Republic of the Philippines
Congress of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Metro Manila
Eighteenth Congress
Second Regular Session

Begun and held in Metro Manila, on Monday, the twenty-seventh day of July, two thousand twenty.

RESOLUTION NO. 160

RESOLUTION URGING THE COVID-19 INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCE FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF EMERGING INFECTIOUS DISEASES TO ESTABLISH A UNIFIED NATIONAL CONTACT TRACING PROTOCOL FOR A MORE EFFECTIVE HEALTH EMERGENCY DATA MONITORING SYSTEM, AND TO DESIGNATE A GOVERNMENT AGENCY OR BODY TO SERVE AS THE CENTRAL REPOSITORY OF A UNIFIED CONTACT TRACING INFORMATION AND DATABASE THAT STRICTLY COMPLY WITH REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10173, OR THE DATA PRIVACY ACT OF 2012

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has caught the world totally unprepared and helpless in stemming its transmission, as cases increased exponentially, infecting millions across the globe at an unabated rate, and recording a death toll that is unprecedented in recent history;
WHEREAS, in no time at all, the virus has spread to almost every continent, putting all economic and development activities of the world to a sudden halt and leaving most nations unable to implement coherent contingency and resiliency plans due to the unanticipated occurrence of virological developments;

WHEREAS, on March 8, 2020, upon the recommendation of Health Secretary Francisco Duque, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte issued Proclamation No. 922, Declaring a State of Public Health Emergency Throughout the Philippines due to the threat of COVID-19, and amidst the frenzy and challenges to immediately reverse the resulting economic downturn, contact tracing was given policy attention as a public health strategic tool that can dramatically decrease the transmission of the virus, as was used similarly to combat communicable diseases such as the Ebola outbreak in 2014, and the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak in 2003;

WHEREAS, contact tracing is the process of finding out who has recently been in close contact with a person infected with a virus, such as SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, including its mutations, and reaching out to those people to guide them in complying with health protocols and procedures, such as self-isolation, to prevent further spread of the virus;

WHEREAS, contact tracing, if properly implemented, could significantly curb the rate of transmission of COVID-19 and ease its negative impact on almost all aspects of the country's economic, political and social life;

WHEREAS, central to the COVID-19 case investigation and data collection is an effective and efficient contact tracing system which calls for collaborative actions across public and private agencies, and strong coordination between the national and local governments to stop the chains of transmission;

WHEREAS, local government units (LGUs) in the country initially reported having a hard time initiating contact tracing in their respective localities because the COVID-19 database lacked basic information such as phone numbers and accurate home addresses of contacts traced;
WHEREAS, contact tracing efforts in the country remain fragmented, with local governments and private establishments typically employing their own contact tracing systems which are not integrated into the government systems and overall database platform, resulting in numerous third parties offering disparate free contact tracing digital solutions, usually through mobile applications that require people to own smart phones, while some establishments continued to offer manual registration to non-smart phone users;

WHEREAS, wide disparate applications and non-centralized data repository lead to mismanaged and redundant data outcomes, wasted unprocessed volume of data, cost duplication, limited data access, and less to noneffective solutions which did not meet the intended expected data reliability in contact tracing, and raised doubts over efficacy and proper access to data collected which have been feared to have put to risk data privacy, confidentiality and cybersecurity laws in the mishandling and improper treatment of the volume of contact tracing data;

WHEREAS, on November 26, 2020, recognizing that data systems should include automated reports to aid in the more efficient technology-aided monitoring progress and outcomes of case investigation and contact tracing, the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID), in Resolution No. 85, prescribed the use of a digital contact tracing application, the StaySafe.ph platform, as the official COVID-19 management and monitoring application of the Philippine government in an effort to digitally consolidate contact tracing data in the country and link it with the Department of Health's (DOH) surveillance and contact tracing platform, the DOH COVID-19 document repository system;

WHEREAS, the StaySafe.ph contact tracing digital application is a free digital application intended to be donated to the government through a Memorandum of Agreement between its developer, Multiays Technologies Corporation, a company supported by the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company, and the DOH, once the former
was issued its security certification by the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), pursuant to Republic Act No. 10173, or the Data Privacy Act of 2012;

WHEREAS, the call of the IATF-EID for all national government agencies and LGUs, private companies, business establishments, and public transportation to use StaySafe.ph as the sole official contact tracing digital application for COVID-19 cases and data in the country so that all data could be linked to the official DOH COVID-19 data repository system remains unheeded to this day;

WHEREAS, aside from disparities in contact tracing applications and use, poor interconnection and data sharing between solution providers and the central database maintained by the DOH are threats to timely and accurate data collection and useful efficient access which are putting in great peril the efforts to fight COVID-19 and arrest its rapid transmission;

WHEREAS, data shows that the Philippines is only able to identify at least 7 contacts per coronavirus-infected person when the ideal contact tracing ratio should be 1:37 for urban areas, and 1:30 for rural areas;

WHEREAS, there is therefore an immediate need for the review and modification of existing contact tracing systems and the development of new and more user-friendly data interfaces to manage multiple data streams with seamless accuracy, interoperability, and access, and which hurdle the requirements of data privacy, confidentiality and cybersecurity laws, and security certification by the DICT. Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives, To urge the COVID-19 Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases to establish a unified national contact tracing protocol for a more effective health emergency data monitoring system, and to designate a government agency or body to serve as the central repository of a unified contact tracing information and database that strictly comply with Republic Act No. 10173, or the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Adopted,

LORD ALLAN JAY Q. VELASCO
Speaker

This Resolution was adopted by the House of Representatives on March 25, 2021.

MARK LLANES, O. L. MENDOZA
Secretary General
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