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COMMITTEE MEETINGS ON HOUSE MEASURES

COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Public Accounts jt. w/ Good Government and Public Accountability	HRs 1066, 1068, 1069, 1073 & 1074	Reps. Tambunting, Barbers, Defensor (M.), Vargas, and Zarate	Investigation into the alleged corruption in the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth)	<p>The Joint Committee, co-presided by Rep. Michael Defensor (Party-List, ANAKALUSUGAN), Chair of the Committee on Public Accounts, and Deputy Speaker Dan Fernandez (1st District, Laguna), for the Committee on Good Government and Public Accountability, will continue its inquiry pursuant to the five resolutions in its next meeting.</p> <p>In today's meeting, the Committee continued its discussion on issues arising from PhilHealth's disbursement of funds under its Interim Reimbursement Mechanism (IRM) and adoption of the case rate payment system in reimbursing hospitals and healthcare institutions (HCIs).</p> <p>Rep. Defensor disclosed that based on PhilHealth data, a total of 4,664 cases of fraudulent claims were uncovered from 2013 to 2020, of which 2,081 cases happened in the National Capital Region (NCR). He also presented the list of 51 HCIs that were given funds under the IRM amounting to P1.49 billion despite having pending fraud cases with PhilHealth. He said that the cases should have been resolved first before these HCIs were again allowed access to the IRM.</p> <p>The IRM provides emergency funding to hospitals, primary healthcare facilities, ambulatory surgical clinics, freestanding dialysis centers, and maternity care package providers to allow them to immediately provide healthcare services during calamities or fortuitous events, including the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Several Members questioned the release of IRM cash advances to facilities, such as dialysis and lying-in centers, that do not provide medical care to COVID-19 patients.</p> <p>PhilHealth Executive Vice President Arnel de Jesus explained that the IRM funds are not intended solely for COVID-19 cases but also to help mitigate the effect of the pandemic on the entire healthcare system. As such, PhilHealth can issue cash advances to hospitals even though they do not have COVID-19 patients under their care.</p> <p>Rep. Stella Luz Quimbo (2nd District, Marikina City) questioned the P26.8 billion fund allocated by PhilHealth for the IRM which is way beyond the estimated cost for COVID-19 hospital</p>

<p>Continuation... Public Accounts jt. w/ Good Government and Public Accountability</p>				<p>admissions. Based on her computation, she explained that with PhilHealth estimate of some 209,000 COVID-19 cases for 2020, the estimated cost for the management of COVID-19 cases should only be around P3.3 billion.</p> <p>PhilHealth Senior Vice President Israel Francis Pargas maintained that the IRM aims to ensure the viability of the entire healthcare system during times of calamities and fortuitous events. Hence, the IRM was computed based on the utilization rate of HCIs during the last quarter of 2019.</p> <p>PhilHealth Fund Management Sector Senior Vice President Renato Limsiaco Jr. also stated that when the IRM is downloaded to the HCIs, they have the discretion as to how they would utilize the fund provided that they would submit a liquidation report. Limsiaco further said that the IRM fund can also be used to pay for the operating expenses of the HCIs to ensure that their services will not be hampered in times of calamities.</p> <p>Dismayed at what the PhilHealth officials stated, Rep. Quimbo likened the IRM to a “blank check” issued by PhilHealth to the HCIs which the latter could use for whatever purpose.</p> <p>Rep. Robert Ace Barbers (2nd District, Surigao del Norte) warned that the issuance of cash advances using public funds might constitute malversation, citing RA 9184 or the Government Procurement Reform Act which provides that funds can only be disbursed if services were already procured or rendered.</p> <p>Rep. Elpidio Barzaga Jr. (4th District, Cavite) inquired if implementing rules and regulations (IRR) were issued governing the IRM.</p> <p>PhilHealth corporate legal counsel Roberto Labe Jr. answered in the negative adding that PhilHealth’s implementation of the IRM is guided only by its Circular No. 2020-0007 which provides the guidelines on the provision of special privileges to those affected by a fortuitous event.</p> <p>Rep. Barzaga stressed that without the IRR, problems in the implementation of the IRM are bound to happen which is what is happening right now.</p> <p>The Joint Committee directed PhilHealth to suspend the release of the remaining IRM funds amounting to around P13 billion until such time that the agency has completed the liquidation of the P14 billion that was already released to the HCIs. The Members also said that the PhilHealth should justify why it should resume the release of the remaining funds.</p> <p>Pargas said that PhilHealth has already stopped the issuance of IRM to HCIs. The last release of IRM was made in July.</p>
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<p>Continuation... Public Accounts jt. w/ Good Government and Public Accountability</p>				<p>With regard to PhilHealth’s case rate payment policy, Deputy Speaker Rodante Marcoleta (Party-List, SAGIP) said that a mechanism should be put in place that would require the return of the balance of the case rate payments when they are not fully utilized. This, according to him, will help ensure that PhilHealth members’ money will be protected and utilized properly.</p> <p>Pargas said that PhilHealth is currently studying the case rate payment policy and its implementation.</p> <p>Under the case rate payment system, PhilHealth will reimburse a fixed rate for a specific illness/case, which will cover the fees of health care professionals and the use of hospital facilities. The reimbursement is not based on the actual cost of medical care.</p> <p>Also during the meeting, Bacolod City Rep. Greg Gasataya noted that the IRM funds were released to all regions except for Region VI. He asked about the timeline for the release of funds in the region since the hospitals in the area are already having financial difficulties due to the increasing number of COVID-19 cases.</p> <p>The PhilHealth corporate legal counsel informed the body that the memorandum of agreement (MOA) for the IRM of Region VI is now awaiting the final approval of the Office of the PhilHealth President. Labe added that it took some time to process the MOA with Region VI due to errors in the documentation.</p> <p>Earlier in the meeting, Rep. Defensor presented the names of 14 PhilHealth officials who signed waivers allowing the Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC) to check their bank accounts. He also showed the letter of PhilHealth President Ricardo Morales dated August 14, apologizing for his absence in the previous hearing.</p> <p>The Joint Committee requested PhilHealth to submit all the data requested by the Committee Members.</p>
<p>Ways and Means</p>	<p>HB 530</p>	<p>Rep. Paduano</p>	<p>Creating the Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) Sovereign Fund</p>	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Joey Sarte Salceda (2nd District, Albay), approved the tax provisions of HB 530 with amendments.</p> <p>As amended by the Committee, the tax provision of the proposed law states that the earnings of the OFWs and former OFWs from their investments in the bonds or other debt or investment instruments that the government shall issue in the implementation of the proposed law shall be exempt from income tax and documentary stamp tax, provided that the amount of investments shall not exceed P250,000 per OFW or former OFW per year. This tax exemption shall be reviewed after five years from the implementation of the proposed law.</p>

Continuation... Ways and Means	HB 7068	Majority Leader Romualdez	Extending the period of availment of the estate tax amnesty, amending for the purpose RA 11213, otherwise known as the Tax Amnesty Act	<p>The Committee approved HB 7068. It was Senior Vice Chair Rep. Estrellita Suansing (1st District, Nueva Ecija) who presided over the deliberations on this bill.</p> <p>The Department of Finance (DOF) interposed no objection to the bill.</p> <p>Baguio City Rep. Mark Go inquired about the status of tax collections of the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) upon the implementation of the amnesty on estate tax and amnesty on delinquencies.</p> <p>BIR OIC-Assistant Commissioner for Internal Affairs Service Elenita Quimosing said that P3.40 billion was collected from the amnesty on estate tax and P1.36 billion from the tax amnesty on delinquencies. However, she added, the collection target for the period 2019 to 2020 is P6 billion for amnesty on estate tax and P21 billion for amnesty on delinquencies.</p> <p>Because of the huge amount that still needs to be collected by the BIR, several Members expressed their support for the immediate passage of the bill.</p>
	Substitute Bill to HBs 191, 3671 & 1043	Reps. Suansing (E.), Garin (S.) and Singson-Meehan	Enhancing revenue administration and collection by granting amnesty on all unpaid impositions levied by government for taxable year 2018 and prior years	<p>The Committee will deliberate further on the amended Substitute Bill in its next meeting.</p> <p>Rep. Suansing, who presided over the deliberations on this bill, said that a small group meeting among the authors and the resource persons from the DOF and BIR will be conducted to discuss further and improve the provisions of the substitute bill particularly on the proposed rates for the general tax amnesty.</p> <p>The proposed law grants a general tax amnesty for one year on all unpaid internal revenue taxes using as base the taxpayer's total assets as of December 31, 2018 as declared in the Statement of Total Assets (STA) with the following options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3% rate subject to examination of pertinent documents by the BIR Commissioner for a period of one year from the payment of the amnesty tax; or • 20% rate but will not be subject to examination of pertinent documents within the indicated period. <p>On the query of Rep. Go on why assets instead of revenue for the year 2018 will be used as tax base, DOF Assistant Secretary Dakila Elteen Napao said that this is because the proposed amnesty is meant to clear out previous delinquencies and liabilities of those who will avail of this amnesty and give them a clean slate in moving forward.</p> <p>Rep. Sergio Dagooc (Party-List, APEC) recommended that the section in the bill pertaining to the "Disposition of Proceeds from</p>

Continuation... Ways and Means				<p>the General Tax Amnesty” should include a timeframe during which the proceeds from this tax amnesty will be allocated for COVID-19 response.</p> <p>Rep. Kristine Singson-Meehan (2nd District, Ilocos Sur), author of HB 1043, proposed to delete this section instead and suggested that any proposal on the matter may just be brought up in the plenary during the bill’s deliberation.</p> <p>The Bureau of Customs (BOC) recommended that the proposed general tax amnesty should not be extended to business entities with pending cases in courts pertaining to smuggling and other violations of customs laws.</p>
	HB 826	Deputy Speaker Gonzales (A.)	Providing for protection of the remittances of OFWs	<p>The Committee deferred the approval of HB 826 pending the submission of position papers from the DOF and the banking sector.</p> <p>Rep. Raymond Democrito Mendoza (Party-List, TUCP), Chair of the Committee on Overseas Workers Affairs, sponsored the bill. He said that the bill addresses the exorbitant remittance fees being paid by the OFWs.</p> <p>Under HB 826, all establishments providing discounts on remittance fees may claim the discounts granted as a tax deduction based on the cost of services rendered to OFWs.</p> <p>Rep. Salceda suggested to include banks among the establishments that may provide discounts on remittance fees and thus may claim this as tax deduction.</p> <p>Napao expressed DOF’s opposition to the proposal of the Committee on Ways and Means that the total deduction from the gross income of establishments providing discounts on remittance fees shall not exceed P24,000 per OFW every taxable year. Napao explained that the provision should be studied further taking into consideration its impact on the revenue collection of the government.</p>

DEFEAT COVID-19 AD HOC COMMITTEE (DCC) MEETING				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Health and COVID-19 Response Cluster	HBs 6793, 6798, 6808, 6838, 6873, 6913 & 6992	Reps. Salceda, Deloso-Montalla, Tan (A.), Revilla, Barba, Babasa, and Salo	Establishing the Philippine Virology Science and Technology Institute and appropriating funds therefor	<p>The Committee, co-presided by Rep. Angelina "Helen" Tan, M.D. (4th District, Quezon) and Rep. Erico Aristotle Aumentado (2nd District, Bohol), agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to consolidate the seven bills and come up with a substitute bill.</p> <p>At the outset, Rep. Tan said that the purpose of today’s meeting is to discuss measures seeking to establish the Virology Institute of the Philippines (VIP) which will conduct studies on viruses affecting plants, animals, and humans</p>

<p>Continuation... Health and COVID-19 Response Cluster</p>			<p>and will focus on developing a vaccine for COVID-19.</p> <p>Rep. Aumentado underscored the need for the country to develop and produce its own vaccine for COVID-19 in view of the urgent worldwide demand for it. Thus, he urged the immediate passage of the proposed law.</p> <p>The authors of the bills, Reps. Tan, Joey Sarte Salceda (2nd District, Albay), Cheryl Deloso-Montalla (2nd District, Zambales), Angelo Marcos Barba (2nd District, Ilocos Norte), Leonardo Babasa Jr. (2nd District, Zamboanga del Sur), and Ron Salo (Party-List, KABAYAN), gave their sponsorship speeches, highlighting the importance of creating the VIP in the country's fight against COVID-19. They also emphasized the need to provide the VIP with the necessary funding to be able to pursue its mandate effectively.</p> <p>In addition, Rep. Salceda recommended to include in the proposed law provisions encouraging private sector participation in the research projects of the VIP through the Public Private Partnership (PPP) scheme and protecting VIP's intellectual property rights.</p> <p>Department of Science and Technology (DOST) Secretary Fortunato dela Peña expressed his support to the bills adding that the research studies that will be conducted by the VIP will serve as a good reference in the policy decisions of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF). With regard to the conduct of clinical human trials for the vaccine, Dela Peña suggested that the VIP should collaborate with the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM). He also mentioned that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) should be in charge of regulating the clinical human trials.</p> <p>Department of Health (DOH) Director for Disease Prevention and Control Bureau Napoleon Arevalo also expressed his support for the bills and agreed that the sole regulatory body on the conduct of human clinical trial should be the FDA.</p> <p>Also expressing their support for the bills were resource persons from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA), National Academy for Science and Technology (NAST), National Research Council of the Philippines (NRCP), Philippine Genome Center of the University of the Philippines (UP), and the Biotechnology Coalition of the Philippines (BCP).</p> <p>The resource persons also recommended that a database management system should be set in place for the control, regulation, and surveillance of viral infection in the country.</p>
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Continuation... Health and COVID-19 Response Cluster				<p>The Department of Budget and Management will submit its position paper on the bills.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Bureau of the Treasury (BTr) Research Service Director Robert Dominick Mariano expressed his objection particularly to the provision that the VIP shall be authorized to use all the income generated from its operations as well as donation and grants for the upgrade of its physical and human resources. He also objected to the proposed appropriation of P2 billion to be charged against the current year's General Appropriations Act (GAA) for the initial operation of the VIP. He said that the generated income of the VIP should be deposited in the National Treasury and that the proposed appropriation should be subject to the availability of government funds.</p> <p>Rep. Salceda informed the body that the proposed law on the establishment of the VIP will complement HB 6096, a bill that he also authored seeking the creation of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) which will provide a comprehensive national framework for health emergency management. He said that the VIP shall provide the R&D solutions to the health problems identified by the CDC, thus these two bills will provide the foundation for a resolute science-based manner of addressing infectious diseases and epidemics.</p>
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SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING ON HOUSE MEASURES

COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/ DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Subcommittee on Labor Standards (Labor and Employment)	Draft Substitute Bill to HBs 81, 181, 1019, 1766, 4875, 5596, 6157 and 6549	Rep. Ong (R.), Deputy Speaker Romero, Rep. Castelo, Deputy Speaker Villafuerte, Reps. Rodriguez, Nieto, De Venecia, and Gaité	Instituting policies for the protection and promotion of the welfare of workers in the film, television, and radio entertainment industry	<p>The Subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Raymond Democrito Mendoza (Party-List, TUCP), approved the draft Substitute Bill in principle. The final version of the substitute bill will be presented to the mother Committee for its consideration and approval.</p> <p>Rep. Christopher de Venecia (4th District, Pangasinan), author of HB 6157, moved that radio entertainment industry shall be included in the coverage of the proposed law. This was after Manila Broadcasting Company Vice President Ellen Pulido manifested that companies, such as theirs, also produce contents for radio that fall within the ambit of the proposed law.</p> <p>Under the definition of terms, the Subcommittee adopted the definition of "workers" as suggested by the Sentro ng Alternatibong Lingap Panligal (SALIGAN) and Philippine Motion Picture Producers Association (PMPPA).</p> <p>On the hours of work, Department of Labor and Employment-Bureau of Working Conditions (DOLE-BWC) Medical Officer Marco Antonio</p>

<p>Continuation... Subcommittee on Labor Standards (Labor and Employment)</p>				<p>Valeros does not favor the provision in the bill allowing workers aged 60 and above to work beyond 12 consecutive hours as long as they execute a waiver. He explained that this would adversely affect the health of senior citizens working in the industry.</p> <p>The resource persons from the entertainment industry, however, agreed to the provision saying that most of the talented directors in the industry are aged 60 years and above and are working beyond 12 hours.</p> <p>Committee Chair, Rep. Enrico Pineda (Party-List, 1-PACMAN), opined that the 12-hour maximum work hours per day should not be allowed on consecutive days for all ages as it affects not only one's health but also work efficiency.</p> <p>Rep. De Venecia suggested that determining the maximum work hours for exceptional circumstances be referred to the Tripartite Council which will be created under the bill.</p> <p>With regard to the proposal to include a provision on the remuneration rights of the workers, Rep. Rufus Rodriguez (2nd District, Cagayan de Oro City), author of HB 4875, suggested that this be discussed further and decided on by the mother Committee.</p>
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AGENCY BRIEFING		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
<p>Rural Development</p>	<p>Briefing on the Hatid Tulong Program and on the national government agencies' strategic socio-economic interventions and programs and extension of other services to assist the locally stranded individuals (LSIs) and returning overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) affected by the COVID-19 pandemic</p>	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Elisa "Olga" Kho (2nd District, Masbate), listened to the briefing of the Presidential Management Staff (PMS) on the Hatid Tulong Program, and the various national government agencies on their strategic socio-economic interventions and programs for returning LSIs and OFWs.</p> <p>PMS Assistant Secretary Joseph Encabo informed the body that the Hatid Tulong Program is a short-term humanitarian initiative of the government that provides transportation assistance to LSIs who were affected by the declaration of the lockdown in the National Capital Region (NCR). These include local tourists, students, OFWs, and other individuals who were stranded due to lack of public transport in Metro Manila.</p> <p>The PMS, along with the Department of Transportation (DOTr), Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), and the Department of Tourism (DOT), coordinates with the receiving local government units (LGUs) before sending back the LSIs to their respective home provinces. The LSIs are subject to local health protocols and other procedures established by the receiving LGUs. To date, Encabo said that 126,000 LSIs have already been assisted by the PMS.</p> <p>Replying to the query of Rep. Kho on the challenges the PMS has encountered in implementing the program, Encabo mentioned the following: difficulty in ascertaining whether the person is an LSI; limited transport facilities; insufficient budget; lack of assurance on</p>

Continuation...
Rural Development

whether LGUs will accept returning LSIs; and lack of manpower. With the limited resources for this program, the government intends to partner with the private sector to improve its implementation.

Rep. Alyssa Sheena Tan (4th District, Isabela) inquired on the use of school buildings as isolation or quarantine areas for returning LSIs and OFWs.

Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Undersecretary Ricojudge Janvier Echeverri said that the Department of Education (DepEd) has already issued a circular allowing the use of schools as quarantine areas and that the LGUs are doing the necessary coordination with the schools on the matter.

On requiring the conduct of RT-PCR (reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction) test on LSIs and OFWs prior to their departure for their respective provinces, Encabo replied that the Hatid Tulong Program does not have the budget to cover this kind of test given its cost and that only rapid tests are being conducted at this time.

Rep. Sergio Dagooc (Party-List, APEC) recommended that the Committee should communicate officially with the Department of Health (DOH), urging the latter to extend the necessary technical assistance to public hospitals that the LGUs may utilize in order to conduct the RT-PCR tests for LSIs and OFWs.

In response to the request of Rep. Edgar Mary Sarmiento (1st District, Western Samar), Encabo explained that the Hatid Tulong Program is limited to transporting LSIs back to their respective provinces and that employment assistance for these LSIs is covered by the Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pag-asa Program (BP2).

The resource persons from the OWWA, Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines, Office for Transportation Security (OTS) of the DOTr, and the Philippine Coast Guard gave the following data relative to the Hatid Tulong Program:

- OWWA - 140,000 OFWs assisted; reintegration programs already crafted for the OFWs who have returned to their provinces;
- CAAP - 198,000 OFWs considered as LSIs transported to the provinces using Philippine Air Force facilities;
- OTS - 146,000 OFWs and 27,321 LSIs assisted through OTS' one-stop shop; and
- PCG - 1,242 students, 11,703 LSIs, and 172,730 OFWs assisted.

With regard to the socio-economic programs of national government agencies for returning LSIs and OFWs, former Party-List Representative and now Deputy Director General of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) Aniceto Bertiz III apprised the body of the current initiatives of TESDA in providing skills training and promoting comprehensive rural development.

As a member of the BP2 Council, TESDA has earmarked funds from two of its flagship scholarship programs, the Training for Work Scholarship Program and the Specialized Training for Employment Program, to provide the following: trainer's training to develop individuals to become trainers and assessors; entrepreneurship training; business and financial management coaching or mentoring in coordination with the Department of Trade and Industry; and tool kits for training and for self-employment.

<p>Continuation... Rural Development</p>		<p>The Department of Agriculture (DA), through its regional field offices, provides BP2 beneficiaries with vegetable gardening kits including seeds and assorted planting materials, animals to raise, and training and technical assistance. The DA will also be offering beneficiaries zero interest loans through its Survival and Recovery (SURE) Aid and Recovery Project, Kapital Access for Young Agripreneurs, and AGRI-Negosyo programs.</p> <p>On the part of the Department of Social Welfare and Development, Undersecretary Aimee Torre Franca-Neri said that under the BP2 program, the DSWD will provide livelihood settlement grants (LSG), a start-up financial assistance under the Sustainable Livelihood Program directly provided to each eligible recipient family to support their livelihood or economic activities in the communities where they will be resettled. The LSG shall only be provided once per eligible family and shall not exceed the amount of P50,000.</p> <p>The resource persons were requested to submit their respective reports and presentations relative to the Hatid Tulong Program and the BP2 Program.</p>
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CONSULTATIVE MEETING WITH GOVERNMENT AGENCIES		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
<p>North Luzon Growth Quadrangle (Special Committee)</p>	<p>Consultative meeting with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) on the proposed FY 2021 budget, plans and programs, and status of implementation of the Unified Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education Act (UniFAST) for Regions I & II and the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR)</p>	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Ramon Guico III (5th District, Pangasinan), discussed with the CHED and TESDA their proposed FY 2021 budget, plans and programs, as well as the status of implementation of the UniFAST in North Luzon.</p> <p>The CHED regional directors of the CAR and Regions I and II said that they have already submitted their respective FY 2021 proposed budgets to the CHED Central Office for review and consolidation.</p> <p>CHED Region II Director Julieta Paras reported that CHED Region II's proposed budget for 2021 is P21.78 million, to be distributed as follows: personnel services (PS), P15.3 million; maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE), P4 million; and capital outlay (CO), P2.5 million. The proposed budget will fund the following plans and programs: conduct of capacity building sessions on transitioning to the normal modes of delivery of learning; conduct of series of workshops on curriculum review and enhancement to enable higher education institutions (HEIs) to develop learning models that are responsive to the post-COVID-19 scenario; and monitoring of the implementation of the enhanced curriculum.</p> <p>As for TESDA, CAR Regional Director Manuel Wong said that the TESDA CAR's proposed budget for next year is P64.97 million.</p> <p>TESDA Region II Director Demetrio Anduyan Jr. said that the region will be able to implement, among other programs, 195 training programs using the modified blended learning system with its proposed 2021 budget of P227.91 million.</p> <p>TESDA Region I Director Vincent Aljon Cifra likewise presented the region's proposed projects for 2021 which are as follows: implementation of the development projects under the Poverty Reduction, Livelihood and Employment Cluster of the Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict, which is headed by TESDA; improvement of nine TESDA administrative schools; and purchase of mobile training program trucks.</p>

<p>Continuation... North Luzon Growth Quadrangle (Special Committee)</p>		<p>UniFAST Board OIC-Executive Director Ryan Estevez, together with the North Luzon CHED and TESDA regional directors, discussed with the Committee Members the status of the following programs under RA 10931 or the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free Higher Education (tuition and miscellaneous fees) in state universities and colleges (SUCs) and CHED-recognized local universities and colleges (LUCs); • Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) or grants-in-aid for poor students in public and private institutions; • Student Loan Program (SLP) for tertiary education students; and • Free Technical-Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in public and private institutions registered with TESDA. <p>On the query of Deputy Speaker Deogracias Victor "DV" Savellano (1st District, Ilocos Sur), Estevez said that the 2020 budget for the programs under RA 10931 was reduced from P38.9 billion to P28.4 billion in compliance with National Budget Circular No. 580, issued last April 22 by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM).</p> <p>The Circular provides for economic measures in the government to generate the required amounts to implement the national policy to address the COVID-19 pandemic. It states that 35% of programmed appropriations of concerned agencies under the FY 2020 General Appropriations Act shall no longer be made available for release effective April 1, 2020.</p> <p>Estevez asked the help of the Members in informing their constituents about the SLP which has P1 billion allocation but with very few applicants. Under the SLP, a student may avail a maximum loan of P60,000 in every program cycle with no interest as long as the student repays the borrowed amount within one year. If the student does not repay the loan within the loan term, a 6% interest rate per annum will be charged.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Savellano and Rep. Joseph "Jojo" Lara (3rd District, Cagayan) recommended lowering the loan interest rate of the SLP which, according to them, is too high.</p> <p>With regard to the Tulong Dunong program, Estevez said that there are 23,440 beneficiaries for Regions I and II and CAR for the Academic Year 2019-2020. Under the Tulong Dunong program, the beneficiary-students receive P12,000 financial assistance per year. However, the DBM decided last September 2019 that there will be no allocation for the said program for FY 2020 national budget. Nevertheless, Estevez assured the body that the scholars of the Tulong Dunong program would remain scholars of the government through the TES program.</p>
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