WHEREAS, the tourism industry in Boracay employs at least 36,000 workers, 19,000 from formal sectors including workers of hotels, resorts, restaurants, dive shops, souvenir shops, tour activity centers, and transport providers; while 17, 000 are from informal sector such as masseurs, tattoo artists, vendors by the beach, among others;

WHEREAS, government pronouncements about the supposed rehabilitation of Boracay did not mention anything about the fate of displaced people, as related to the non-disclosure of a rehabilitation plan, if it does exist. There were reports that workers who usually earn P2,000 daily this summer peak season are despairing to accept work with pay of P323 per day for 30 days and a near stampede ensued involving displaced workers who waited for transportation assistance from a government agency;

WHEREAS, in compliance to President Rodrigo Duterte’s order to address the issues of sewerage and waste management systems, the interior, tourism, and environment departments recommended the closure of Boracay for at least six months starting on April 26. According to their press releases, the six-month closure period was for rehabilitating Boracay;
WHEREAS, the claim of closing the island in order to rehabilitate it comes into conflict with media reports that the Philippines Amusement and Gaming Corporation (Pagcor) had approved the construction of a $500-million integrated mega-casino complex on a twenty-three-hectare property of the island proposed by the Macau-based casino giant Galaxy Entertainment Group Ltd. together with its local partner Leisure and Resorts World Corp.;

WHEREAS, aside from the Macau-type casino-resort, a certain Double Dragon Properties Corp. has expressed its interest to build the country’s largest hotel by room count dubbed as the Hotel101 Resorts in Boracay;

WHEREAS, these reports conflicts or complicates the motive of the government to simply rehabilitate the island. Under similar tourism framework, this is worsening as it will displace local small-and-medium business establishments, aside from the already dislodged workers, consequently, exposing government measures as undemocratic, exclusive and elitist;

WHEREAS, the government’s dichotomized approach that to rehabilitate the island, its closure must be executed, concretely led to the displacement of livelihood of tens of thousands of workers, when it is chronological that the island’s environmental state was only a symptom and failure of revenue-driven tourism development framework of past and present administrations;

WHEREAS, since the Marcos administration, development of the tourism industry was primarily revenue-driven, which in the 1990s its liberalization was intensified and in 2005, under the Macapagal-Arroyo administration, Boracay was declared as a Special Tourism Zone. In 2016, the Department of Tourism recorded 1.7 million visited the island or 14,182 daily adding to the local population of more than 33,000;

WHEREAS, but as early as 1998, there were already studies that unbridled entry of visitors in Boracay, the island had already been loaded with garbage pollution, coliform contamination and water depletion. One of such studies was made by tourism scholar William Trousdale on his paper, Governance in Context: Boracay Island, Philippines January 1998;

WHEREAS, what happened to Boracay is the result of decades of flawed approach to developing our natural gifts. Now that Boracay has become, to use the words of the President, a cesspool, it should be called by its real name: failure of revenue-driven and unsustainable tourism development framework;
WHEREAS, as of present, a Boracay rehabilitation plan is yet to be publicized, even if there is such, it is now obviously undemocratic, not people-oriented and crafted without adequate public consultation with the stakeholders, majorly the 36,000 displaced workers of the island. Though coverage of agrarian reform was pronounced, there exist no definite government plan that will directly benefit farmers and fisherfolk communities, and more relevantly; the protection of the rights for ancestral domain of the Ati indigenous people, who expressed worry of the closure, is not guaranteed, especially when in 2013, an Ati leader in dispute with a big resort firm was killed;

WHEREAS, with the island’s closure being under the banner of rehabilitation, the government should be at present reconsidering its National Tourism Development Plan 2016-2022, which is revenue-driven and its supposed claim to create jobs was outrightly offset by the abrupt closure vis-à-vis displacement of workers;

WHEREAS, this government cannot stand on high moral grounds pontificating about supposedly rehabilitating Boracay without the admission that the environmental crisis is first and foremost brought about by the flawed and unsustainable tourism development framework and continued adoption of that framework ascertains the miserable fate of Boracay’s ecology and inhabitants;

WHEREAS, according to former Anakpawis Party-list Representative Fernando “Ka Pando” Hicap and National Chairperson of Pamalakaya-Pilipinas or the National Federation of Small Fisherfolk Organizations in the Philippines, the rehabilitation effort of the Duterte administration is a vehicle for clearing and opening up the island to big-ticket developers such as the two giant businesses mentioned above. While Pamalakaya recognizes that rehabilitation of Boracay is urgent, it should not be used as an entry point for the island’s foreign takeover and of other tourist destinations and marine resources in the country;

WHEREAS, it is of utmost urgency to determine the impact of the island’s closure on the stakeholder sectors, especially the 36,000 workers who by overnight lost their jobs and livelihood, and whether adequate government support was rendered;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, Committees on Labor and Natural Resources to conduct a joint inquiry and on-site public hearing, in aid of legislation, on the impact of the government’s closing down of Boracay island, that displaced 36,000 workers, amid reports of the PAGCOR-approved construction of casino resorts in the island.
Adopted,

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ANAKPAWIS Party-list

REP. CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE
BAYAN MUNA Party-list

REP. ANTONIO L. TINIO
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REP. SARAH JANE I. ELAGO
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