



Committee Daily Bulletin

18th Congress
First Regular Session

A publication of the Committee Affairs Department

Vol. I No. 16
September 10, 2019

PRE-PLenary CONFERENCE ON THE FY 2020 BUDGET

COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Appropriations	Pre-plenary conference on the proposed FY 2020 budget, plans and programs, and major accomplishments of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED)	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Isidro Ungab (3rd District, Davao City), held a pre-plenary conference with CHED to thresh out issues and concerns raised by House Members prior to the deliberations of its FY 2020 budget in the plenary.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair, Rep. Francisco Jose "Bingo" Matugas II (1st District, Surigao del Norte), presided over this pre-plenary conference.</p> <p>CHED Chairperson J. Prospero de Vera III said that under the FY 2020 National Expenditure Program (NEP), the CHED is set to receive a budget of P40.78 billion, which is 22.22% lower than its current budget of P52.44 billion. By expense class, CHED's 2020 proposed budget will be distributed as follows: personnel services (PS), P445.28 million; maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE), P3.68 billion; capital outlay (CO) P209.7 million; and Higher Education Development Fund (HEDF), P1.09 billion.</p> <p>De Vera said that the significant decrease in CHED's proposed budget is mainly due to the P7.1 billion cut in the budget for the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education which funds the government's free higher education program and the tertiary education subsidy (TES). (This program still has a budget of P35.36 billion for next year.) Another huge decrease amounting to P3.65 billion was the FY 2020 budget for the Student Financial Assistance Program (StuFAP).</p> <p>De Vera also said that CHED's proposed budget does not cover the Tulong Dunong Program and the subsidy for medical students in state universities and colleges (SUCs). Nevertheless, De Vera assured the Committee that the Tulong Dunong scholars will still receive assistance under the TES.</p> <p>The Tulong Dunong Program grants P12,000 annual financial assistance to qualified students. On the other hand, the TES provides free tuition fees to students enrolled in SUCs, local universities and colleges (LUCs), and all accredited technical-vocational education and training programs.</p> <p>Rep. Sergio Dagooc (Party-List, APEC) asked what actions have been taken by the CHED to address its low utilization rate of funds for the free college tuition program as reported by the Commission on Audit (COA). De Vera said that the CHED had instructed all SUCs and LUCs to change their academic calendar, with the month of August as the school opening, in view of the government's shift to a cash-based budgeting system, under which only projects to be implemented within a fiscal year are funded. If classes start in the month of August, the schools will have enough time to submit documents required for the release of funds.</p> <p>On the query of Deputy Speaker Loren Legarda (Antique) if the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) has already established WiFi connectivity in all SUCs, De Vera answered in the negative. A budget amounting to P326 million was allocated to DICT this year for this purpose.</p> <p>Several Members promised to find ways to augment the CHED's 2020 budget.</p>