Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City
EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION No. 850

Introduced by
BAYAN MUNA Representatives FERDINAND R. GAITE,
CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE and EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT,
ACT TEACHERS Party-List Representative FRANCINE L. CASTRO,
GABRIELA Women’s Party Representative ARLENE D. BROSAS
and KABATAAN Party-List Representative SARAH JANE I. ELAGO

RESOLUTION
URGING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, THROUGH THE COMMITTEE
ON HEALTH AND THE DEFEAT COVID-19 AD HOC COMMITTEE,
TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE HIGH
INCIDENCE OF INFECTION AND DEATHS DUE TO COVID-19 AMONG
FRONLINE-HEALTH WORKERS, AND RECOMMEND URGENT MEASURES
TO PROTECT AND SUPPORT THE HEALTH WORKERS

WHEREAS, on May 8, 2020, Department of Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said
that the numbers of health workers who tested positive climbed to 1,934 out of 10,343 total
confirmed COVID-19 cases. Among the infected healthcare workers were 721 nurses, 616
physicians and 124 nursing assistants\(^1\). The latest figure would show that 18.48% of the total
COVID-19 cases are health workers. As of May 8, 34 health workers have died;

WHEREAS, the DOH said that since April 11, the number of infected healthcare workers has
been slowing down. But the figure is still high, with 48 more cases than that on May 6, when the
tally was at 1,886\(^2\), and 315 increase since April 30, when the DOH tally was 1,619 positive health
workers\(^3\);

WHEREAS, no less than the World Health Organization expressed concern over this high
incidence of COVID-19 infection among health care workers. WHO-Western Pacific region
COVID-19 incident manager, Dr. Abdi Mahamud, on April called “worrisome” the high incidence
of healthworkers succumbing to COVID-19 infection. The 13% incidence in mid April is higher
than the 2-3 percent overall regional average;

WHEREAS, while Dr. Mahamud of WHO said that the high incidence could be due to the
inadequacy of personal protective equipment; improper use of the same, or the high number of
cases overwhelming the health care system, DOH Undersecretary Vergeire claimed in various
interviews denied that lack of PPEs caused the high infection rate among health workers. She said
that health workers’ infection is due to patients’ non-declaration of travel history, health personnel

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exposure in their communities, and long duty hours;

WHEREAS, nurses and health workers from different hospitals have complained about the lack of PPEs. Some nurses were only given 2 sets per 12-hour shift so that they could not even take a break for more than two times. Others wash and reuse non-washable and non-reusable PPEs, still others were not given any PPE sets at all if they were not assigned to wards with confirmed positive cases. Most hospitals pitifully rely on donations;

WHEREAS, based on available reports, the Office of the Civil Defense in charge of distributing government-procured PPE sets was able to distribute only 43,000 by the third week of April. There is no clear report on the status of distribution of the purchased 1 million PPE sets worth P1.8 B. Yet, the 2,000 PPE sets delivered by OCD to the Philippine General Hospital, for instance, will reportedly last for only 4-5 days if there are 30 admitted COVID patients (probable and confirmed) considering that about 12 sets of PPE sets per day for one patient is needed by health workers from triage section to COVID ward or ICU. Some hospitals like San Lazaro Hospital and Lung Center of the Philippines utilize more than 400 PPE sets each per day;

WHEREAS, most nurses work 12-hour per shift with duty days varying from 2 straight days to 14 straight duty days. Some are provided with food and accommodation, some accommodation only, some are allowed to go home, still some are left to fend for themselves; and there is lack of standards on the duration and use/reuse of PPEs;

WHEREAS, health workers report that there is no automatic mass testing for them after and prior to duty, thus it cannot be ascertained if the infection came from their exposure to patients or the communities. Asymptomatic health workers classified as probable cases are at times made to report for duty in some hospitals thereby exposing fellow health workers and patients;

WHEREAS, health workers claimed that the lack of standards and protocols from the DOH resulted to different interpretations and system on the use and distribution of PPEs, patient load, duty days, among others.

WHEREAS, nurses from the Filipino Nurses United said that there is a need to investigate the current practices in different hospitals and develop one standard protocol. The protection of health workers must be ensured such that lack PPE sets must not be allowed to compromise the health workers' safety and right to life;

WHEREAS, immediate mass hiring of regular health workers must be done as severe understaffing of nurses in COVID-19 referral hospitals further increases their risk to infection to COVID-19. High infection rate among health workers further worsens understaffing as thousands of health workers are taken away from their work in providing direct patient care where they are needed most;

WHEREAS, the long time government neglect has made the health workers doubly vulnerable to COVID-19 infection. Even prior to the pandemic, health workers were already overworked and underpaid. Inadequate salaries and benefits, unhealthy patient load, inadequate hospital budget resulting to lack of equipment, medicines and supplies have severely compromised their physical, financial, social and mental well-being and their capacity to fully provide care to the patients;

WHEREAS, the fight against COVID-19 necessitates that the high rate of infection and deaths among the front-line health workers be immediately addressed and arrested. We need to save the lives of more health workers so that they can save more people's lives. While the health workers risk their lives as they continue to fulfill their oath to care for patients and save their lives, the government must fulfill its primary responsibility of protecting and supporting the health workers and providing for free, accessible, and comprehensive health services to the people. Much more than calling them “heroes”, the government must ensure and provide concrete actions and
programs to truly protect and support health workers;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the House of Representatives, through the Committee on Health and the Defeat COVID-19 Ad Hoc Committee, conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the high incidence of infection and deaths due to COVID-19 among frontline-health workers, and recommend urgent measures to protect and support the health workers.

Adopted,

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Bayan Muna Partylist

REP. CARLOS ISAAGANT I. ZARATE
Bayan Muna Partylist

REP. EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT
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REP. FRANCIS L. CASTRO
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REP. SARAH JANE I. ELAGO
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