. I am sorry, Mme. Speaker. Can the distinguished interpellator repeat his question?

REP. LAGMAN. That was not the question. I was asking whether the distinguished Sponsor would yield to a few questions.

REP. FRASCO. Yes, of course, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, may I know what was the answer of the distinguished Sponsor to the question of Rep. Stella Quimbo on who shall defray the budget for contact tracing? Is it the national government or the LGUs?

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

It is the DILG, that is the lead agency, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Well, that does not answer my question. Who will defray or assume the cost of the funding for contact tracing? Is it the national government or the LGUs?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, both, actually. The national government complemented by the local government units.

REP. LAGMAN. How much is the portion to be assumed by the national government and how much is the portion to be assumed by the LGUs?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, it is the DILG that makes that determination.

REP. LAGMAN. Will the DILG make that determination without any guidance from the Department of Health?

REP. FRASCO. There is a guidance, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. And what is that guidance with respect to the proportion of the funding to be assumed by the national government and by the LGUs?

REP. FRASCO. One contact tracer per 800 population, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Yes, but who will assume that? Is it the national government or the LGUs?

REP. FRASCO. It is the national government that currently hires the contact tracers, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. In the 2022 National Budget, is there an appropriation for contact tracing?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, it is in the budget of the DILG and not with the DOH.

REP. LAGMAN. And that budget of the DILG is funded by the national government?

REP. FRASCO. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. How much is the funding for contact tracing, which is embedded in the budget of the DILG?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, we do not have those figures with respect to the DILG budget currently, however, we will get this figure and provide the distinguished interpellator.

REP. LAGMAN. Now, what is the total appropriation for the procurement of drugs and medicines other than those which are related to the COVID-19 pandemic?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, for a while, Mme. Speaker, while we get the figures.

Mme. Speaker, per NEP 2022, drugs and medications totaling: P18.5 billion for drugs; P11.4 billion for medical and dental lab cost; for a total of P29.9 billion.

REP. LAGMAN. And this amount of P29.5 billion is funded by the national government.

REP. FRASCO. P29.9 billion, yes, Mme. Speaker, it is funded.

REP. LAGMAN. In other words, nothing is charged to the LGUs for the procurement of drugs and medicines, is this correct?

REP. FRASCO. That is correct, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. With respect to the funding for the Health Facilities Enhancement Program, may we know, distinguished Sponsor, how much is the total appropriation for 2022?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, the figure is P19.56 – sorry, P19.47 billion, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Thank you for that answer, distinguished Sponsor. May we know whether this P19.47 billion is to be funded by the national government?

REP. FRASCO. Yes, of course, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. And nothing is to be absorbed or funded by the local government units, is that correct?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, perhaps, if there are infrastructure projects, the maintenance costs for these will be charged to the local government units.

REP. LAGMAN. But the construction cost is not charged to the local government units, is that correct?

REP. FRASCO. That is correct, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Now, how much is allocated for Malasakit Centers nationwide?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, for a while, while we get the figures.

Mme. Speaker, for the Malasakit Centers, it is a total of P17 billion, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. And this will be all assumed by the national government, I suppose, this P17 billion, is that correct, distinguished Sponsor?

REP. FRASCO. Yes, that is correct, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. How many Malasakit Centers are there now nationwide?

REP. FRASCO. There are a total of 147 Malasakit Centers nationwide, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. And with this appropriation of P17 billion, how much is allocated per Malasakit Center?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, on the average is, P5 to P10 million per month, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Well, I do not have the computation, but the computation will be P17 billion divided by 147 Malasakit Centers. Is that correct?

REP. FRASCO. Yes, that is correct, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. So, your computation, distinguished Sponsor, is that, it is P10 million—no, no. How much is it again...

REP. FRASCO. On average, Mme. Speaker,...

REP. LAGMAN. ... per Malasakit Center?

REP. FRASCO. ... P5 to P10 million per month, per Malasakit Center, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Per month. So, if it is P10 million per month, then it would be P120 million per year. Is that correct?

REP. FRASCO. That is correct, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Can I possibly request for a submission from the Department of Health justifying the amount of P17 billion for 147 Malasakit Centers and what are the present functions of these Malasakit Centers?

REP. FRASCO. Yes, Mme. Speaker, the Department of Health would be delighted to provide the report.

REP. LAGMAN. And I would be delighted to receive that the soonest. When can I get that submission?

REP. FRASCO. We will do our best, Mme. Speaker, to provide the report by next week.

REP. LAGMAN. By next week. By next week, we will be already on recess, I think. Can we have that possibly by Thursday? Because we will adjourn by Thursday for the long break, and I suppose, that the figures and data would be readily available in the Department of Health considering that they have already submitted the appropriation of P17 billion for the Malasakit Centers.

REP. FRASCO. Yes, Mme. Speaker, we will do our best and we acknowledge that the last day of session is Thursday and we

commit to provide the report by Thursday, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Thank you, distinguished Sponsor. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. I have no other questions for the moment.

REP. FRASCO. Thank you very much, distinguished interpellator.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Thank you, Honorable Lagman.
Majority Leader.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, next to interpellate the distinguished Sponsor is the Lady from the First District of Iloilo, I move that we recognize Cong. Janette Garin.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Honorable Garin is recognized to interpellate the Sponsor.

REP. GARIN (J.). Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Thank you very much, distinguished Sponsor.
Am I clear, Mme. Speaker?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Loud and clear. But before you proceed—Majority Leader.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, I would also just like to manifest that Cong. Sergio Dagooc and Cong. Kit Belmonte have yielded their time to Cong. Janette Garin.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Noted on that, Majority Leader.

REP. DE VENECIA. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). You may proceed, Honorable Garin.

REP. GARIN (J.). Maraming salamat po,

Mme. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, distinguished Sponsor.

May I request, since I am not at the plenary, may I request the Committee on Rules to share the slides that I prepared.

With that, Mme. Speaker, while, I am not sure if it is being loaded, but may we be apprised how we are responding to the pandemic, that has been more than a year since the pandemic started. What are the DOH concrete plans of action in relation to this? What will be the whole-of-nation approach to this? Can the honorable Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, give us in a nutshell what we will be expecting?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, yes, the strategy is to proceed with our ongoing vaccination program, and of course, follow the PDITR strategy, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). In other words, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, the plan is PDITR, and that is Prevention, Detection, Isolation, Treatment and Reintegration. But is this supported in the current National Expenditure Program? And can the honorable Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, give us the specifics to justify that this is being supported.

REP. FRASCO. Yes, Mme. Speaker, with regard to the specifics, we have the budget for the vaccination, isolation through the HFEP. We have our (*inaudible*) and of course, with the TTMF, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, can you please proceed with the specifics. We can go step by step, let us start with prevention. And if we talk about prevention this would, of course, be related to vaccination and even early diagnoses. May we know how much is the budget of the Department of Health for 2022 in terms of COVID vaccination?

REP. FRASCO. One moment, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, with due courtesy, I hope that my—

REP. FRASCO. Yes.

REP. GARIN (J.). ... the lag will not be deducted from my time.

REP. FRASCO. We have a P4.2 billion from the programmed funds, and that is roughly 7.8 million doses, and we have P45 billion from the unprogrammed funds that is roughly 83.4 million doses, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, apparently, I cannot get the exact figures being—in relation to the response of the honorable Sponsor. May we have that again, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor?

REP. FRASCO. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

Currently, we have P4.2 billion from the programmed funds and that is 7.8 million doses, and we have P45 billion from the unprogrammed funds, and that is equivalent to 83.4 million doses, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). In other words, the budget that is available is only equivalent to 7.8 million doses, because all of us are aware that the P40 billion plus that the distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, is saying, is lodged under the unprogrammed funds. Sa madaling sabi po, ito ay nakalista pero walang pondo.

Just (*inaudible*), Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, correct me if I am wrong.

REP. FRASCO. Yes, Mme. Speaker, that is correct.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, in the pre-Plenary hearings that we had, including in the Committee hearings that we had, we made and reiterated the same appeal, so, may we inquire from the leadership of the Department of Health if they have already initiated moves to realign some of the not so necessary funding, and instead, spend this not in the unprogrammed funds but in a line item that will cover for the procurement of vaccines?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, yes, the DOH has already realigned on the advice of our distinguished interpellator.

REP. GARIN (J.). Can we have the specifics of that, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor?

REP. FRASCO. Yes, of course, Mme. Speaker. Mme. Speaker, the realignment of P4.23 billion for COVID initiatives are from the following: HFEP from (NEP 2022) P82 million to (proposed GAA 2022) P72 million, realigned of P10 million to COVID-19 vaccines. The amount is originally for other activities, trainings that cannot be implemented due to the pandemic.

The operations of Philippine Medical Travel and Wellness Tourism Program or PMTWTP were transferred to HPB. Under Public Health Management, Central Office, MOOE, from (NEP 2022) P1.080 billion to (GAA) P894 million, realigned P186 million to COVID-19 vaccines. The amount is originally for SAA-CHD activities that can no longer be implemented because of the pandemic or those with low impact.

And lastly, for the realignment of a total P4.2 billion, Prevention and Control of Communicable Diseases, also under MOOE, from (NEP) P8.1 billion to (proposed GAA) P8 billion, realigned P138.412 million to COVID-19 vaccines.

Further, Mme. Speaker, under FHINRP including complementary feeding under also MOOE, a total of realigned for COVID-19 vaccines was P3.43 billion from FHINRP; from Health Sector Research Development, also under Central Office MOOE, a total realigned of P42.094 million for COVID-19 vaccines; Pharmaceutical Management also under MOOE, realigned a total of P170 million to COVID-19 vaccines; and under Health Technology Assessment—that was it, Mme. Speaker. So, a total of P4.23 billion for COVID-19 vaccines was realigned. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. And apologies for that, I was muted and I was having a hard time entering the virtual, our

meeting. In other words po, sa madaling sabi, a total of P4.23 billion has already been realigned and allocated for vaccines. May I know the unit cost for this program, approximately how much per dose?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, more or less, P542 per dose, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Okay, thank you very much for that. Mayroon pa po bang ibang pagkukunan ang Department of Health because if we are talking about 7.8 million doses, that is roughly 5 percent of the Philippine population.

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, the total of the unprogrammed P45 billion for COVID-19 vaccines are currently being negotiated by the Department of Finance with the three multilateral lending agencies, these are the World Bank, the ADB and the AIIB.

REP. GARIN (J.). In other words, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, nakasandal po sa panaginip natin na makautang para makabili tayo ng bakuna. Iyon po ba ang nangyayari at iyon po ba ang hihintayin ng ating mga kababayan?

It is answerable by a yes or no, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor.

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, that is the commitment of the Department of Finance to the President, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Yes, but my question is, nakasandal ba sa desisyon na tayo ay makakautang or tayo ay pauutangin para makabili ng bakuna next year? Because what I am hearing is that, there will be discussions from funding agencies. Ang pagkaintindi ko po, kapag ganyang salita, if you laymanize it, it simply means, maghahanap ang Pilipinas ng mauutangan para mayroon tayong pambili ng bakuna.

Did I hear it right, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, yes, we have our own funds, the P45 billion, unprogrammed,

and the P4.2 billion programmed funds, but we are also relying on our loans, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Yes. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, let us make it clear. Let us call a spade a spade. Alam natin na kapag sinabing unprogrammed funds, suntok sa buwan iyan, because that will only be funded if we have excess tax collection. At paano naman tayo magkakaroon ng excess tax collection e nasa pandemya nga tayo at maraming negosyo ang nagsasara?

Be that as it may, I do not want to waste my time arguing on this, and for the record, we are saying that response to this pandemic is a priority of our government, that we should walk the talk. How can we say that we are prioritizing it if we are only allocating P4.23 billion, enough for seven million Filipinos? That is 7 percent of our population. At iyan nga po ay kulang-kulang, at napakasakit malaman na hanggang ngayon, nakasandal tayo sa magpapautang sa atin para po tayo magkabakuna.

Be that as it may, I believe the slides are already there.

May we request the Secretariat to please share the slides that I have submitted.

So, if we move forward, we have two strategies.

Next slide, please.

Next slide, please.

Next slide, please.

Next slide, please.

Sorry.

Okay. So, pinag-usapan po at ito po ang sagot n'yo kanina. The current strategy and the whole-of-nation approach are prevention, detection, isolation, treatment and reintegration.

And, when we talk about prevention, vaccination is one, at nakita naman natin ay tila hindi po nakakapanatag ng kalooban ng karamihan iyong ating pinag-uusapan dahil nakasandal tayo sa mga uutangan natin instead of looking at our coffers and saying that we have the funds to buy the vaccines.

Kasi kung mangungutang pa tayo, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, napakahirap magkaroon ng advance reservation sa mga vaccine manufacturers. Kaya nga po

nagrereklamo tayo, sasabihin natin, ay walang stocks, wala kaming makuha. E paano nga tayo makakakuha ay wala naman tayong pondo na pine-prepare.

Moving forward, another very important strategy is testing. So, may we proceed further, magkano po ba ang pondo natin for testing? Or may I rephrase my question, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. Sa pondo ng ating gobyerno for 2022, ilan po ba ang mabibigyan ng libreng testing?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, one moment as we get the figures.

REP. GARIN (J.). Again, Mme. Speaker, I hope that the lag will not be deducted from my time.

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, there is a total of 4.38 million COVID-19 tests and other laboratory network needs.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, my question was how many people can be given free COVID testing with the budget that we have for 2022? Ilan po ba ang hindi sisingilin at walang ibabayad at libre ang kanilang testing?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, the answer to that is 4.38 million people can be tested, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). And this will be lodged where? Kung ako po ay isang direct contact, kung ako po ay isang health care worker, or ako po ay isang kailangang ma-swab kasi na-expose ako. Saan po ito puwedeng—can I be one of the 4 million Filipinos who can avail of the free testing and where will I go?

REP. FRASCO. Yes, Mme. Speaker, of course the priority are the health care workers but—I am sorry.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, my question is very simple. Saang testing center ba iyan? Ang sabi natin may pondo tayo, mayroon tayong apat na milyong Pilipino, libre, walang bayad na

makakapagpa-test. Saan po ba ito? Where can I go for free testing? Because the Bayanihan funds and even the budget of the DOH have been repeatedly telling us that even—ito libre ang testing, but it does not seem to coincide when you talk about the situation on the ground, that is why I am asking, so that we can guide our constituents.

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, we actually have—the DOH actually has 270 testing centers all over the country. These include public and private testing centers, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Yes, I am sorry, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. But my question is not being answered.

Ang sabi ninyo po, distinguished Sponsor, I do hope that, of course, Congressman Frasco is a very good friend of mine, kaya lang ito kasi trabaho lang e. Kaya nga ang tanong natin, kung mayroon tayong apat na milyong Pilipino na libre na puwedeng i-test, kasi sabi nga ng DOH may pondo tayo rito, saan iyong mga testing center na ito? I am not asking about the DOH-accredited laboratories. I am asking about free COVID testing.

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. It was actually—it is actually 283 testing centers all over the country. There are 34 government testing centers ...

REP. GARIN (J.). Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, please naman po, ano. We are very polite with our questions. Please give us direct answers. I am not asking for the number of accredited laboratories, ang pinag-uusapan natin dito, ilan ba ang mabibigyan ng libreng testing para naman we can achieve prevention, detection, and early isolation, that is actually the grand plan of the Department of Health and is actually your whole-of-nation approach. But here I am hearing your reiterative answers pointing to the number of testing centers that we have. That is not my concern. My concern is saan pupunta ang Pilipinong kailangang i-test na walang pambayad? Because you are telling me you have available funds to test four million

Filipinos, unang-una napakaliit po noon. Pero okay na kung hindi natin i-contest iyan. Ang tanong ko, what is the system? What is the process? Where are they going to go, so that they will not be – para hindi sila singilin. Asan sila mungadtu para dili mabayad, para libre sila? Because if we have testing centers that people keep on paying, then we will end up with people who are not being tested and who will be continuously infecting others.

In other words, the questions that I am deriving at is pointing to the feasibility and the practicability of whether the Department of Health will walk the talk and provide for prevention, detection, isolation, treatment and reintegration.

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

To answer the distinguished interpellator's question earlier, on where we can provide free testing for our constituents, of the 283 testing centers all over the country, there are a total of 134 testing centers that provide free tests to our people.

REP. GARIN (J.). And may the distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, post these 134 testing centers on our website, because we need to be sure that the answers being given to us are accurate. Because I tell you, if you are telling me that you have 134 testing centers who are giving free testing, we can call on them now, we can inform people and they can be guided where to go so that they would not have to pay.

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, yes. We will post this on the DOH website. Every licensed testing center and government-run testing center are actually posted on the DOH website, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, again, paikot-ikot po tayó. We are not talking about licensed or accredited testing centers. We are talking about your budget that can cover four million free tests, and the institutions that will provide this.

I would understand it, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, if you will just tell

me that the DOH refuses to give us the facts. In other words, we have the prevention, detection, isolation, treatment and reintegration plan, but in reality, these are all colors that cannot be implemented because the proposed budget of the Department of Health is not pandemic-ready.

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, the DOH is committed to provide the facts. In fact, with regard again to the testing centers, this will be posted – these are posted in the DOH website, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Okay.

Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, let me just, again, rephrase my question, unahin na natin sa bakuna. If we are to solve or even just partially solve this pandemic, how many doses do we need for 2022? And in relation to testing, how many free PCR testings should be given by the government for free, so that we can adequately respond to this pandemic? I just need two numbers, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor.

Ilang bakuna ang kailangan para sa 2022 para masabi nating ginampanan natin ang obligasyon natin para solusyonan ang pandemya?

Pangalawang tanong, ilan po bang free PCR testing ang kailangang ibigay ng gobyerno para sa ilang mga tao para masabi nating natugunan natin ang early detection and immediate isolation?

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

With respect to the number of doses, currently from the unprogrammed and programmed funds of the DOH, there is a total of 91.2 million doses. Also, with respect to the loan that is being negotiated by the Department of Finance, that is also an additional millions of doses.

With respect to the PCR testing, this is risk-based testing, Mme. Speaker, targeted testing.

Thank you.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, I am really sorry, you are my good friend, honorable Sponsor. But my question is not being answered. Napakasimple po ng tanong ko.

Let us stop talking about loans and program fund dahil ito ay wala pa, puwedeng mangyari, puwedeng hindi. Ang pag-usapan natin ay iyong nasa NEP at may pondo tayo.

Let us move forward kaya nga binabaligtad ko. By 2022, how many doses do we need in relation to vaccines needed if we are to appropriately respond to the pandemic? And, my second question is, in terms of testing, you have the figures, you have the projections, how many free PCR testing do we need to provide so that we can be judged as appropriately responding to the pandemic?

REP. FRASCO. Again, Mme. Speaker, distinguished interpellator, with respect to the total number of vaccine doses that our country can provide to our people, it is roughly 91.2 million doses and that does (*inaudible*) the ...

REP. GARIN (J.). Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, I am asking about how many doses do we need? So, am I taking it that that will be the total number of doses that we will be needing, 91 million doses?

Let us base it on how much, so how much do we need and then, umatras tayo kung ilan iyong ating napondohan.

Okay, we have 110 million Filipinos, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, not to mention the foreigners that are residing here. So, what is our target for next year considering that we will now be vaccinating teens, considering that in the near future, in the next few months, babies and children will also be vaccinated, and considering the fact that we might be needing a third dose? How many doses do we need? Is it safe to say that we will be needing, more or less, 100 million doses?

Ang tinanggal po lang natin diyan is those two years old, three years old and below.

REP. FRASCO. Yes, Mme. Speaker, more or less, we will be needing those many doses.

REP. GARIN (J.). Okay.

REP. FRASCO. The specifics ...

REP. GARIN (J.). So, on the part of testing,

ilang tests ang kailangan, considering the projections that we have? We are expecting how many people to be infected, to be direct contacts, to be part of the targeted testing? Ilan po bang tests ang kailangan ng buong Pilipinas for 2022?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, we expect roughly 53,000 tests per day just in our public labs, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). So, how many will that be? Will that transcend to 53,000 times 365 days? So, that is roughly 19,345,000 tests.

REP. FRASCO. Yes, Mme. Speaker, that is about – right, 19,589,550 tests per year.

REP. GARIN (J.). Iyan ang kailangan nating tests for 2022, we are sure about that. Kasi, we are – like for health care workers, if we have 2.5 or three million health care workers, we include the tracers, they are being tested every two months. Others are being tested once a month, so they are being reswabbed and reswabbed, so that will be two million times 12, you already have – three pala, you already have 36 million tests just for health care workers, excluding the other frontliners.

REP. FRASCO. That is about right, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). That is just for health workers. What I am pointing out, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, ay tila hindi nagtutugma. Ang sinasabi mo kasi sa akin, ang kailangan natin is around 20 million tests for one year. But, if you look at our health care workers, which is roughly around three million health care workers that exclude the other frontliners, like ambulance drivers, people in the quarantine centers. If you test them once every three months or roughly – kung tingnan mo sila lang mismo, you already need 36 million tests. And I think, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, the problem here is, if we do not know our goals, if we do not know our targets, how can we talk about solutions to this pandemic?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, with all due respect, Mme. Speaker, we do have assumptions and this is what our – these are our assumptions (*inaudible*) ...

REP. GARIN (J.). So, can we ...

REP. FRASCO. ... to the test.

REP. GARIN (J.). Yes, can we please have the assumptions, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor? Can we please have the assumptions so that we can proceed with the computations?

REP. FRASCO. Yes. As mentioned earlier, Mme. Speaker, the total target for government labs only is 53,670 tests per day, for an annual test total of 19,589,550. And these are broken down as follows: RT-PCR tests per day – 34,886, for a total annual 12,733,208; (*inaudible*) ...

REP. GARIN (J.). Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, okay. Punta na lang tayo, 20 million ang dapat na i-provide na libre ng gobyerno for next year. How many tests have been funded, have free PCR testing? Sa pondo ng 2022, if our target is 20 million free tests, ilan ang napondohan dito if you consider our NEP?

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, can we request for a one-minute suspension, Mme. Speaker?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). The session is suspended.

It was 9:07 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 9:09 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). The session is resumed.

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, with respect to the COVID-19 tests, as requested by the DOH from the DBM, the original request was

P15.9 billion. However, what was granted was only P5.09 million. And this is a total of 4.3 million COVID tests. The DOH is appealing for an additional P10 to P11 billion so we can hit our target of 19.5 million tests for the year 2022.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, this is not new to us, DOH blaming DBM and DBM earlier telling us that DOH was not able to substantiate or justify their requests. Ang problema dito, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, ang nagiging biktima po kasi ng turuan na ito ay ang sambayanang Pilipino. And my experience with the Executive kapag hindi ka pinagbigyan ay dapat paulit-ulit kang mag-appeal at kung talagang hindi ka pagbibigyan at nakita mo namang kailangan ng taumbayan ang pondo na ito because this means our survival, then it is time again for the Department of Health to sacrifice the other funding and focus on our needs. Because you have been telling us that the solution to this pandemic is prevention, detection, isolation, treatment and reintegration kaya naman po pagod na pagod iyong ating LGU officials kasi ang hirap pong maghanap ng solusyon kung ganito iyong ating direksiyon.

Okay. Be that as it may, may we get the commitment, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, of the DOH family, how much are they going to realign not only for additional vaccine but also for testing? Kasi kung ganito po, Mme. Speaker, distinguished colleagues iyong ating direksiyon ay tila parang feeling ko magkaka-COVID ulit ako, baka quarterly magkaka-COVID na lang ako nito dahil nakikita po nating marami po tayong plano pero hindi natin alam kung paano tumbukin ang ating plano. So, do we get the commitment of the honorable Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, that...

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Yes, we commit to the distinguished interpellator. The total amount that we actually appealed for with respect to our budget is P92 billion. This includes everything that was mentioned earlier – COVID-19 tests, allowances for our health care workers, and

much needed infrastructure projects for our health facilities all over the country.

REP. GARIN (J.). Yes. Do we have budgets for program implementation review, seminars, trainings or health promotion? Kasi marami sa mga programa na iyan ay hindi implementable during this pandemic.

REP. FRASCO. No, Mme. Speaker, we do not have.

REP. GARIN (J.). So, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, can the honorable Secretary of the Department of Health assure us that before we go on break, before we finally approve the budget, let us say within, I am sorry to say this but within 24 hours, can you give us items that can be realigned for additional vaccines and additional free testing? Kasi kung mayroon tayong utangin, di iyong utang na iyon ang gamitin doon sa mga pagkukunan niya. What I am saying, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, is kung sinasabi nating maniwala kayo, umuutang tayo at pag dumating iyong utang, ibibili natin ng bakuna and we are going to provide free tests, why do we not make it the other way around? Use the money that you have for 2022 for vaccines and free testing, and iyong utangin ay gamitin diyan sa mga pagkukunan ng pondo.

REP. FRASCO. Yes, Mme. Speaker. We commit to the request of our distinguished interpellator. As mentioned earlier, we are requesting – or we have realigned P4.2 billion and we commit and we are still looking for more, in fact, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. We thank Secretary Duque for that and we are really looking forward that he will walk his talk, because we are seeing a very difficult situation on the grounds, especially in the provinces.

Next slide please. Can we request the Secretariat to flash the next slide?

Okay. These are the purposes of vaccination – zero deaths, reduction of

hospitalization, reduction of transmission. Can the good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, confirm the reliability of what is posted on the slide?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, yes, from what we can see from the slides, these are our main objectives but the vaccines are not 100 percent protective, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). So, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, the three main purposes of vaccination are zero deaths, or we can have substantial reduction of deaths, reduction of hospitalization and reduction of transmission. We are aware that with the announcements of the Department of Health and the World Health Organization, the big surprise or the Delta surprise or the Delta pandemic has changed the game, and the main two functions of vaccination which are zero deaths and reduction of hospitalization still persist. However, the reduction of transmission has been drastically and significantly reduced by the Delta pandemic. Can the honorable Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, attest to this?

REP. FRASCO. Yes, Mme. Speaker, with respect to the Delta variant, it is a more highly transmittable variant of the coronavirus. So, that is part of the reason of the surge and increase in infections all over the country. But, if we continue with our vaccination program, we believe that we will be able to achieve the objectives posted by our distinguished interpellator. However, there are also breakthrough infections. So, that is why it is still a very important aspect of our budget for the following year to vaccinate not only the unvaccinated, but also including in our program, to provide booster shots for the Filipino people. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Thank you very much, distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker for those answers.

Just to laymanize it, ang sinasabi po ng ating Kalihim ng Kalusugan, tama naman po iyon, kailangan na kailangan pa rin natin iyong bakuna; however, the third purpose of vaccination, which is actually the reduction of transmission, has taken us by surprise because

of the Delta variant. Kaya itong pangatlo ay talagang apektado at kaya apektado rin iyong ating target of herd immunity.

So, let me move forward to the second question that is flashed there. If the above three are not complied with, or let me simplify it, if the third purpose of vaccination is not happening because of the Delta variant, can we achieve herd immunity even with just two doses?

Kasi sa pagkakaintindi ko, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, when we talk about herd immunity, it has something to do with the third purpose of vaccination, and that is the reduction of transmission. Ibig sabihin, iyong bakunado, dahil bakunado ka ay hindi ka mahahawa, karamihan ay hindi mahahawa, at kayo ay hindi makakapanghawa. However, with the Delta surprise that we have now, the vaccinated are getting infected and can transmit the infection. Again, however, you are still far from death and you are far from hospitalization if vaccinated.

So, I am going back to the question of herd immunity. Can we have herd immunity if the current vaccines, regardless of any brand, are not curtailing transmission from an infected vaccinated person to other people?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, I think in addition to the vaccination program and for us to be able to get back to the new normal or get to the new normal, we cannot just consider vaccination alone. We also still have to consider minimum public health standards. In particular, with respect to COVID, we should continue to wear our masks and maintain social distance, most especially during this time with respect to the Delta variant that it is more transmissible than the previous variants. Thank you.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, that is a no-brainer. We all agree to that. We still need minimum public health standards on top of vaccination. But my question is not related to that, my question is all about herd immunity. My question is—okay, let me simplify it, would you agree with me in the scientific definition of herd immunity which actually pertains

to the protection of the population because a certain substantial proportion who have been vaccinated will prevent or stop the chain of transmission? Hindi po ba iyan ang ibig sabihin ng herd immunity?

REP. FRASCO. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). At kaya nga po, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, kung ang ibig sabihin ng herd immunity, kapag ganitong karaming Pilipino ang nabakunahan at iyong mga nabakunahan karamihan sa kanila, 80 percent ay hindi mahahawa at hindi makakapanghawa, iyong 20 percent na mai-infect ang ibig sabihin noon ay papunta tayo sa herd immunity. But what is happening now with the Delta surprise, lahat ng bakuna, regardless of brand, with the dictated dictum of number of doses and that is two doses for many, one dose for some, ang nangyari ay nandoon pa rin iyong reduction of deaths, reduction of severity, reduction of hospitalization; however, the vaccinated are now getting infected and the infected vaccinated are starting to transmit and can definitely transmit as what our scientists are telling us. Kaya bumabalik ako doon sa herd immunity. I am not saying that we do not need the vaccines but I need this to be discussed because this is one of the parameters where our government is going to spend money. Kasi herd immunity ang ating target hindi ba? That is the end point.

So, my question is, where are we now in herd immunity? Are we back to zero? But that is practical and that is acceptable because this is science. So, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, may we hear the wisdom of the Department of Health?

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

With respect to herd immunity, considering that the coronavirus is a new virus and there are variants that pop up, it is very hard to say with respect to achieving the exact herd immunity threshold that we would like or achieving it is our objective. But the main objective of the DOH, with respect to our vaccination program and also with respect to complying with minimum health standards,

is to reduce the number of deaths and to reduce the number of those hospitalized in our facilities.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, to that.

I entirely agree with you that our goal is zero deaths if possible or significant reduction of deaths and significant reduction of severity as well as hospitalization. But I am catching or discussing the issue of herd immunity because I believe this is a very important communication to formation that should be communicated to our people especially through our local government units. Because as of this point in time, because the virus is very novel and we have new variants who have affected the efficacy of our vaccines and there is also waning immunity, we probably have to do away with herd immunity as a parameter.

Kasi palagi po nating naririnig sa ating mga vaccine czars, the people in charge of herd immunity, ito iyong ating hinahabol. We have to shift to that. We have to be very transparent to our people so that each citizen of the Republic of the Philippines can help. And I am opening this up because we have to shift. Our target will now be, ilan iyong hindi na nakakapanghawa? How do we measure the interception of transmission? Paano ba natin mapipigil iyong pagkahawahawa? And I believe that is the measure that should be communicated by the Department of Health. Will the honorable Sponsor and will the Department of Health agree to this, Mme. Speaker?

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor.

Yes, we agree that herd immunity is definitely an objective, but the main objective of the Department of Health is again to reduce—to continue our vaccination program, to make sure that the Filipino people comply with minimum health standards in order to achieve our objectives to reduce deaths and reduce hospitalization.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mme. Speaker,

distinguished Sponsor, may I request the honorable Sponsor, with due courtesy to just answer me with a yes or no. With the current circumstances considering the Delta pandemic, will you agree with me that we are back to zero in terms of herd immunity simply because of waning immunity and because of the fact that the currently recommended primary series is not being achieved? Ibig sabihin, iyong first two doses, the expected protection of those two doses, that primary series is not being achieved? Will you agree with the thoughts that are coming now among the people in the medical and scientific community that we are back to zero in terms of herd immunity? And I am not saying that the vaccines are not effective. I am saying that the DOH should be transparent, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. Kasi ang pagkakaintindi ng mga mayors, ng ibang governors, “Ay, 50 percent na kami sa herd immunity. Ay, 70 percent na kami sa herd immunity.” Not considering the fact that there is no herd immunity to talk about at this point in time because of the waning immunity and the inadequate protection from the currently recommended primary series. This is not a fault of our government. This is not a fault of the Department of Health. This is science that should be explained to our other frontliners and decision-makers. It is a yes or a no, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor.

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, distinguished interpellator. I think the answer is no. We are not back to zero with respect to herd immunity. The purpose of the vaccination program is to reduce the transmission of the coronavirus and if shown that if a person is vaccinated, they have less of a viral load and that will help in terms of the transmission, ‘no, but because of new variants, most especially the Delta variant that is more transmissible as compared to previous variants, perhaps, there is an increase in terms of the threshold of herd immunity or the definition of herd immunity.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, I think this is where our country has a major problem, because if we

do not accept the problem, if we continuously are in denial, then we cannot discuss solutions.

Balik po tayo, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, sa inyong sagot. Ang sabi ninyo, “No, there is herd immunity because it can protect, it produces decreased viral load and it reduces transmission,” but that is with regard to Alpha, Beta, the UK, the South America and the Brazil variant. That does not cover Delta variant, which is the variant that is now circulating in our country. That is why we have to be transparent, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor.

Kaya, uulitin ko na lang, iyong tanong natin is if you are discussing, let us discuss the Delta variant because that is the circulating variant that will soon envelope our whole country and the whole world and we can have more aggressive variants. So, talking about Delta variant, are we back to zero with herd immunity? It is a yes or a no, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Speaker?

And, again, that is not wrong. Hindi po natin puwedeng sisihin ang gobyerno; hindi natin puwedeng sisihin ang DOH, pero kailangan nating tanggapin para pag-usapan iyong mga next solutions.

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, our current vaccines actually do work against the new variant, the Delta variant. And it is shown that if a person is vaccinated, they have less of the Delta variant viral load and that will stall the transmission of the virus.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, can you point to me a hospital or any health care institution that can prove what you are talking? Because, I can disprove that with the data that I have.

Ang sinasabi n’yo ho kasi, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, vaccines are working. Yes, the vaccines are working in terms of reduction of deaths, reduction of severity, and reduction of hospitalization, but reduction of transmission for Delta variant? No, because that is what is being shown. Mas malakas ang Delta variant, mas mababa iyong proteksiyon na ibinibigay ng dalawang dose ng bakuna kaya maski bakunado ka, nahahawa ka at puwede ka pa ring makapanghawa.

That is why, it is very important to keep on campaigning for mask. Kaya nga ibinalik iyong mask. Kaya nga ibinalik iyong minimum public health standards na paulit-ulit na sinasabi.

Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, my appeal is very simple, transparency in communicating the health situation. Because if we keep on hiding this information, our governors and mayors will get confused. Karamihan sa kanila nagbibilang ng herd immunity without understanding that we cannot discuss herd immunity now, that was before. Pero iba ngayon ang parameters.

Does the DOH have, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, a data, a list of breakthrough infections in each of their hospitals? Mayroon po ba sila niyan or in just a few hospitals, if you have?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, no, the DOH does not have these records.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, I am really sorry. But, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, whoever is coaching you is lying. Paano ba naman hindi malalaman ng DOH kung ilan ang breakthrough infections e nalalaman nga ng ibang mga tao kasi it is very clear.

Okay, let us talk about each hospital. PGH, ilan ba diyan ang bakunado pero nag-positive? O, San Lazaro, ilan iyong bakunado pero nag-positive? RITM, ilan ang bakunado pero nag-positive? Punta na lang tayo sa distrito ko. San Joaquin Hospital, ilan iyong positibo pero bakunado? I mean, we have to talk about realities.

Okay, let us start with what hospital? RITM—it is very impossible because, if DOH does not have that data, then there is a failure in reporting. Therefore, we are not counting the breakthrough infections and that is why our pandemic response is not answerable to what we should be doing.

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, actually, the DOH is counting the breakthrough infections. However, the data currently available are not complete. So with respect to our report and study, it is currently ongoing with the different hospitals.

REP. GARIN (J.). But what is the initial result, Mme. Speaker, distinguished colleague? Hindi pa natin masasabing complete iyan kasi ongoing e, patuloy, it is a work in progress. Mayroong nai-infect, patuloy nang patuloy. But, what is the data that you have now? Because I heard the data that were given by FDA and I am sorry, it is a big lie. Because you cannot have 284 breakthrough infections e sa district hospital lang namin aabot na ng 100, e sa buong Pilipinas pa kaya.

PGH has been releasing its data. How about San Lazaro? How about RITM? How about these infectious disease hospitals, or let us say the regional hospitals, or let us say the provincial hospitals? Nare-report naman po, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, kung ilan iyong positive e.

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, again, the data are still being collected by the DOH so they are not complete, but based on what ...

REP. GARIN (J.). What is the rough data, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor? Just give us a few hospitals.

REP. FRASCO. I just have (*inaudible*), Mme. Speaker, ...

REP. GARIN (J.). What hospital would you have there?

REP. FRASCO. ... the summary that we have, based on the available data that we have, there are — a total of 242 cases were reported as breakthrough infections, 87 percent of which are mild and asymptomatic, while 10 percent are hospitalized and 2 percent are dead.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, again, I am telling you, that figure is a big lie. Because if you are telling us — let us not talk about mild, moderate or severe, because the discussion here is whether nakapanghawa ba o hindi, kasi maski walang sintomas nakapanghawa ka, maski mild nakapanghawa ka. And we are talking here about the whole picture how can we resolve this pandemic — 242 cases, e sa San Joaquin Hospital nga lang which is a

level-one hospital na ang liit-liit niyan, they already have 60 cases. And in our district hospital, we have probably almost 50 cases. And I know, for a fact, that in PGH, I think, the breakthrough infections, there will not be less than 50. So, napakaimposible naman po ng 242. And there is really no help, 'no. What is the benefit of hiding the figures? We are not saying that vaccination has failed. It has its impact. It has its positive effect. But we need to acknowledge, accept and be transparent with the data and the information so that our local government chief executives can handle their individual situations as well.

Tanungin na lang kita, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. In the province of Cebu, how many breakthrough infections do we have? Because in my rough estimate, in my rough data, it is around 289, that includes the city.

REP. FRASCO. With respect to the question from the distinguished interpellator, we are still collecting the data. As I mentioned earlier, there are a total of 242 cases, breakthrough cases ...

REP. GARIN (J.). Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, balik na lang po tayo, tanungin natin, for the city and the provinces of Cebu, how many breakthrough infections do you have? Because my data says 289, that is already above 242. Puwede bang balikan natin iyong province and city of Cebu, how many breakthrough infections do you have?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, we do not have that information currently because we are still harmonizing our data with the DICT.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mme. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, I do hope that the DOH will have it in their conscience to be transparent to our people. Kasi napakaimposible nga na 242. Ospital pa nga lang sa distrito ko pa nga lang, more than 300 na iyan, sige, isa-isahin natin, PGH, kasi lumalabas naman sa balita iyon. You cannot keep on saying we have to wait for DICT — this is a war, and our decisions are based on the transparency that you are showing. I am not

saying that we failed, but what I am saying is that we have to recalibrate information because we owe it to our people to be transparent.

Breakthrough infections are happening at a rate of 50 to 60 percent among health care workers in hospitals, and that is a fact. Kung nandidiyan lang ako, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, I can show you my notes, I can show you my numbers. Unfortunately, I am not there for some personal reasons. And unless, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, we persistently allow DOH to blind us with the real situation, we cannot solve this pandemic. And we are losing lives, we are losing people. Our health care workers are getting infected. I am not saying that we are at fault. We are not at fault. But we have to accept the facts. Kaya nga bumabalik tayo sa definition ng herd immunity. Kasi, ang tama natin kasing sanang sasabihin diyan sa labas, we have to go back to zero in terms of herd immunity. Vaccine still works and everybody has to presume that we are back to zero. Balik tayo doon sa panahon na takot na takot tayo, kasi ngayon, with the vaccines with people saying, we are 50 percent from our target of herd immunity, we are 60 percent of herd immunity, akala tuloy ng tao protektado sila. Akala tuloy ng tao Superman, Wonder Woman sila, that is why we have this problem now.

If other big countries and progressive countries, and a good health care, they are admitting that herd immunity is back to zero, why can we not do it?

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. With respect again to breakthrough infections, as I mentioned earlier, breakthrough infections in the community are still being computed. However, we do have FDA data on AEFI-Adverse Events Following Immunization, and the data state 116 cases were reported as breakthrough infections, 88 of which are mild and asymptomatic while 11 percent ...

REP. GARIN (J.). Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, please I am appealing to you. This is all about the lives of our people. We cannot just rely on AEFIs because those are delayed reports. You have your medical

center chiefs; you have your Infectious Disease Department in every hospital. E kasi, ilan ba ang nagre-report, kunwari sa atin o me nag-positive nang health care worker, uunahin mo ba iyong pag-report sa FDA samantalang ang dami-daming pasyenteng inaasikaso mo?

The hospitals have the data, then why can the DOH not just go to each chief of hospital and request them to give a daily update? Ilan ba diyan sa mga empleyado n'yo ang natamaan? Ilang porsiyento ba 'yan? Because I can show you our own rough estimate and I am telling you it is 50 to 60 percent. And why are we debating on something that is a fact? Why can we not accept the situation, acknowledge that science is evolving. Acknowledge that it is a very novel virus and recalibrate our responses from there.

Because, if DOH says, we are back to zero for herd immunity, that we have been successful because of the reduction of deaths as well as the severity kaya for next year, ang kailangan natin ay malaking pondo para sa immediate detection, early isolation, and aggressive vaccination kaya sana mabibigyan ng pondo ang Department of Health.

Why? Because they are telling the DBM, the DOF and the other people na ito ang sitwasyon. And why is it that many LGUs have already the pandemic fatigue and they are not expanding their isolation centers? Kasi ang iniisip na lang nila, 30 percent na kami, 40 percent na kami, 50 percent na kami ng bakunado at tapos na ang problema, which is not the case.

Kaya, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, alam n'yo nakakapagod itong ulit-ulitin. I would have had a very peaceful life kung hindi ko na ito gagawin, matalik ko pa namang kaibigan at kamag-anak itong distinguished Sponsor. But then, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, this is not for us, this is not even for me. This is for our country. O, tanungin na lang natin sa DOH Central Office, ilang bakunado ang natamaan na? That is not the hospital or iyong pinakamalapit. You have Jose Reyes, that is your neighbor; you have San Lazaro Hospital as your neighbor, or you have RITM who is doing all the testing or PGH na malapit lang sa inyo.

Out of the total number of people who became positive, ilan diyan ang bakunado? So we can compute the breakthrough infections.

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. We acknowledge the concern of our distinguished interpellator with respect to the breakthrough infections, and we commit to the distinguished interpellator to gather more data and add it to the current data that we have so that we may be able to provide her a complete summary and report. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleague, distinguished Sponsor, I have the figures, it is rough, it is incomplete, it is a revolving number.

Ayoko nang pag-aksayahan ng panahon na pag-awayan pa natin iyon. Ang kailangan lang talaga is tanggapin at tugunan ang katotohanan.

So, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, let me just rephrase, will the Department of Health, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, commit that they request every hospital to submit a biweekly update on the number of health care workers and their immediate family members, mga kasama sa bahay, iyong expanded A1 na nai-infect, so we will have a running total? So, it will be direct communication from each hospital to the regional directors, then direct to the central office. Let us not for wait for AEFI reporting. We do not have a very good system for that because people are concentrating on other matters.

So, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, can Congress request or mandate the DOH to commit that they will submit twice a week the running numbers of health care workers, frontliners and their household companions who are getting infected despite being vaccinated?

Again, I repeat, for the record, Mme. Speaker, we are not saying that the vaccines failed. The vaccines are working because if it were not working, sana marami nang namatay. It is working, but we are talking about how to intercept transmission. We are talking about accepting that there is waning infection.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Before the Sponsor will answer, I would like to remind Honorable Garin to wind up because her time will expire in four minutes.

Thank you.

REP. FRASCO. Thank you.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mme. Speaker, does that include the time that has been shared to me by the members of the Minority family, Mme. Speaker?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Yes, Honorable Garin. Yes, that includes the time from the other interpellators.

REP. GARIN (J.). Maraming salamat po at may I appeal, Mme. Speaker, because the problem here is, I am repeating the questions because the Sponsor does not seem to answer the questions being propounded directly.

So, with that, Mme. Speaker, may I appeal that I be given an extension of 10 minutes.

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, distinguished interpellator.

Distinguished interpellator, before the Speaker answers that, with respect to the question that you had previously, yes, we commit to continuing to collect the data from the hospitals in the different regions and we commit to provide this data to Congress biweekly.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, distinguished Sponsor.

On another note, last year, there was a discussion on providing for flu and pneumonia vaccine for health care workers and their families. Where are we on that? How many percentage have we covered in terms of flu and pneumococcal or pneumonia vaccine among health care workers and their family members? Has this been implemented, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Before the Sponsor will answer, Honorable Garin, we will extend you time for another five minutes.

REP. GARIN (J.). Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker. Much appreciated po.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, may I request a one-minute suspension, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). The session is suspended.

It was 9:49 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 9:50 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). The session is resumed.

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, with respect to the question of the distinguished interpellator, currently, the DOH is in process of providing flu vaccines and pneumonia vaccines to our health care workers.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, we are already one year from that commitment, and our health care workers are our jewels in this war. Sila iyong mga nasa harap na nagsasakripisyo para sa atin. Iyong malaking proteksiyon na ibinibigay ng flu and pneumonia vaccines for them, we cannot keep on delaying them. Diyos ko po. I am really sorry, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, I love the officials of the DOH family, but you know, we cannot be going this way. Isang taon na po iyon. We promised that flu vaccines and pneumonia vaccines will be given to our health care workers, at ngayon ang maririnig natin, binibili pa lang siya, ini-implement pa lang siya, e ang dami nang namamatay.

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, in addition to my answer previously, with respect to the flu vaccines and pneumonia vaccines, some of our hospitals, public hospitals do provide these vaccines to our health care workers and the pneumonia vaccines are specifically targeted to senior citizens.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, is the budget for pneumonia and flu vaccines included in the 2022 NEP, especially, for the health care workers in private institutions and local government hospitals—iyong mga devolved institutions? Kasi walang pera iyong mga iyon kung sila pa ang bibili.

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. The current budget for the pneumonia vaccines are focused on our senior citizens.

REP. GARIN (J.). So, we are not providing, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, for health care workers? Because that was the discussion last year. In fact, that was one of the commitments of the Department of Health last year kasi konti lang naman sila. While in a regular program it goes for senior citizens, that in our pandemic response to protect our health care workers they should be covered with flu and pneumonia vaccines.

Anyway, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, can the DOH commit that our health care workers and immediate frontliners be provided with free flu and pneumonia vaccines for 2022?

REP. FRASCO. Yes, Mme. Speaker, we can commit to this, and we will look into our budget, so that we may be able to provide this to our health care workers next year.

REP. GARIN (J.). Yes, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, many manufacturers and all other countries have already started discussing waning immunity. Ibig sabihin dahil napakabago noong virus na ito, medyo bumabagsak pakonti-konti iyong bisa ng proteksiyon ng bakuna in five to six months. Now, is the DOH, Mme. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, accepting this? Are they studying this? What is the status now?

REP. FRASCO. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Thank you very much. Is the DOH also accepting the fact that there seems to be inadequate protection from the currently recommended primary series

for some of risk groups for which evidence from the Phase 3 clinical trials may have been lacking? Ibig pong sabihin, dahil nga EUA tayo, nasa middle tayo ng Phase 3-A, at supposed to be ang kailangan ay completion ng Phase 3-A para maging commercially available ang bakuna, ang nakikita natin ngayon is hindi bastante, not enough ang proteksiyon na naiibigay ng primary series or the first two doses because of the new variant. Is the DOH accepting this fact, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, experts are actually saying that we do get enough protection from the current doses that we received. However, currently, our vaccine expert panel are studying the booster shots for our individuals next year. However, we have not received that final study and advisory from our vaccine expert panel.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, tila medyo conflicting po 'yong iyong sagot. Your first statement says that the vaccines are providing adequate protection. I am saying that, yes, they are protecting us in terms of mortality and morbidity. However, when we talk about inadequate protection, it actually refers to the extent of intercepting transmission. That is why my question is saying because you have already admitted waning immunity, the next question is related. You cannot have waning immunity, tapos magkaiba iyong inadequate protection because the manufacturers are agreeing to that. All the other companies are agreeing to that for specific population.

That is why my question is, the inadequate protection from the currently recommended primary series. Ibig sabihin, kunwari itong bakuna, ang sabi niya one dose lang siya, ngayon lumalabas, with the new variants, kailangan siyang maging two doses. Kung two doses naman, with the new variants, kailangan siyang maging three doses.

My question is, is the DOH family, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, in agreement to what all the other global experts are saying, who have studied the immunogenicity produced by more than 200 million vaccinated people?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Honorable Garin, your time is up.

Please wind up.

REP. GARIN (J.). Can I just—yes, Mme. Speaker, I am just waiting for the answer of the distinguished Sponsor, and then I will just give my last question, and it may not be answered lengthily. Yes or no lang, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, iyong puwedeng isagot doon.

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, with respect to the question of the distinguished interpellator, the focus of the DOH family is to continue to vaccinate our unvaccinated, considering that we have current study that by vaccinating our people, it will reduce the transmission and reduce the deaths.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, I am sorry but I do not want to waste my time, if the DOH refuses to be transparent to its people. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, alam po nating lahat ang nangyayari sa ating bansa. We are appealing to the Department of Health to be transparent so that the LGUs can help us, so that everybody can help each other, admitting science and the situation now does not put DOH in a bad side. You will not be in a bad side by acknowledging the problem and doing something about it. The right thing to do now is to admit and acknowledge, e kung sinasabi na ng mga manufacturers, kung sinasabi na ng mga ibang bansa na mas magagaling sa atin dahil mature iyong kanilang regulatory agencies, if the clinical trials are already showing that the immunogenicity of the primary series does not seem to match the other variants, then why are we going to insist ...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Honorable Garin ...

REP. GARIN (J.). ... on the statements being pushed to the Sponsor that were actually in relation to the pre-Delta situation?

Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, thank you very much for this.

But again, as a last resort, let me appeal to the DOH, transparency is key to the solution. We cannot solve this pandemic kung patuloy nating nililinlang ang taumbayan at patuloy nating sinasabi sa kanila ang hindi katotohanan. Let us acknowledge the problem because our people need to know. We all need to recalibrate our responses. We all need to solve this pandemic.

Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker.

Thank you very much, distinguished Sponsor.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu.).
Majority Leader.

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Just to add, to date, 12 out of a hundred countries are doing booster shots and most of them have already vaccinated more than 50 percent of their population. So, our focus here in the Philippines and our DOH is to vaccinate the unvaccinated.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu.).
Majority Leader.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, next to interpellate is the distinguished Lady from BHW Party-List. I move that we recognize Cong. Angelica Natasha Co.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu.).
Angelica Natasha is recognized to interpellate the Sponsor.

REP. CO (A.). Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Good evening to the Department of Health, to Secretary Duque as well as to our esteemed Sponsor and Representatives.

Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, with regard to the devolution transition of LGUs relative to the implementation of the *Mandanas-Garcia* case ruling, what percentage of your 2022 Budget is allotted to support and capacitate local governments during the full devolution process and to ensure its success? Can you cite at least three priority areas concerning the implementation of the *Mandanas-Garcia* rule so

that the LGUs can more adequately perform their responsibilities in this regard?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, para po sa ating local health transition, we have 492,880,000 po, Mme. Speaker, for this year, for the year 2021.

REP. CO (A.). Thank you, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

May I know if you can you cite at least three priority areas concerning the implementation of this and do you have any specific interventions or programs to assist our BHWs in developing their capacity given their increased responsibilities as part of the devolution of basic services?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, we have—the DOH have three priorities: one is the high-poverty incidence; number two is the low-income LGU; and number three is the GIDAs, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CO (A.). Thank you, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, during this pandemic, the Department of Health has been assigned to distribute the Special Risk Allowances or the SRA to our frontline health care workers, included here are the barangay health workers. May this Representation know the breakdown of the 526,727 health care workers being considered for SRA per region? We want to know the percentage of BHWs who were considered or included in the roster of health care workers who will receive the Special Risk Allowance or the SRA?

Maraming salamat po, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, we have 191,186 LGU hired active BHWs or 87 percent of 218,698 total BHWs in the country were included in the count, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CO (A.). Thank you for that, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

May I just know ilan po ang na-release-an na ng SRA sa bilang na ito?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, as of September 19, 2020, we have 8,427, costing of 66 million, Mme. Speaker, ...

REP. CO (A.). Thank you ...

REP. VIOLAGO. ... based on partial 42 percent report submission from our regional offices, Center for Health Development.

REP. CO (A.). Thank you for that, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

I would like to just let you know na there is still a lot of barangay health workers, in particular, who have not received their Special Risk Allowances, and I would like to take this opportunity to follow up with the Department of Health on the distribution of the Special Risk Allowances.

Another question, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor: Do BHWs who are working in the health centers or RHUs and those who are conducting contact tracing qualify for the SRAs and other COVID-19 benefits?

Thank you, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, yes, they are qualified to receive benefits as long as they are certified barangay health workers, Mme. Speaker, certified eligible by them, by local health, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CO (A.). Thank you, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

May I also just know how will you ensure that the SRA and other benefits are available to eligible BHWs? What mechanisms do you plan to deploy in doing so?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, systems are in place at the regional offices. Lists of eligible BHWs are submitted and certified by the Local Health Board or the head of the health facilities which will be validated by the Development Management Officers of the regional offices or Center for Health Development, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CO (A.). Thank you, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

May you also provide for the basis and

explain how you have arrived at the following: one, the P1 billion contingency fund (*inaudible*); two, P831 million for COVID sickness and death compensations; and third, percentage of health care workers based on the level of risk exposure whether it is low, medium or high.

Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, the P1 billion contingency fund is determined to ensure funding in case of surge in the level of COVID-19. This will also account for the increase in the number of HCWs, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CO (A.). May I also get the answers for the P831 million, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, and the third question earlier with the percentage of health care workers based on the level of risk exposure?

Thank you, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, the 100 health workers times 30 days, times 12 months is 36,000 health workers.

For mild and moderate case, the assumption is the 97.9 percent of total HWs will be infected. The 36 health workers times 97.9 percent equals to 35,244 health workers; 35,244 health workers times 15,000 equals to 528,660,000.

For severe and critical case, the assumption is that 1.4 percent of total HWs will be infected; 36 HWs times 1.4 percent is 504 HWs; 504 HWs times 100,000 is equivalent to P50,400,000.

For death case, the assumption is that 0.070 percent of the total HWs shall succumb to the disease; 36,000 health workers times 0.070 percent equals 252 health workers; 252 health workers times 1,000,000 is 252,000,000. Estimated total budget is P528,660,000 plus P50,400,000 plus P252,000,000 equals P831,060,000.

The grant of COVID-19 sickness and death computation is not based on the level of risk exposure. The application claims submitted by the health workers who contracted the disease are categorized based on the classification of cases: mild, moderate, severe, critical or death, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CO (A.). Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

With the numbers mentioned where 97 percent of health care workers may get mild COVID, may I get the commitment of the Department of Health to secure and provide risk allowances for these health care frontliners? This is very important. Your computation already of 97 percent with mild, may I please get the commitment of the Department of Health to help us in supporting our frontliners?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, yes. The DOH family will commit. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CO (A.). Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, under Section 20 of the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the Universal Health Care Act, the sources for the special health fund shall include financial grants from national government agencies, such as the Department of Health and income from PhilHealth payments.

Also, from the same provision of UHC Act's IRR, the special health fund shall be allocated for, among others, renumeration of additional health workers and incentives for all health care workers, including here volunteer health workers or barangay health workers, in accordance to R.A. No. 7305 and R.A. No. 7883 or the Barangay Health Workers' Benefits and Incentives Act. May we know, Mme. Speaker, how much has been allocated for the renumeration of public health workers and barangay health workers' renumeration benefits, incentives and capability building? Thank you, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, it will always depend on the decision and prioritization of the Provincial Health Board once they organize their health fund, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CO (A.). Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, distinguished colleagues, the demand for human health resource is very critical, especially in the light of the COVID-19

pandemic and other essential health care services. Many studies have shown that a great number of our countrymen suffer and succumbed from various diseases not only due to the COVID-19. There are other emerging and reemerging diseases.

Meanwhile, our health frontliners, including our barangay health workers are in dire need of support so that they can effectively provide health services to the Filipino people. Data from the DOH Personnel Administration Division as of December 2019 show that there are 5,405 unfilled positions in the Department covering the Central Office, Centers for Health Development, retained hospitals, and Treatment and Rehabilitation Centers. An estimated 25 percent of all barangays in the Philippines do not have any health worker, which indicates the importance of our barangay health workers, kaya ipinapakita po nito ang kahalagahan ng ating mga BHWs.

Moreover, Mme. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, according to the DOH, when compared to the World Health Organization estimate of 44.5 per 10,000 population needed to achieve coverage of sustainable development goals, there is a gap of about 25 human resource for health per 10,000 population in the Philippines. The data I have mentioned, Mme. Speaker, is from the DOH itself.

At this point, I urge this august Chamber to look further into and consider the reallocation of budget for health human resource because this is imperative in fulfilling primary care which is at the very core of this universal health care.

Mme. Speaker, aside from the budget, I also strongly urge this august Chamber to prioritize critical legislations for primary health care in support of the Universal Health Care Act including the Magna Carta for the Barangay Health Workers.

Uulit-ulitin ko na lang po na lubhang mahalaga po talaga at kinakailangan na po ang ating suporta para sa ating mga frontline health care workers. I hope that the Department of Health can realize this and help us as soon as possible.

Maraming, maraming salamat po, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, we will take note of that.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CO (A.). Thank you, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor. That ends my interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Majority Leader.

REP. DE VENECIA. Next to interpellate the distinguished Sponsor is the Lady from ACT TEACHERS Party-List, I move that we recognize Cong. France Castro.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Honorable Castro is recognized to interpellate the Sponsor.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Magandang gabi po sa ating lahat, sa DOH family at sa ating mga colleagues na nandidito pa sa ating meeting, sa Zoom.

Mme. Speaker, marami nang ano, masyado nang marami na ring naitanong tungkol doon sa budget ng DOH, at ako po, mayroon po akong ano na lang—puwede bang mag-submit na lang po ang DOH, Mme. Speaker, dahil dito po sa nakuha ko sa DOF na COVID-19 response financing ay doon pumapatak po na P1 trillion po halos iyong ating ginastos or nagastos sa COVID-19 response. Okay.

At ayon po sa COA, sinasabi po ng COA na—halimbawa po dito sa budget ano, mayroon pong halos na \$20.06 billion. Mayroon po tayo ditong \$2.5 billion contract to support various projects implemented by agencies. Tapos a total of P19.72 billion has been disbursed.

So, pamilyar po ba kayo dito sa financing secured for COVID-19 response, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor? As of September 5, 2021 po, iyon po 'yung ating financing for COVID-19 response.

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, I just want to ask po, Cong. France Castro, if you want us to submit the list of disbursement for COVID-19 response, iyon po ba ang gusto

ninyo, mag-submit kami ng list sa inyong tanggapan, Mme. Speaker?

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Yes, out of this ano, mga expense—financing, that were secured for COVID-19 response, tingin ko naman po hindi naman lahat ito ay napunta sa health, sa Department of Health. So, gusto ko lang pong makuha, ma-dissect iyong from the health—from the DOH and sabihin at mai-report po sa Kinatawang ito kung saan-saan ito napunta as of this day or as of September 27. Puwede po bang magawa iyan, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, opo. Puwede po kaming mag-submit ng list of disbursement para lamang po sa agency ng DOH kasi po ito ay iba-iba po ang gumamit na agencies—may DILG, may DSWD, may DOTr. Ang puwede lang po naming i-submit sa inyo ay iyong ginamit po ng DOH, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). So, are the data available? Puwede ko bang malaman kung magkano po ang for the DOH consumption or for utilization po? Out of this \$22.512 billion. So, may I know magkano po iyong allotted sa DOH?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, ang allotted po is \$1.425 billion, Mme. Speaker—US dollars po, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Ah okay. \$1.425 billion po out of \$22.512 billion dollars? So, ganoon po kakaunti ang mayu-utilize ng DOH dito sa COVID response?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, ito po iyong naka-allot sa DOH, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). So, I am shocked. Kaya nga tingin natin kaya nga hindi talaga naging effective iyong pagtugon sa pandemic ng ating gobyerno dahil sa napakaliit—out of \$22.512 billion ang na-allot lang sa DOH ay \$1.425 billion, so if your data are correct, so mukhang umaano iyong aking conclusion na talagang underfunded

itong ating pagtugon dito sa pandemya lalong-lalo na doon sa pangangailangan natin sa health system.

So, kukuhanin ko na lang po, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, iyong saan-saan po ito ginamit at nagastos. May sasagot po ba, Mme. Speaker, iyong ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, ito pong figure na sinabi ko sa inyo is only for foreign assistance fund po, Mme. Speaker. And ang question po ni Congresswoman Castro, ano po ba? Magsa-submit uli kami ng utilization po ng funds? Ganoon po ba, Mme. Speaker?

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). So, iyon po. Kasi sabi ninyo kasi itong—kasi sabi ng Finance—ng DOF through the COA din po na nakuha naming report, mayroong about \$22.5 billion in support of the COVID-19 to finance iyong ating pandemic response. So, naka-detail po dito: budgetary support financing – \$20.06 billion; grant assistance – 54.06 billion; and then project loans financing – 2.395 billion. So, iyon po iyong nakalagay doon. So, sabi ninyo po ang DOH ay may \$1.425 billion out of this? So, iyon na lang po, iyong \$1.425 billion na whether it is foreign-assisted or local fund, iyon po ang tinutukoy natin, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor. Kung tama po iyong inyong ibinigay na data sa akin.

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, yes, we will submit po the list of distribution po ng funds—ng foreign-assisted funds in your office, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Thank you po, Your Honor.

This morning, I heard the President—President Duterte announce a vaccination in the general public. Parang sinasabi niya po ay mandatory. So, do you support this, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker? Kung mayroon na daw pong enough vaccine? So, sinusuportahan po ba ito ng DOH, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, iyong sinabi po ni President Duterte, mandatory general public vaccination?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, ang ibig sabihin po ng general population is only for adult population. Children are not included po, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay, parang hindi po iyon ang pagkakaintindi ko doon sa sinabi po ni President Duterte at iyong sinasabi niya nga ay mandatory kapag may enough vaccine.

Speaking of number of vaccines po, sa average po according to the report ay 415,362 doses per average daily, tama po ba ito, jabs daily 415,362 as of today? Accurate naman po, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. VIOLAGO. Opo. Tama po iyong inyo pong data, Mme. ...

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Yes, at mayroon na po tayong, more or less, 40 million doses ng mga vaccine, 38,746,501. Kanina, sa pakikinig ko kay SDML Garin, kino-compute ko with this rate kung hanggang kailan tayo magkakaroon ng herd immunity, parang pumapatak na hanggang sa 2023 pa natin makukuha iyong herd immunity. Tama po ba ako kung ganito po iyong rate?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, ang herd immunity po is a long process para natin makuha ito. Sa ngayon po, marami pa rin pong hindi nagpapabakuna. Siguro po kulang pa rin tayo sa ating ginagawang programa para maipalabas natin sa mga kababayan natin na kailangan po ng bakuna talaga. Iyong herd immunity po is a long, long process, not unless po lahat tayo ay mabakunahan na, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Yes, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, nag-a-agree po ako sa inyo doon sa sinasabi nating long, long process, so talagang mahaba pa at kung titingnan natin iyong comparison niyan sa iba't ibang mga bansa, talagang hindi tayo talaga nakaka—matagal pa talaga nating maaabot iyong herd immunity. Okay. So, iyon po ano, noong last briefing po, Mme. Speaker, may budget po para sa mga PPEs at with our experience po doon sa PS-DBM Pharmally controversy,

nagkaroon tayo ng mga problemang ganoon. Sinabi ni Secretary Duque na hindi na tayo kukuha ng mga imported. Magyu-utilize na tayo noong, ano, 'no, magma-manufacture na tayo at kukuhanin natin dito. Filipino-made itong mga PPEs.

So, sa budget po ng DOH, Mme. Speaker, mayroon po ba tayong ano, may ganoon po ba tayong allotment para doon sa iba pa nating mga kailangan? Kasi tatagal pa 'tong pandemya. Alam ko po baka sa 2022 pa. So, mayroon po ba tayong budget? Iyong policy po ba ay sa pang-2022 Budget ay parang bilhin iyong sariling atin, mag-manufacture tayo ng mga sarili nating mga equipment, at least, iyong mga mask, iyong mga gloves, iyong mga kung ano-ano pang mga kailangan basic? Mayroon po bang ganoong, ano, policy ang DOH sa 2022, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, ang budget for PPEs in the 2021 Budget is P3.44 billion for PPEs, unit cost is 1,325 per set. Ang order po natin is 2,598,199 pieces. Ang number of health facilities po na mabibigyan is 758,700.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. So, saan ninyo po iyan kukuhanin, sa ating mga Filipino manufacturer na? Mayroon na ba kayong natap na, halimbawa, na Filipino manufacturer? Kasi, kahit sa batas natin ng Bayanihan 1 or 2, ang nakalagay naman doon, priority iyong ating mga Filipino manufacturer, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, open po for bidding pero priority po talaga ang local manufacturer, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay, that is good to hear, iyong mga policy nating ganyan para iyong experiences natin sa Pharmally ay maiwasan.

Last topic na po, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor. Nagpapasalamat ako sa DOH kasi you have this Joint Memo Circular No. 1 with the DepEd, mainit-init pa ngayong araw, ah kahapon, September 27. Mayroon lang po akong ano, may mga ilang katanungan lang

po ako related dito sa Joint Memo Circular with the Department of Education.

So una po, Mme. Speaker, kaugnay po dito sa Joint Memo, una po ba, nag-conduct, makaka-conduct po ba ang Department of Health ng risk health assessment sa lahat po ng schools natin? Kasi mahalaga na makita natin doon iyong risk assessment. Matagal ko na itong sinasabi sa Department of Education para makapagsimula tayo, step by step, doon sa face-to-face. So, may ginagawa po ba ang DOH kaugnay niyan, Mme. Speaker?

Kasi may nabasa ako dito sa memo, school safety assessment. Iyon po ba iyong kaisipan ko na risk health assessment?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, opo. Ang DepEd po ang nag-iikot base sa standard na ibinigay ng DOH, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Yes, oo, tama po. Nakita ko po dito iyong sinasabing standard. So, DepEd? DepEd po ba iyong nag-iikot? Wala po ba itong counterpart with the DOH?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, DepEd po ang nag-iikot pero base po ito doon sa ibinigay na standard ng DOH. Ganoon po ang naging usapan ng DOH at ng DepEd, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. So, base po doon sa School Safety Assessment Tool na, ano po ito, ginamit, ginawa po ba ito ng DOH?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, puwede pong pakiulit ng question?

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Sinasabi kasi dito sa Joint Memo Circular, "The school shall be x x x" – nakalagay doon: "Participating public and private schools shall pass the school safety assessment using the School Safety Assessment Tool x x x." So, ito po ba ay galing sa DOH, iyong School Safety Assessment Tool? Kasi sinasabi ninyo na base sa criteria ng DOH. Ito po ba iyong tinutukoy ng ating Department of Health?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, opo, galing po sa DOH. Ano po, joint, joint na pag-

aaral po ito na ginawa ng DOH at ng DepEd po. Para po ito sa ating risk prevention para sa atin, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you, Your Honor.

Ano po ibig sabihin ng “minimal-risk areas”? Ano po ang—can you define this in layman’s term? Ano ang ibig sabihin ng “minimal-risk areas”?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, “minimal risk” refers to an area with a two-week growth rate of zero or below and an Average Daily Attack Rate of less than one. The TWGR refers to the growth in cases in the last two weeks, while the ADR refers to attack rate based on newly reported cases in the past two weeks.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. So medyo ma-technical pa rin iyong definition. So, I hope na magagamit ito doon sa pag-aano natin ng minimal-risk assessment sa mga eskuwelahan natin.

Isa pa po, doon sa mga private schools. Ang ibig bang sabihin dito, iyong mga magpa-participate doon sa pilot ay, nakalagay naman dito, “voluntary.” Pero sa private school, iyong interest and willingness. So, isa sa criteria ng private school ay interest and willingness na nakalagay at magsa-submit sila ng ilang mga documents. Anyway, sa DepEd na po iyan.

So, isa pa po ritong ano, ‘no, gusto ko pong mag-inquire about doon sa “All teachers and employees who are 65 years old and below x x x.” Bakit isinama pa po natin iyong mga 65 years old, e retired na po sila? “x x x 65 years old and below with no diagnosed comorbidities shall be eligible to provide service x x x.” So, ano pong ibig sabihin ng “65 years old and below,” o typographical error lang po ba ito?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, mayroon pong mga non-teaching personnel na mga senior na nagtatrabaho pa rin po hanggang ngayon, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). No. Pag 65 years old ka na, mandatory retired ka na, di ba?

Mandatory retirement na iyong 65 years old, bakit isinama ninyo pa? At saka, ‘di ba iyong ating—sabi—ano ba ang advice ng ating mga health experts about iyong seniors? So, ibig sabihin, siguro kung typographical error lang itong 65, balewalain na po natin iyan. Sixty to sixty-four po, halimbawa, isasama pa rin po ba natin iyon sa face-to-face, limited face-to-face or piloting? Hindi ba delikado sa mga seniors?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, ang 65 years old po ay non-teaching personnel. Tulad po ng utility, puwede po silang magtrabaho. Kaya hindi po lahat ng 65 years old ay retired na, mayroon pong 65 years old na nagtatrabaho pa rin po, non-teaching personnel po. Puwedeng janitor, puwedeng sa utility, ganoon po.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay, naiintindihan ko na po, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor. So, basta walang comorbidities, pero kailangang pag-aralan pa rin natin ito nang dalawang beses, ano, kasi iyang DOH na rin po ang nagsabi, ‘no, iyong vulnerability at saka iyong risk nitong ating mga senior citizens.

Kung mag-o-open po iyong pilot, mayroon po bang ipo-provide iyong DOH or halimbawa ang LGU po na health worker o nurse in the school? Kasi parang wala po akong nakitang provision sa memorandum. Kasi ang nakikita ko lang po dito iyong emergency health kits, PPEs, other needed materials. So, may provision po ba na ma-deploy-an ng health workers or nurse iyong mga schools natin?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, opo.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Okay po ba iyon, accurate po ba iyong sagot?

REP. VIOLAGO. Opo, opo, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay.

So, inaasahan po natin iyon, ano, kasi isa rin po sa recommendation ng mga teachers, ‘no, sana magkaroon talaga ng nurse or health workers na talagang nakakaalam. Halimbawa, may mga cases ng mga emergency, siya iyong

mag-a-assess sa mga bata kung may mga symptoms, kasi hindi iyan magagawa ng mga teachers, at misrepresentation naman kung teachers iyong gagawa niyan, especially, iyong mga clinic teachers po natin.

So, thank you po, ano, ako po ay medyo satisfied dito sa joint memorandum na ito. At least po mayroong mapapagsimulan ang Department of Education na puwedeng gawing guidelines para doon sa facing, limited, voluntary face-to-face at magiging guidelines ito later sa mga susunod pang pagbubukas ng mga eskuwelahan sa lahat ng part ng ating bansa.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. VIOLAGO. Thank you po, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, Cong. France Castro.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Majority Leader.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we now recognize the distinguished Lady from GABRIELA Party-List, Cong. Arlene Brosas.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Honorable Brosas is recognized to interpellate the Sponsor.

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Maraming salamat po, Mme. Speaker. Will the Sponsor yield to a few questions, Mme. Speaker?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, yes, we will. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Yes, Mme. Speaker, during the budget briefing for the Department of Health, this Representation asked about the vaccine procurement of the government. However, vaccine czar Secretary Galvez informed the public that there is an existing Non-Disclosure Agreement or NDA. Mme. Speaker, this claim is a violation of Section 6 of Republic Act No. 11525 or the COVID-19 Vaccination Program Act of 2021 which mandates transparency and accountability in

the vaccines procurement by disclosing the supplier's name and the amount given for the purchase.

Now, Mme. Speaker, how much money did the government spend for the vaccine procurement?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, the Non-Disclosure Agreement for COVID-19 vaccines, the NDA is a condition imposed by pharmaceutical companies at the time the GOP was in dire need of accessing COVID-19 vaccines. Thus, we had to agree with the manufacturers' condition; otherwise, they would give the vaccines to other countries that are willing to accept the NDA.

Once they apply for the FDA Certificate of Product Registration, the vaccines will now be available in the market and the price will be known. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Yes, Mme. Speaker, ibig sabihin ba tinanggap natin hook, line, and sinker ang lahat ng iyan, Mme. Speaker? Lahat ng pharmaceutical companies?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, opo. Tinanggap natin ito; otherwise, wala po tayong vaccine kung hindi natin ito tinanggap, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. So, Mme. Speaker, how much money, can you tell me, how much money did the government spend for vaccine procurement?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, from ADB po, we released P35 billion. And from the World Bank po, na-release natin is P23.500 billion po, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Iyon lang, Mme. Speaker?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, opo. But we have a total P70 billion at ito na po iyong ating mga nagastos, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. But, Mme. Speaker, the total is P35 and P23 billion. Iyong P70 billion, iyon yung naka-tag na budget. Pero iyong nakuha pa lang ay P35 and 23, tama ba?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, ...

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, ...

REP. VIOLAGO. Opo, tama po.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, magkano po iyong ginastos ng gobyerno para sa Sinovac doses at ilan po ang natanggap ng Pilipinas?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, from GOP po, we have P2.5 billion, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Ilan pong Sinovac doses ang natanggap ng Pilipinas? Do we have that number?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, we received 37,100,000 doses of Sinovac, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Sorry, again, Mme. Speaker.

REP. VIOLAGO. We received 37,100,000 doses of Sinovac, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Mme. Speaker, sa mga vaccines, paano po ba ang distribution nito sa regions? May update po ba tayo ng allocations per region at ano-ano po ang ibinibigay per region na vaccine?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, ito po iyong dalawang basehan, una po is sectoral. What do you mean by sectoral? This is for the priority, mga health workers natin, sa mga frontliners ngayon, and then, one is the geographic po para naman po ito sa surge kung gaano karami naman ang cases ng COVID sa kanilang lugar, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, I am asking about the distribution and allocation, Mme. Speaker, per region.

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, we can provide Congresswoman Brosas the list po ng allocated vaccine.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, kaya ko po itinatanong, Mme. Speaker, kasi kamakailan sinabi, sa Davao City, nagrereklamo sila. They were sent Chinese vaccines like Sinovac and Sinopharm, pero ang gusto daw nila ay Pfizer and Moderna.

Mme. Speaker, wala bang nagrereklamo na mga regions na sa kanilang mga rehiyon, wala pa silang mga vaccine? In fact, kahit ano.

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, as of September 27, 2021, the NCR got a total of 16,829,000 or if you want, Mme. Speaker, we can provide this regional distribution list also to Cong. Arlene Brosas.

REP. BROSAS. Yes, thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Mme. Speaker, mayroon po bang mga nagrereklamo na regions na wala pa sila? Kasi ang issue po dito, buti pa iyong Davao City, parang apparently, mayroong naibigay sa kanila pero iyong ibang mga regions, wala.

In fact, iyong ibang mga regions, mababa ang rate ng vaccination lalong-lalo na sa A4. So, Mme. Speaker, ang example nga ay Zamboanga at Baguio na nitong June, July, mabagal iyong kanilang vaccination; samantala, matindi ang surge ng mga cases nila, Mme. Speaker.

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, ganoon pa rin po, kailangan pa rin natin ng prioritization for A1, A2 and A3 bago po mag-A4, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Yes, Mme. Speaker, pero iyong COVAX vaccine ba, Mme. Speaker, na sinasabi, A1 hanggang A3 lang ang puwedeng i-vaccine nito?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, puwede po ito sa A1, A2, A3, A4 and A5, Mme. Speaker. Ah hindi po kasama ang A4 – A1, A2, A3 and A5 lang, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Okay. So, A4 ang wala. And, Mme. Speaker, speaking of vaccination, ilang porsiyento lang po ba ang na-vaccinate sa atin dito sa Pilipinas?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, we already have 35.46 percent for the first dose, and then, we have 26.68 percent for the complete dose na po, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Twenty-six percent pa lang, Mme. Speaker? So, iyon pa lang ang nababakunahan sa ating bansa? E, Mme. Speaker, ilan po ba iyong pinayagan natin na approved vaccines sa atin? Ang balita ko po kasi, tayo ang pinakamataas na may pinakamaraming pinayagan na vaccine na pumapasok sa ating bansa. Tama po ba?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, kasi po ang mga arrival ng mga vaccine natin ay hindi po sabay-sabay.

REP. BROSAS. Nevertheless, Mme. Speaker, napakaliit noong 26 percent na vaccine rate, porsiyento ng populasyon na mayroon tayo na na-vaccine sa kasalukuyan. So, would you agree, Mme. Speaker, na mabagal iyon, at hindi iyon nagko-commensurate sa sinasabi ninyo kanina na nabili na natin, P35 billion, P23 billion, tapos mayroon pa kayong sinasabi na nakapag-distribute sa ibang lugar, pero here we are, we have about 26.8 percent lamang na sinasabi ninyo na vaccine rate ng population.

So, anong nangyari, Mme. Speaker?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, mula po noong March, we have 1,480,920 vaccines delivered; April - 2,257,800 vaccines; May - we have 4,376,170; June - we have 6,771,960; July - 13,333,250; at August is 18,039,890. Iyong September po natin, ngayon pa lang dumarating. Kaya ngayon lang po dumadami ang ating vaccines dahil hindi nga po sabay-sabay dini-deliver.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Okay, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, sa sinabi ninyo po, kailan natin, somehow, maaabot itong necessary rate nang sa ganoon ay hindi tayo mahirapan sa pandemyang ito, Mme. Speaker? With the rate that we are going, may problema pa po ba tayo sa procurement ng vaccine ngayon?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, sa procurement po, wala. Sa delivery po ng supply tayo nagkakaroon ng problema, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. So, Mme. Speaker, sa delivery, pero nag-a-anunsyo na tayo na tuloy iyong bakunahan including adolescents ng October 1. So, paano po ito pinaplano ng gobyerno? Ano po ba ang ibibigay ninyo sa 12 to 17 years old na bakuna? E ito nga, 26 percent pa lang iyong nababakunahan natin, sabi ninyo, inisa-isa ninyo sakin hanggang September, 18 million; August, 18 million pa lang ang na-deliver, etcetera. Ngayon, mayroong plano na bakunahan ang 12 to 17 years old. What will happen, Mme. Speaker?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, regarding po doon sa ating mga adolescent, as of now po, fina-finalize pa ng DOH ang guidelines nila para for the vaccination of the adolescent. Pero as of now, for the adults, priority pa rin po tayo, adult population pa rin tayo, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. So, hindi isasabay ang 12 to 17 years old, Mme. Speaker, sa vaccination?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, as of now po kasi, binubuo pa lang natin - ng DOH ang guidelines po para sa vaccination ng mga ganyang edad. At pag nakumpleto po tsaka ia-announce ng DOH kung kailan po gagawin ang vaccination for them.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Yes, Mme. Speaker. Ano pong vaccine ang balak ibigay na brand ng DOH for the 12 to 17 years old? Siguro naman po iyan masasagot ninyo ako.

REP. VIOLAGO. Pfizer and Moderna po ang ibibigay natin, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Okay, Pfizer and Moderna, na hindi pa po naa-acquire, hindi pa nade-deliver?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, may parating po tayong Pfizer and Moderna, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Okay, thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, uulitin ko lang iyong distribution and allocation sa regions, ano po. Iyong transparency ay para maipakita kung ano-ano ang inilaan sa mga rehiyon. Kasi hindi po natin alam kung ilan din iyong bilang, tapos hindi rin natin alam kung ano-anong mga vaccines ito. Ito ba ay COVAX, J&J, Chinese vaccines, etcetera. Do you have that data, Mme. Speaker? Nakaganoon po ba iyong data ninyo?

Ang sinabi n'yo lang sa akin kanina, sectoral priority, tapos geographic, iyong may surge ng cases. So, walang vaccine equity dito, nakabatay ito sa pagpapasya ng DOH kung alin ang bibigyan niya. Gano'n ang lumalabas, ano, Mme. Speaker.

So, sa kanyang mga binibigyan, inaalang niya kung ano 'yong may sectoral priority at saka iyong may surge cases nga. Iyan ang sinasabi ninyo, Mme. Speaker. So, technically, iyong ibang mga regions, hindi iyan nakakatanggap ng sapat na vaccine, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, we will provide po the list of the allocated vaccines to every region po.

Thank you.

REP. BROSAS. Sige, thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Pinagpapawisan na si Mikki, Mme. Speaker, sa question ko.

Mme. Speaker, I have two more questions na lang, Mme. Speaker.

This is about the TRIPS. Alam n'yo na po ito, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

Many Filipino advocates have urged the government to sign last time kasi diniskas natin ito, the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights or the TRIPS waiver, a proposal to have intellectual property protection for products and technologies used in the fight against COVID-19, including vaccines for the duration of the pandemic. As side ko lang po ito, panghuling tanong ko na ito, last time kasi naubusan na ng oras.

Ngayon, ang sabi naman po ninyo, susuportahan ninyo iyong TRIPS waiver

or iyong negotiation for the TRIPS, parang ganyan. Ano po ang update na sa negotiations, kung naglabas po ba ng written support statement ang DOH?

As I understand, ang DFA po kasi, ang sinabi nila sa atin, mayroon silang categorical answer na magsu-support naman. Pero, may we get the position of the DOH, or at least, mag-commit ang DOH na they will support the World Trade Organization's official agreement on the TRIPS waiver once it is released.

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, the summarized rationale of the DOH Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Agreement or TRIPS World Trade Organization proposal – the proposal will give countries the freedom to collaborate and take advantage of all readily available data and technologies to fight the COVID-19 pandemic by addressing the possible inadequacy of Philippine legislation such as the Cheaper Medicine Act and the Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines, or R.A. No. 8293, to improve access and affordability of medicines, and other medical devices and technologies. The intent is to facilitate the transfer of technology and scientific knowledge to countries to ramp up the global production of vaccines and other necessary equipment which pharmaceutical companies are not keen on sharing. The increase in the number of detected variants justifies the need for manufacturers to be self-reliant. As such, the waiver will send a strong public health message regarding the monopoly of pharmaceutical companies over the science, know-how, and technology which is essential to scale up and decentralize vaccine manufacturing in the world. This will improve access and enable a more equitable and just distribution of vaccines, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. So, Mme. Speaker, iyong binasa ninyo po ay ...?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, position of support, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker.

I clearly remember last time na hinihingi ko iyong copy yata noong ganyang document ninyo. So, may I ask, Mme. Speaker, na bigyan tayo ng kopya noon, Mme. Speaker.

That is officially from DOH, ano?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, okay, we will submit po. Yes, we will.

REP. BROSAS. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker.

On to my last question, Mme. Speaker, iyong kaugnay po ito sa—mayroon po ba kayong hospital admission for pregnant women? Mayroon po ba kayong existing guidelines, ang DOH, sa pag-admit ng pregnant women sa panahon ng pandemya, Mme. Speaker?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, yes, the DOH has different policies, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Different policies for different hospitals, Mme. Speaker?

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, yes po, for hospital.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, we heard, isa po kami sa nakakabalita na maraming buntis ang namamatay na nakalinya sa ospital. Tapos, Mme. Speaker, may mga—wala kasing mga designated special lanes for pregnant women sa ilang mga ospital, Mme. Speaker. Even bata po na, iyong baby, namamatay at saka iyong nanay, sa paghihintay na sila ay ma-test muna sa COVID-19, etcetera.

So, Mme. Speaker, we are asking the DOH, can we get the commitment from the DOH na sila ay siguruhin na makapag-set up ng special or priority lanes for pregnant women who need to get admitted in hospitals. Kasi, kawawa po iyong nade-delay iyong mga buntis tapos ang nagiging epekto, dalawa po ang nagsa-suffer, iyong nanay saka iyong anak. At, mayroon pong mga cases na lumapit sa amin na ganoon, iyong mga bata at iyong nanay ang namamatay, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, I totally agree with you, Congresswoman Brosas, kasi sa amin din po may mga incidents na ganyan. Pero in a hospital po, there are for COVID and non-COVID wards po, for mga pregnant women and sa mga kabataan who are very vulnerable po kaya mayroon po talagang separation, hindi naman po pinagsasama-sama sila. If there are any data po na pupuwede pa naming tingnan at kung mayroon pong mga reklamong ganito, the DOH will take note of them and we will see what they can do, Mme. Speaker, to improve po the service, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Yes, please, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, importante po ito. In fact, baka hindi lang natin masyadong pinapansin pero maraming cases na namamatay iyong nanay because, iyon nga, naghihintay doon sa labas ng ospital.

Mme. Speaker, may example dito. Last month, a 26-year-old woman died after six hospitals refused to admit her because they were either full or understaffed. Si Katherine Bulatao had given birth at home but died of blood loss afterwards.

Mayroon din pong isa pa, si Mary Jane Alvide, who died in labor after being turned away from four hospitals and finally being admitted to the fifth according to the Center for Reproductive Rights. Iyong center po said it had received at least three reports of pregnant women who were refused treatment by hospitals.

Mme. Speaker, iyong mga ganito po, iyong mga obstetrics emergencies, etcetera, ay kailangan po talaga nating asikasuhin ang mga ito lalong-lalo na ngayong panahon ng pandemya.

Mme. Speaker, hindi ko pa nga itinatanong iyong statistics kung ilan na talaga iyong namatay sa labas ng ospital. Nakaka ano po ito, 'no, nakakaawa iyong sitwasyon na ganito, Mme. Speaker.

I hope the DOH can do something about this, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

That is the last of my question, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

REP. VIOLAGO. Mme. Speaker, siguro

po we will just request for a formal report and the Licensing Officer of the DOH will take a look at it po, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Thank you, Honorable Brosas. Majority Leader.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, I now move that we recognize the distinguished Gentleman from BAYAN MUNA Party-List, Cong. Carlos Isagani T. Zarate, for his interpellation.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Honorable Zarate is recognized to interpellate the Sponsor.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, but bago po magsimula ang aking oras, mayroon po akong isinabmit na PowerPoint sa Committee on Rules, and may I request that I be allowed to share my own screen for this year's presentation, Mme. Speaker.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Will the good Sponsor – good evening to the good Sponsor and the Mme. Speaker.

Maaari po bang magtanong ng ilang mga paglilinaaw sa budget ng DOH, Mme. Speaker, good Sponsor?

REP. FRASCO. Yes, of course, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, good Sponsor.

Some of the questions that I may propound probably have already been partly or fully answered previously but I have to state them again for the record. At dahil po sa aking pakikinig nang mga ilang oras na, napakarami pong hindi pa rin maliwanag doon sa mga kasagutang ibinigay ng Department of Health and we have to reflect on these for the record dahil, Mme. Speaker, good Sponsor, noong nakaraang taon, noong nag-debate rin tayo sa pondo ng DOH, we have been assured by the DOH that that budget is a budget that will be adjusted to respond to the problem ng COVID-19 pandemic. But here we are now and we learned na hindi ganoon

ang nangyari. Last year pa lamang, mayroon nang pagmamaliit ang Department of Health sa magiging epekto nitong pandemic na ito. I can still remember a good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, the last hearing that we had before the lockdown with the Committee on Health, March 10, we have been telling the Department of Health, mayroon nang mga iilan-ilang mga namatay noon, siguro hindi pa aabot sa 10 at hindi pa aabot sa 100 ang infected with COVID-19, but we have been telling the Department of Health na isa sa talagang strategy rito ay magkaroon ng mass testing na kaagad doon sa mga komunidad na nagkaroon na ng transmission ng COVID-19, but hindi ho tayo pinakinggan ng Department of Health, hindi tayo pinakinggan ng IATF. In fact, in that hearing, Secretary Duque himself admitted na dapat as early as January ay nag-declare na ng health emergency, but he did not. It took the Department more than two months before a declaration of health emergency was made, and by that time, there was already a transmission of the COVID-19 from the single death that happened on January 31 last year.

So, here we are again, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, as I have said, kailangang pag-usapan natin nang maayos ito dahil this was touted by the President and by the administration as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. But habang binubusisi po natin iyong budget, nakita nating talagang may problema, napakalaking problema. It is not responding principally to what is now being experienced and a lot of our people are suffering because of this COVID-19 pandemic and the failed responses of the present administration.

Now, I am sharing my screen, Mme. Speaker, good Sponsor, doon po sa isinabmit sa akin na mga dokumento ng Department of Health as a result of the budget briefing, wherein only 12 Department of Health hospitals got an average of 7.36 to 27.51 percent higher budget appropriation under the NEP of 2022, compared to their budget proposal. The other 64 hospitals were given budget under the NEP that is 0.42 to 70 percent lower than what they proposed. Meanwhile, mayroon pong dalawang DOH hospitals na hindi rin nag-propose according sa budget

nila, according to the documents submitted to us.

Note, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, that this is only for MOOE budget that the DOH did not—but the DOH up to now did not submit to us the data regarding the PS or Personal Services and Capital Outlay proposal of these hospitals.

Now, on the screen now, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, is the summary of differences between the proposed hospital budget and as reflected in the NEP 2022. My first question on this, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, is that I observed that there are differences between the documents submitted to us by the DOH regarding the proposed budget for these hospitals and the budget proposals submitted by the hospitals themselves, kasi humingi ho kami sa mga ospital din ng kanilang proposed budget submitted to our office—some were higher and some were even lower. For example, in the documents submitted to us by the DOH, the Doctor Jose N. Rodriguez Memorial Hospital, they proposed P1.4 billion MOOE; however, in the document submitted to us by the DOH, it was only P518.9 million. On the other hand, in the case naman po of the Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center, they proposed P313.1 million MOOE; however, base po doon sa ibinigay sa amin ng DOH, ang proposal was P697.2 million.

So, my question now, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, is—is there a difference doon ho sa mga datos na ipinadala ng DOH at doon naman sa mga datos o data na ibinigay direkta sa Kinatawang ito ng mga nabanggit na ospital?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, distinguished interpellator, with respect to the original proposal of the DOH for the operation of DOH hospitals in Metro Manila, the original proposal was P16.5 billion. However, what was approved by the DBM was only P13.4 billion. This is actually part of our appeal. We are appealing for the additional P14 billion for our hospitals, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, doon po sa inyo pong—for a while, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, ako po

ay nawawala sa aking screen. So, maraming salamat po doon sa inyong tugon, but I also observed, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, that the document you submitted, meaning the DOH, that you submitted to this Representation only contains the MOOE or the hospitals that I mentioned, but wala pong nakalagay doon na PS and Capital Outlay proposal ang mga ospital. So, based on the submitted documents of some hospitals to our office, mayroon naman po silang proposal na Capital Outlay and even PS. So, ibig po bang sabihin nito, bago ito ipinadala sa DBM, ang DOH na mismo ang nagkaltas noong mga budget proposal na ito ng mga pampublikong ospital na ito, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

With respect to these two hospitals, these are two new hospitals, Mme. Speaker, and the Personal Services will be charged to the MPBF, Miscellaneous Personnel Benefit Fund. And with respect to the Capital Outlay, currently, there is no Capital Outlay, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Well, is that a justification na dahil bago ang mga ospital na ito ay hindi sila mabibigyan ng tamang regular na pondo for their PS, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. FRASCO. Sorry, Mme. Speaker, can you repeat your question?

REP. ZARATE. Is that a justification kaya wala silang PS dahil mga bagong ospital sila, iyon lang po ba ang justification noon? Hindi po ba dapat ay, by this time, kahit sabihin ninyo po na dalawang taon pa lang ang mga ospital na ito, if we accept that as a fact, but by this time dapat po ay iyong pondo nila for PS ay nakatalaga na sa ating National Expenditure Program for next year, hindi po ba, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

For new hospitals, the Personal Services is charged or taken from the Miscellaneous Personnel ...

REP. ZARATE. Yes, good Sponsor, with the kind indulgence of the good Sponsor,

nabanggit n'yo na po iyan na kukunin sa MPBF. Ang tanong ko lang po, hindi po ba dapat hindi na doon kinukuha iyong pondo for PS, for example, huwag na iyong Capital Outlay, iyong PS. But I will not belabor that point if that is already the answer that will be repeated by the good Sponsor.

Another observation, good Sponsor, not only for these two DOH hospitals, napapansin ko po na every year, mayroon pong zero Capital Outlay budget ang ibinibigay sa—kung hindi man lahat pero karamihan po ng ating mga DOH hospitals even amid this pandemic, there are only four sa nabilang ko po base doon sa mga dokumentong isinabmit sa atin that have Capital Outlay budgets. Even identified COVID referral centers like PGH, the DJNRMHS, East Avenue Medical Center, the RITM have zero Capital Outlay budget to address the necessary COVID-19 needs.

Will the good Sponsor explain why is this so given that ang sinabi po natin, ang pangunahing problema pa rin nating pangkalusugan ay ito ngang pagraragasa nitong COVID-19 pandemic, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

With respect to the Capital Outlay of our DOH hospitals, we—the DOH actually proposed a total of P19.5 billion. However, what was given by the DBM was only P8.4 billion for the DOH hospitals. For the past two years, there is no Capital Outlay but there were equipment purchases by these hospitals, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. That is unfortunate to say the least, good Sponsor, kung pati iyong mga equipment na pangangailangan dahil dito sa COVID-19 pandemic, overwhelmed na ang ating mga pampublikong ospital kahit na mga ventilators ay kulang na kulang. At kung hindi ito matutugunan ay how can we expect our people especially those who will be infected by this COVID-19 virus to survive.

Now, good Sponsor, may we just request the Department to submit to this Representation, in preparation for possible amendments that we will propose at the proper time, iyon pong actual budget as proposed by our DOH

hospitals as well as—especially for example, the Philippine General Hospital that contains PS, MOOE and Capital Outlay. If there is a submitted budget deliberation form or other relevant documents, may we also request that these be included and submitted to us.

Second, the hospital budget and the PGH as approved by the DOH—iyong budget nila na in-approve ng DOH ay mangyari po na hingiin din natin. Currently, you have submitted to this Representation only the MOOE of this hospital, so we also request na iyong mga proposed PS and Capital Outlay at proposals ng mga DOH hospitals will also be submitted to us.

Finally, on this item, the Corporate Operating Budget presentation of the Philippine Children's Medical Hospital, if there is any, puwede pong mahingi rin natin. Can we get that commitment from the good Sponsor before—this coming Thursday where we will be finalizing this National Expenditure Program for 2022?

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Yes, the DOH can commit to both items as requested by the distinguished interpellator, and yes, the DOH will try to submit prior to the end of session. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, good Sponsor.

I will now go to another item of my interpellation. These are budget cuts for national government subsidy to GOCC hospitals. And again, I will have to state this for the record dahil kagaya po noong ibang mga DOH hospitals, pangatlong termino ko na ito, good Sponsor, my last term, and ayan po iyong trend na nakita ko. Halos kada taon ay talagang tinatapyasan ang budget ng mga pampublikong ospital. Instead of increasing this budget, tinatapyasan ito. So, sa tingin ng Kinatawang ito, malaki ang problemang ito dahil dito tumatakbo ang maraming mahihirap nating mga kababayan. The exact amount of the national government subsidy as proposed by the GOCC hospitals were appropriated under the NEP. In the case, for example, of PCMC, the Philippine Children's Medical Center, as you can see in the slide, aside from the P1.042 billion

national government subsidy, it was given an additional appropriation of P68,516,000. This P68.516 million was broken down as follows: additional subsidy for indigent patients, P31.723 million; and additional subsidy for IP, P36.793 million. Nevertheless, we should highlight these cuts for GOCC hospitals.

Lung Center of the Philippines, makikita po natin sa slides iyan, from the 2021 GAA of P504 billion ay natapyasan po ito ng P100 million; NKTII, mayroon din hong tapyas na P9 million, and down the line as you can see from these slides.

So, the decrease in the MOOE, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, in these GOCC hospitals are alarming. Since, to say the least, these budgets are for indigent patients. For example, if a heart bypass costs P5 million per patient, then, mayroon pong 19 na mga indigent patients will be deprived of this operation even if it is the very management of the GOCC hospitals that decided to cut their budget, and it is not acceptable especially amid this pandemic. So, my question along this line, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, is ano po ba ang rason nitong mga budget cuts na ito na nare-reflect ngayon dito sa ating National Expenditure Program?

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, distinguished interpellator. With respect to the GOCC hospitals, the budget is actually based on the quantified free service system which takes into account the patients in these hospitals in the past year, and considering that in the past year, due to the pandemic, there was a decrease in the number of patients in these hospitals. However, we take note of the concern of our distinguished interpellator with respect to the decrease in these budgets, and we will include these in our appeal for these budgets to be increased. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you for the answer. Kung ganoon po, hindi po ba tama lang na instead of—well, ang sabi ninyo, this will be part of the appeal that you will make, but tama lang talaga, 'no, na i-increase ang budget ng mga GOCC hospitals na ito in order to ramp up its COVID-19 measures.

For example, free COVID-19 testing for the patients, instead of letting the current situation where instead of going to hospitals, the patients, ang mga pasyente po would rather suffer or die due to fear of getting infected of COVID-19. Hindi lang COVID-19 ang sakit na pinagpopokusan ng ating pamahalaan. Maraming iba pang sakit ang nariyan pa rin na dapat mabigyan ng lunas. Alam naman po natin iyan. Kaya nakakabahala po ito. This is very alarming at dahil sa halip na pupunta ng mga pampublikong ospital ang ating mga mamamayan e sabi ninyo takot sila. And, dapat masolusyonan ito.

The decrease in the MOOE of these GOCC hospitals, as I have mentioned earlier, good Sponsor, is very alarming since these budgets are for, sa mahihirap nating mga kababayan, sa mga pobre nating katauhan. And I already cited earlier, halimbawa, doon nga sa halimbawa kapag kailangan ng heart bypass. So, I hope that the good Sponsor himself will strongly push that these cuts will be restored, as they should be restored, dahil pangangailangan po iyan ng ating mga mamamayan.

Now, pupunta po ako doon sa ating budget cuts naman sa National Reference Laboratories po natin. Kung makikita po ninyo rito, nandiyan din ho iyong mga figures ng mga tinapyas na mga budget sa ating mga national reference laboratories.

So, may we know the reason again behind these budget cuts, Mr. Sponsor. These budget cuts on the national reference laboratories will have a huge impact on our efforts, of the DOH's efforts, of the government's efforts against COVID-19 and its new variants especially itong mayroon nang Delta, mayroon nang Lambda, mayroong Omega, and for other emerging diseases, not only for COVID-19.

So, again, may we get a reply, an explanation from the good Sponsor on these budget cuts.

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. We take note, with respect to the distinguished interpellator's slide with respect to the lowering of the budget for the national reference laboratories. These budgets were attained from the assessment of the DBM's absorptive capacity of these laboratories.

REP. ZARATE. Again, that is very unfortunate, to say the least. RITM, for example, ito iyong ating pangunahing research arm sa panahon ng pandemya ng COVID, if you can remember last year, and in fact, until now. At, bakit mo sila tatanggalan ng P170 million sa kanilang MOOE, good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker? And that is only RITM, mayroon pang iba na tinapyasan din.

So, of course, it is very easy to point the blame on the DBM but what is the DOH also doing about this? Alam naman talaga ng DOH na ganoon nang ganoon ang DBM, tapyas nang tapyas, but how aggressive is the DOH in pushing that this should not be and explain to the DBM na hindi dapat ito tinatapyas, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Before the Sponsor will answer, I would like to remind the Honorable Zarate that your time will expire in four minutes, so please wind up.

REP. ZARATE. Yes, Mme. Speaker, may I request for an extension of five minutes dahil iyong lag po, matagal po kasi iyong reply from our good Sponsor, and I still have a lot of items to be asked, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). There will be no more extension, Honorable Zarate, please.

REP. ZARATE. We submit, we submit, but may we get a reply.

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, distinguished interpellator.

With regard to your concern as to the budget cuts of the national reference laboratories, this is actually part of our budget appeals and a total of P761 million is what we are appealing for so that we may add these back to the MOOE of the national reference laboratories.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, good Sponsor.

Again, these cuts are not acceptable, especially, nasa panahon tayo ng pandemya ng COVID.

Now, going to the other points in my interpellation, and ito naman po iyong siguro—nabanggit ko na rin ito kanina, sa PGH—again, ito po, ipapakita ko lang dito na napakarami rin pong cuts, ‘no, kahit na doon sa ating epidemiology and surveillance, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. Even po doon sa ating Family Health, Immunization, Nutrition and Responsible Parenting, mayroon pong pagkakaiba doon sa inaprub na natin sa GAA 2021, and doon sa ating proposal for NEP 2022.

So, dito po, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, ipinapakita natin na dito pa lang sa mga usapin na ito, itong proposed budget ng DOH for 2022 ay it is not truly responsive doon sa kasalukuyang problemang kinakaharap ng ating bayan dahil nga dito sa krisis na pinalala nitong pandemya ng COVID.

Again, we strongly urge the good Sponsor nitong budget ng DOH, and the DOH itself, to aggressively and proactively push also not only the Members of this House, but ang main responsibility nito ay nasa DOH po para ma-restore itong budget na ito.

And, because I think I already consumed my time, I will just make some manifestation, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. Mme. Speaker, if I may be allowed these few minutes.

Marami nang nagkakasakit, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, at namamatay na health workers, pero naitanong na rin ito ng ating mga kasamahan kanina, pero dito po sa iprenesenta sa ating National Expenditure Program, wala pa ring budget ang inilaan ang administrasyon para sa kanilang benepisyong. Bagkus, itong mga ilang punto na ipinakit ko rito ay puro tapyas sa budget ng ating mga pampublikong ospital, lalo’t higit na kung tinatapyasan ito, paano na lang iyong mga benepisyong ng ating mga health workers. Kahit na nakita rin natin kahit na iyong mga pangpondo para pambili ng mga PPEs ay kulang na kulang para maproteksiyunan ang ating mga manggagawa, at nakakapanggalit pa, it appears that accepted na lamang, halimbawa, iyong ginawa ng Pharmally na pinalitan iyong date of production noong ibinenta nilang mahal doon sa PS-DBM na mga equipment. Tila walang pakialam, parang hindi nakaapak sa lupa ang mga paa ng ating DOH sa buhay at hindi nila nakikita

ang buhay at kagalingan ng ating mga health workers.

Again, nabanggit din ito ng ating mga kasamahan kahit na doon sa strategy na binanggit ng DOH, mahalaga sa tingin namin mula pa noon, ibinabalik-balik namin ito na dapat magsagawa ng free mass testing. At ang nangyari ngayon, mayroon palang mga naging pondo — mayroon palang nag-procure ng mga test kits pero pinabayaang ma-expire ang libo-libong test kits.

Kailan kaya mare-realize, Mme. Speaker, Ginoong Sponsor, ng DOH na kailangan talagang magsagawa tayo ng free mass testing kung gusto nating masawata o mabigyan ng solusyon itong pagkalat ng COVID-19?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Thank you for your manifestation, Honorable Zarate.

REP. ZARATE. With that, Mme. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. Thank you to our good Sponsor sa naging katugunan sa ating mga questions and maraming salamat po, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Thank you very much.

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, distinguished interpellator.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Majority Leader.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, the last to interpellate is the distinguished Gentleman from BAYAN MUNA Party-List. I move that we recognize Cong. Ferdinand Gaité.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Honorable Gaité is recognized to interpellate the Sponsor.

REP. GAITE. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you to our colleagues who, kahit na malapit nang mag-alas dose ay naririto pa. At sana nga, bagama't ako ang huli ay mabigyan pa rin ng pagkakataon kung pahihintulutan ng ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor. Just a few more questions, paabutin natin ng alas-dose para

sarado na iyong araw na ito, kung pahihintulutan ng ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor.

REP. FRASCO. Yes, of course, thank you.

REP. GAITE. Alam ko pagod ka na rin, pero sa ngalan ng serbisyo sa bayan, siguro talaga ito iyong sakripisyo natin at mas hindi matatawaran iyong sakripisyo ng ating health workers, lalo na sa panahon ngayon na nakita na nga natin na nagkakasakit, namamatay, and yet, sa programa for 2022 ng Department of Health, hindi pa rin natin makita iyong liwanag dahil misfit iyong worsening situation ng COVID. Nakailang lockdown na tayo, nakailang ECQ na tayo, tumataas pa rin ang incidence ng transmission.

Iyong ating COVID response na alam naman natin na ang Department of Health ay dapat manguna dahil ito ay isang health problem. It is not a military problem, it is not a security problem, but it is a health problem, and yet, hindi nagre-reflect sa budget for 2022 iyong ganitong oryentasyon.

Kahit na paulit-ulit na sinasabi, kahit na sa Presidential message ni Pangulong Duterte sa usapin ng budget na ito ay pandemic response, I failed to see it in this current budget, because ito nga mismo, ang budget ng Department of Health ay kapos na kapos.

Unahin ko na po iyong ating health workers. Ilang ulit na pong nasabi at gusto ko lang i-validate muli, walang COVID-19-related benefits sa budget for 2022. Tama po ba iyan o hindi?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, distinguished interpellator, yes, you are correct. Wala, however, ...

REP. GAITE. Wala.

REP. FRASCO. ... the Department, we are making an appeal for this.

REP. GAITE. Katulad noong naunang tagapagsalita natin, si Cong. Kaloi Zarate, how much of an appeal is being done? Tila hindi natin makita iyong pagpupursigi dahil ang daming nai-slash na budget. Kayo ang dapat manguna sa COVID response, pero

ang mga nauna pa ay mga budgets for Build, Build, Build Projects under the DPWH, iyong budget ng military, iyong budget ng NTF-ELCAC and others, which are, at this time, talagang hindi priority. So, we do not see how the Department has been actively pushing, making this government realize that "health is wealth." Iyon 'yung sabi ni Chairman ng Ways and Means Committee na si Joey Salceda. Pero sinabi ko nga, ang inuuna ngayon iyong wealth kesa iyong health. Kasi ang gustong paunlarin na kaagad ay iyong ekonomiya pero hindi nga makagulong iyong ekonomiya dahil hindi pa nga natin naha-hurdle iyong problema ng kalusugan. And until there is such a realization, tulad ng sabi ni SDML Janette Garin, hangga't hindi natin naa-admit na hindi natin maaabot iyong herd immunity dahil nga sa mga kahinaan at dahil na rin sa usapain ng siyensiya, ay hindi tayo makakausad at paatras tayo sa halip na paabante.

Dito lamang sa usapin ng benefits ng ating health workers, doon sa nakaraang budget interpellation, sinabi ko nga, importante, kaya nga tinawag nating frontliners sila, iyong ating health workers, because sabi ko nga, if they fall, we fall. Sila iyong nasa unahan doon sa laban na ito, at tayo na nasa likod, kung wala nang tutulong sa serbisyong pangkalusugan ay magko-collapse tayo na parang domino, na tayo ay hindi naman mga scientist, hindi tayo mga medical experts, sila ang nakakaintindi ng prosesong ito, pero hindi natin binibigyan sila ng kaukulang tulong lalo na sa iba't ibang aspeto sa pangangailangan nila sa iba't ibang PPEs.

Iyong benepisyong hindi na lang para sa kanila, kundi para makabalik sa ospital ay ipinagkakait pa rin natin iyong kanilang MAT o meals, accommodation and transportation. Iyong kanilang SRA, iyong tinatawag na benefits tulad noong active hazard duty pay at iyong iba pa na hanggang ngayon ay nade-delay.

Kung gayon, magkano ho ba iyong tinatantiyang aabutin para maibigay lang itong benefits tulad ng SRA, active hazard duty pay at MAT? Ang sabi na figure, about P50 billion – more than P50 billion. Tama po ba iyon?

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, distinguished interpellator.

Just to inform our distinguished interpellator, Mme. Speaker, the DOH actually initially requested for P309 billion for the Department. However, what was received from the DBM or approved by the DBM was only P242 billion. That is the reason why the DOH is appealing for an additional P92.8 billion. This P92.8 billion will cover the concerns of our health care assistants which is also paramount to the concerns of the DOH. And, the health care workers' benefit, as proposed and part of our appeal, should cover 526,727 health care workers for a total budget of P50.4 billion, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Salamat po. So, tama po iyong figure, about P50.4 billion iyong kailangan just for the benefits, hindi pa kasama iyong iba pang madalas nang ibinibigay tulad ng sahod, iyong Magna Carta for Health Care Workers, and other standard benefits prior to the pandemic.

Kaya nga po, nakakadismaya na ngayong kailangan natin itong benepisyong ito, hindi pa maibigay. At ang malungkot pa nga niyan at nakita naman natin, nagprotesta iyong ating mga health care workers dahil nagreklamo sila na noong una ay hindi maibigay pero nagkakaroon pa ng delay sa pagbibigay ng benefits na ito.

Moreover, nagreklamo rin sila na naglagay ng iba't ibang pamantayan kung sino lamang ang makakatanggap at hindi makakatanggap, which aggravated the situation. Marami sa kanila ang umaasa na bibigyan sila ng mga benepisyong patas ang pagbibigay, pero noong ito ay ipinatupad na, nakita na iyong ilang benefits ay hindi pala ibibigay sa lahat, kung kaya't bumagsak ang kanilang morale dahil umaasa ang marami na mabibigyan sila ng karampatang benefits, gaya ng nabanggit, on top of that, may mga benefits pa for those na magkakasakit, may benefits din na insurance at iba pa, pero kahit ito, eventually, ay hindi rin naibigay. Nadidismaya rin ang Kinatawag ito dahil ipinangako natin ito doon sa Bayanihan 1 at sa Bayanihan 2, in-expect ng mga health care workers that they will be compensated for the sacrifice. Pero

nakita na natin na hindi ito naibigay both sa public at private health workers at sa marami pang iba. Ang pinag-uusapan po pa lang natin ay iyong mga professionals, pero kahit iyong mga ibang aide, iyong mga janitors, iyong mga tagatulak noong mga trolley, noong wheelchairs, iyong drivers ng ambulansiya, they apparently – nakalimutan na rin sila, ito iyong non-health personnel. But they are also working under the same hazards. Sila din ay nagsusundo, nagta-transport, gumagamit ng mga most likely ay hazardous because of the situation in the hospitals.

Bakit ganoon? Bakit sa halip na maibigay ang lahat ng benefits ay tinilad-tilad pa? As a matter of fact, ang isang reklamo ng health workers ay sa halip na ibigay ito on a monthly basis, doon sa policy, ginawa pang on a daily basis, depende kung ilan iyong number of days ka nag-report sa mga COVID wards. Worse, mayroong ibang hospitals sa private sector na tinilad-tilad pa per hour. So, kung nakaisang araw kang nagtrabaho, kukuwentahin pa kung ilang oras ka actually nandoon sa COVID wards, para ma-compute mo itong mga binabanggit na benefits.

Bakit napakagulo ng policy? Hanggang ngayon yata hindi pa rin nare-resolve. What steps did the Department of Health do to clarify the conflicting policies in the granting of such benefits? Lumalabas kasi parang kanya-kanyang interpretation e, per hospital, per facility. Anong steps ang ginagawa ng Department of Health para i-correct ito, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. We understand the concern of the distinguished interpellator with respect to the benefits in the past of our health care workers, which included special risk allowance, hazard duty pay, meals, accommodation, and life insurance. This time, the DOH is trying to simplify and replace these several benefits into one benefit called the “One COVID-19 Allowance.” This will cover all medical and non-medical professionals, which include the janitors, front office staff, and nurses. This new formula will allow the DOH to simplify the computation, and assist and ease in the

distribution of these benefits. And again, these benefits – a total of P50.4 billion will benefit a total of 526,727 health care workers. System (*inaudible*) are in place at the regional offices as well, and a list of eligible BHWs are submitted and certified by the local health board or the heads of health facilities which will be validated by the development management officers of the regional offices, or Centers for Health Development.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

Is the good Sponsor referring to the singular allowance for health workers, as proposed by the Department of Health? Ito iyong iisa na lamang na welfare. I think the term was the proposal of a singular allowance, na ipagsasama na lahat ito, na sa halip tilad-tilarin pa sa nabanggit sa MAT, active hazard duty pay, special risk allowance, gagawing isang benepisyo na lang. Iyon ba iyong nire-refer ng ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. FRASCO. Yes, Mme. Speaker. There will be just a singular allowance for health care workers. This will be called the “One COVID-19 Allowance.” And it will categorize our health care workers as low-risk, medium-risk and high-risk – low-risk to receive P3,000 per month; medium-risk, P6,000 per month; and high-risk, P9,000 per month.

Thank you.

REP. GAITE. Thank you for that clarification.

I would like to inform you that the one organization, the Filipino Nurses United are not in favor and are already opposing that in their statement just this September 27. And I would like to read, dati-rati kasi, they were receiving P3,000 active hazard duty pay or AHDP; P5,000 special risk allowance, and P8,000 for meals, totaling, roughly, P16,000 for such benefits. But now, the proposal is to reduce it to P3,000 for low-risk, P6,000 for medium-risk, and P9,000 for high-risk. Parang papababa yata, hindi pataas. I do not know how this will benefit our workers if the direction

of the benefit is towards diminution, hindi pataas, hindi increasing 'yong benefit.

So, eto 'yong statement ng PNU, and they are opposing this proposal. Hindi ito simply to simplify but to create a condition where there is diminution in the benefits, as they stated in their proposal, in their statement.

So, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, I do not think this is a solution, it is a non-solution. Lalo lang maghihirap iyong ating mga workers kung ito ay ipatupad. Ang posisyon nila ay dapat ibigay ito sa lahat, regardless of position classification, regardless of whether 'yong kanilang actual presence doon sa COVID wards, lalo na sa mga instances na dahil sila ay nagkasakit, sila'y naka-quarantine, lumalabas habang naka-quarantine sila, dahil sa kanilang ginawang pagtatrabaho ay obviously, hindi na sila magre-report hindi magku-qualify at idi-deduct iyong possible benefits na matatanggap.

I think again, the Department of Health should find a better solution, hindi itong singular allowance system that will further lower the already meager benefits that they are receiving, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor.

Let me move on to my next question. Doon sa hiring po ng mga HRH or iyong human resource health workers, sabi dito nag-allocate lang ng maliit na maliit na halaga. Well, relatively, P3.8 billion for emergency hiring of 6,810 COVID human resource for health and another P17 billion for the hiring of the regular, ito na 'yong regular HRH, to hire 26,035 health professionals to public and private hospitals.

But, comparing this with the 2021 Budget, mas mataas, actually, iyong budget for, sorry, in 2021, the hiring of regular HRH was the same number, 26,035. Is this a program thing, iyong bilang ng hina-hire na hindi naman nadadagdagan, year in and year out? Because, this, I think, this is such a curious number na hindi naman naipapatupad.

Can the Department of Health explain, Mr. Sponsor, why it has such a budget when considering that even up to now, many government hospitals still maintain a shortage of about 40 to 50 nurses per day based on bed capacity? Some 40 percent of private hospital nurses have already resigned from

their jobs, alam ninyo ba iyon, because of this content, over the non-payment of promised government benefits, iyong hazards of the work, including the non-payment of such benefits.

Kaya, ito iyong claim ng president ng Philippine Nurses Association.

So, paano ho natin matutugunan ito na nagrereklamo na iyong ating health care workers, nagrereklamo iyong ating nurses pero hindi ma-provide itong basic benefits na ito sa ating mga health care workers. Hindi pa nga sila gawing regular.

Ang sabi pa dito, emergency hiring of 6,810. Does the Department of Health, Mr. Sponsor, agree that even this number is not sufficient considering na nabanggit kanina ni Congresswoman Garin na nagkakasakit na iyong ating health workers, kung kaya kulang na iyong, actually, nasa floor para magbigay ng services?

Tama po ba iyon, kulang pa rin itong hinihingi at we did not even take into account the possibility, and obviously, it is happening now, iyong sinasabing nagkakasakit na mga health care workers? Did they factor in this problem or nakasagad na sa bilang na ito based on iyong current formulation ng personal requirements under the HRH Program, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, emergency hiring is a strategy for augmenting health facilities nationwide, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Mr. Sponsor, gaano katagal pa ba iniisip natin itong pandemya, hanggang next year na lang ba, hanggang 2022, hanggang 2023? Mayroon ba kayong projection, because that will also be the basis for our hiring policy. Matagal na po na kulang ang bilang ng ating health care workers, wala pa hong pandemya, nakikita na natin iyong problema ng understaffing. Ang problema ng understaffing, overworked iyong ating health care workers.

So, itong strategy for COVID-19 na mag-hire ng emergency hire, hindi ba, sa halip mag-hire na lang tayo ng regular because the problem of understaffing has been a problem even before the COVID onslaught. Tama po ba

iyon? Ano hong observation ng Department of Health sa usaping ito?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, with regard to the ongoing pandemic, we suspect that, perhaps, this will be another year or two. That is why the Department is emphasizing to continue with our vaccination program and to continue to vaccinate as many Filipinos as possible.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Thank you. And so we will need more vaccinators. Tama po?

REP. FRASCO. Tama po, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. I am looking now at a table given by the Department of Health regarding our HRH professionals. So, there are physicians, nurses, midwives, medical technologies, etcetera, numbering almost a million. Ito iyong professionals with licenses, 986,633, but those actually practicing HRH in both in the public and private sectors number only 288,544, divided about a 152,500 in the private facilities and 135,000 in public facilities. Mas malaki nang konti ang nasa pribado. Pero ang kagulat-gulat niyan, doon sa more or less isang milyong lisensiyadong HRH, 340,423 are migrants, nangibang bansa na, while mas malaki pa, 357,666 licensed HRH are not practicing as health workers, most likely because of the pandemic, because of the risks involved, because of the low pay, because of the inability to be hired as regular workers in the hospitals, they have decided to work probably in the call centers or other work.

So, ang tingin po ng Kinatawang ito ang isang major na dahilan is because of the low pay that we are giving our health care workers. Hindi commensurate iyong kinikita nila kaya't baka mas malaki pa iyong kinikita nila as call center agents. Nasayang iyong investment ng ating bansa para sa mga health care workers who were willing to work or to practice as health care workers but we are not incentivizing for them to work based on their profession dahil hindi compensated enough. I think these data na marami sa mas malaking bilang ng ating professionals ang pinipiling magtrabaho sa ibang bansa, Mr.

Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. Kaya even with this current levels of salaries na talagang nakakalungkot at napakababa, I will go to this question, although our nurses recently in 2020 were adjusted from Salary Grade 11 to 15, para silang pumapanhik ng—para silang tumatakbo ng marathon na every corner ay parang tinatapunan sila ng hurdle, tinatapunan sila ng balakid. Bakit ko po nasabi iyon? Kasi noong unang ipinatupad iyong 2020—as early as 2002—with the Nursing Act of 2002, sinabi na doon na malinaw na dapat ang salary grade level ng ating nurses, for example, ay Salary Grade 15. Anong ginawa sa kanila? Ginawa lang Salary Grade 11 iyong Nurse I. But it took a decade—two decades, sorry, before in-adjust, 18 years to be exact, before nag-decide ang Supreme Court na hindi dapat Salary Grade 15 sila. So, positive na iyan, January 1, 2020, iyong Nurse I naging Salary Grade 15 na. But by the magic of a circular, again, by the DBM, maganda na sana, Salary Grade 15 iyong Nurse I, pero ano'ng ginawa niya sa Nurse II? Logically, iyong Nurse II dapat ginawa nang Salary Grade 16. Ano'ng ginawa? Dinemote iyong Nurse II at ginawa—sorry, iyong Nurse II ay ibinalik sa level ng Nurse I at pareho na ang Nurse I at iyong Nurse II dati na Salary Grade 15, so ito na naman iyong bagong balakid. Pero nitong recently naglabas na ang Secretary Medialdea last June 1, 2021 na hindi; mali iyong DBM Circular dapat ang Nurse I Salary Grade 15, ang Nurse II Salary Grade 16. Nakahinga na ang ating mga nurses, but unfortunately other hurdles are being placed in front of our nurses dahil hindi pala lahat ng nurses qualified.

Ang mga nurses na nasa mga GOCCs, local government units at ibang ahensiya ng gobyerno except those under the Department of Health, ang qualified lang pala dito sa upgrading depende sa kakayanan noong GOCC at LGU kung kaya ng budget nila doon lang nila ipatutupad ito.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, hindi pa ito retroactive kasi 2020 pa dapat ito sinimulan, pero ang sabi effective lang ito...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu).
Honorable Gaite...

REP. GAITE. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Thank you very much. That would be your last question, but before we proceed to the next interpellator, Mr. Sponsor, you may answer the Honorable Gaité.

REP. GAITE. Thank you po. Mayroon na lang pong isang manifestation after this – after seeking an answer to this question.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). I am sorry, Honorable Gaité, but your time has already expired.

REP. GAITE. Thank you. Puwede ho bang makakuha na lang ng sagot from the – ano po ang posisyon ng Department of Health dito sa posisyon na dapat isama ang lahat ng mga nurses natin regardless – regardless whether they are situated in GOCCs, LGUs, and the retroactivity of the upgrading of nurses – Nurse II to the date of 2020 January 1, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, distinguished interpellator, Mme. Speaker. Yes, the position of the DOH is that we support the increase in the salaries, however, with respect to the adjustment of the salaries, but with respect to the LGUs and the GOCCs, we support the adjustment of the salaries, Mme. Speaker. Also, with respect to the LGUs and the GOCCs, we support that as well. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Majority Leader.

REP. GAITE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ROMUALDO. Mme. Speaker, the next in our list of interpellators is the Lady from KABATAAN Party-List. I move that we recognize Rep. Sarah Elago.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Honorable Elago is recognized to interpellate the Sponsor.

REP. ELAGO. Maraming salamat, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. Dalawang katanungan na lang po bilang paglilinaw doon sa mga nauna nang naihapag na mga usapin ng ating mga kasamahan dito sa Kongreso.

Unang-una, parte po ang DOH noong technical committee on WTO matters na nag-uusap tungkol doon sa TRIPS waiver on COVID-19 vaccine. Mme. Speaker, dahil malapit na iyong susunod na TRIPS council meeting sa October 13 and 14, kailan po natin maaasahan na magkaroon na ng national position ang DOH pagdating sa suporta nito sa TRIPS waiver?

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. This was read earlier but for the benefit of the distinguished interpellator, with regard to the TRIPS summarized rationale of the DOH Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Agreement–World Trade Organization proposal, the proposal will give countries the freedom to collaborate and take advantage of all readily available data and technologies to fight the COVID-19 pandemic by addressing the possible inadequacy of Philippine legislation such as the Cheaper Medicines Act and the Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines to improve access and affordability of medicines and other medical devices and technologies. The intent, Mme. Speaker, is to facilitate the transfer of technology and scientific knowledge to countries, to ramp up the global production of vaccines and other necessary equipment which pharmaceutical companies are not keen on sharing. The increase in the number of detected variants justify the need for manufacturers to be self-reliant.

As such, the waiver will send a strong public health message regarding the monopoly of pharmaceutical companies over the science know-how and technology which is essential to scale up and decentralize vaccine manufacturing in the world. This will improve access and enable more equitable and just distribution of vaccines.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Maraming salamat, Mme. Speaker.

Simple lang po iyong tanong ko, kailan po lalabas iyong national position ng technical committee on WTO matters kung saan nakaupo rin po ang DOH? Hindi ko na po itinatanong na kung bakit natin ito kailangan dahil matagal na ring nananawagan ang Representasyon na ito na kailangan natin ito. In fact, Mme. Speaker, we have a resolution filed here calling for the support of the Philippines for the TRIPS waiver.

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Per the DOH, we have already submitted the position paper to the DTI, the Department of Trade and Industry, last January 20, 2021. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Okay. Mme. Speaker, magkakaroon po ng informal meeting ang technical committee on WTO matters on October 4 to prepare for the TRIPS Council on October 13 and 14. Sasali po ba dito ang DOH at dadalhin itong kanilang position bilang pagsuporta doon sa TRIPS waiver?

REP. FRASCO. Mme. Speaker, the DOH completely supports. However, it is the DTI that takes the lead.

REP. ELAGO. Mme. Speaker, naninindigan po tayo na dapat magkaroon pa ng mas malakas na suporta at dapat ang Kongreso na ito ay maipasa n'ya na rin iyong House resolution bilang suporta sa TRIPS waiver upang matiyak na iyan ang mangunguna pagdating sa boses na dadalhin ng Pilipinas sa TRIPS Council.

Ngayon, Mme. Speaker, tungkol po sa mga testing laboratories, sa atin pong 81 provinces, ilan po dito ang walang kasalukuyang testing lab?

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. As of the moment, there are 34 provinces without their own government COVID-19 testing laboratories.

REP. ELAGO. Yes, Mme. Speaker, napakahalaga po ng mga testing labs na ito para palakasin at palawakin pa iyong ating kapasidad para makita at magkaroon nang

mas malinaw at siyentipiko na batayan pagdating sa pagdedesisyon ng mga community quarantine levels sa buong bansa.

Mme. Speaker, how much would it cost to fund a laboratory – testing labs per province for these 34 provinces? Nakasama po ba iyan doon sa proposed budget ng DOH?

REP. FRASCO. One moment, Mme. Speaker.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Per the information from the DOH, per testing equipment and infra that comes along with this, the allocation is P18 million times 34 which is a total of P612 million for all, Mme. Speaker, and this will be implemented in phases.

REP. ELAGO. Mme. Speaker, kung gusto po natin na mas mapabilis at magarantiya iyong tagumpay natin sa COVID-19, alam po natin kung gaano kahalaga iyong testing at nakakapanlumo po na sa totoo lang na lumipas na iyong isang taon mula nang dumating dito sa ating bansa, nagdeklara na ng public health emergency, ang dami pa ring mga probinsiya na magpasahanggang ngayon ay walang testing laboratories, kaya, Mme. Speaker, manghihingi po tayo noong listahan ng mga probinsiya na ito kasi ang mayroon lang po ako dito ay 31 provinces.

Nagulat po ako na mayroon pa palang tatlo na mga probinsiya na walang testing laboratories at iyong requirement po ng pondo na kinakailangan para ito ay maumpisahan o maitayo. Gayundin, naninindigan po tayo na iyong mga bagong alert level system na pina-pilot natin halimbawa dito sa NCR, hindi po iyan gagana o wala po iyang bisa kung wala tayong mass testing at iyong agaran na contact tracing na kailangan pa nating hanapan ng pondo dahil walang pondo magpasahanggang ngayon, para mayroon tayong malinaw at siyentipikong batayan ng pagdedesisyon sa klasipikasyon ng antas ng community quarantine sa kada area.

Napakahalaga din iyan, Mme. Speaker, para doon sa ligtas na pagbabalik eskuwela at pagsuporta sa pagbubukas ng mga negosyo sa ating bansa bilang pagsuporta sa trabaho at kabuhayan. Kaya po, Mme. Speaker, sinusupportahan po natin ang panawagan ng

ating mga kasamahan na i-restore iyong mga budget cuts sa ating DOH hospital, sa mga GOCC at specialty hospitals, gayon din po ang pondo na kinakailangan para sa mass testing, sa contact tracing at iyong libreng pagpapagamot sa maysakit.

Kasabay po niyan iyong panawagan natin para sa pamimigay ng ayuda sa ating mga kababayan bilang panlaban natin hindi lang sa COVID-19 kung hindi sa gutom at sakit na nararanasan ng ating mga kababayan.

Maraming salamat, Mme. Speaker. Maraming salamat, distinguished Sponsor.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Majority Leader.

REP. FRASCO. Thank you, distinguished interpellator.

REP. DE VENECIA. I move, Mme. Speaker, that we recognize the distinguished Lady from Marikina, the Hon. Stella Luz Quimbo.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Honorable Quimbo is recognized.

REP. QUIMBO. Mme. Speaker, there being no other member of the Minority who wishes to interpellate, I move to terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Department of Health. *(Applause)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Majority Leader.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, on behalf of the Majority, I move that we terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Department of Health and its attached agencies and corporations.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Is there any objection? *(Silence)* The Chair hears none; the motion to terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Department of Health and its attached agencies and corporations is hereby approved. *(Applause)*

Majority Leader.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 10153

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we suspend the consideration of House Bill No. 10153.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Is there any objection? *(Silence)* The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

DESIGNATION OF MEMBERS TO THE BICAMERAL CONF. CTTEE. ON H.B. NO. 10213 AND S.B. NO. 1382

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we designate the following Members to the Bicameral Conference Committee on the disagreeing provisions of House Bill No. 10213 and Senate Bill No. 1382, providing for the development of the electric vehicle industry and establishing a regulatory framework for the manufacture and use of electric vehicles:

1. Rep. Juan Miguel Macapagal Arroyo;
 2. Rep. Edgar Mary S. Sarmiento;
 3. Rep. Glona G. Labadlabad;
 4. Rep. Jose Enrique "Joet" S. Garcia III;
 5. Rep. Ruffy B. Biazon;
 6. Rep. Francisco "Kiko" B. Benitez;
- and
7. Rep. Sergio C. Dagooc.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Is there any objection? *(Silence)* The Chair hears none; the aforementioned names are hereby designated as members to the Bicameral Conference Committee.

Majority Leader.

RATIFICATION OF CONF. COMM. RPT. ON H.B. NO. 8998 AND S.B. NO. 1933

REP. SANGCOPAN. Mme. Speaker, we are in receipt of the Bicameral Conference Committee Report on the disagreeing provisions of House Bill No. 8998 and Senate Bill No. 1933, providing for administrative process of domestic adoption.

In accordance with our rules, Mme. Speaker, I move that we ratify the said Bicameral Conference Committee Report.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

VIVA VOCE VOTING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). All those in favor, say *Aye*.

SEVERAL MEMBERS. *Aye*.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Those who are against, say *Nay*. (*Silence*) The *ayes* have it; the aforementioned Bicameral Conference Committee Report is hereby ratified.

Majority Leader.

RATIFICATION OF CONF. COMM. RPT. ON H.B. NO. 8164 AND S.B. NO. 2368

REP. SANGCOPAN. Mr. Speaker, we are in receipt of the Bicameral Conference Committee Report on the disagreeing provisions of House Bill No. 8164 and Senate Bill No. 2368, providing for the revised charter of the Philippine Veterans Bank.

Mme. Speaker, in accordance with our

rules, I move that we ratify the said Bicameral Conference Committee Report.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

VIVA VOCE VOTING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). All those in favor, say *Aye*.

SEVERAL MEMBERS. *Aye*.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). Those who are against, say *Nay*. (*Silence*) The *ayes* have it, the said Bicameral Conference Committee Report is hereby ratified.

Majority Leader.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. SANGCOPAN. Mme. Speaker, I move that we suspend the session until later today at 9:00 a.m., September 29, 2021.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Yu). The session is suspended until later today, at 9:00 a.m.

It was 12:27 a.m.