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CONFERENCE COMMITTEE MEETING

COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/ DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Conference Committee	HB 7727	Rep. Yap (E.)	The General Appropriations Act of 2021	<p>The Conference Committee, co-chaired by Rep. Eric Go Yap (Party-List, ACT-CIS), Chair of the House Committee on Appropriations, and Sen. Juan Edgardo "Sonny" Angara, Chair of the Senate Committee on Finance, approved the Conference Committee Report on HB 7727 or the General Appropriations Act (GAA) of 2021.</p> <p>Rep. Yap said that the timely passage of the proposed 2021 GAA will ensure that the government will be able to "rebound, reset and recover" after the country lost its momentum because of the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Likewise, Sen. Angara recognizes the importance of the timely passage of the proposed 2021 GAA as he expressed optimism that it will be signed into law before the year ends.</p> <p>Aside from Rep. Yap, other House Members present during the conference committee meeting were the following: House Majority Leader Ferdinand Martin Romualdez (1st District, Leyte), House Minority Leader Joseph Stephen Paduano (Party-List, ABANG LINGKOD), Deputy Speakers Doy Leachon (1st District, Oriental Mindoro), Michael Romero Ph.D. (Party-List, 1-PACMAN), Jose Atienza Jr. (Party-List, BUHAY), Roberto Puno (1st District, Antipolo City), Loren Legarda (Antique), Bernadette Herrera-Dy (Party-List, Bagong Henerasyon), Kristine Singson-Meehan (2nd District, Ilocos Sur), Eric Martinez (2nd District, Valenzuela City), Juan Pablo "Rimpy" Bondoc (4th District, Pampanga) and Wes Gatchalian (1st District, Valenzuela City); Reps. Joseph Sto. Niño Bernos (Abra), Edcel Lagman (1st District, Albay), Elenita Milagros "Eileen" Ermita-Buhain (1st District, Batangas), Michael John Duavit (1st District, Rizal), Joey Sarte Salceda (2nd District, Albay), Eleandro Jesus Madrona (Romblon), Francisco "Kiko" Benitez (3rd District, Negros Occidental), and Munir Arbison (2nd District, Sulu).</p> <p>On the part of the Senate, aside from Senator Angara, the other conferees were: Senate Majority Leader Juan Miguel "Migz" Zubiri and Senators Pia Cayetano, Cynthia Villar, Panfilo Lacson, Joel Villanueva, Win Gatchalian, Ramon Bong Revilla Jr., Christopher Lawrence Go, Imee Marcos, Risa Hontiveros, Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan, Maria Lourdes</p>

Continuation... Conference Committee				Nancy Binay, Grace Poe, Ronald "Bato" dela Rosa, and Richard Gordon.
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COMMITTEE MEETINGS ON HOUSE MEASURES				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Aquaculture and Fisheries Resources	HB 7792	Rep. De Venecia	Strengthening the current function of the National Integrated Fisheries Technology Development Center (NIFTDC) of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) and renaming it to Philippine Center for Aquaculture and Fisheries Development (PCAFD) and appropriating funds therefor	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Leo Rafael Cueva (2nd District, Negros Occidental), agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to fine-tune HB 7792.</p> <p>Rep. Leonardo Babasa Jr. (2nd District, Zamboanga del Sur) was designated as TWG Chair.</p> <p>Rep. Christopher de Venecia (4th District, Pangasinan), author of HB 7792, said that his bill seeks to strengthen the current function of the BFAR-NIFTDC located in Dagupan City, Pangasinan by establishing it as a corporate body to be known as the PCAFD. He informed the body that the BFAR-NIFTDC has been successfully breeding and propagating economically important marine, brackish, and freshwater aquaculture species over the years.</p> <p>Rep. De Venecia said that the proposed PCAFD will develop a national aquaculture and post-harvest industry development program to achieve the following: sustain and further improve the gains already made in fish production and processing; improve the income and economic condition of marginal fisherfolk; expand employment opportunities in the rural and coastal areas; and ultimately promote the general welfare of the people through food sufficiency and security. He explained that the increase in population, climate change, occurrence of natural calamities, lack of infrastructure, and underdeveloped food production technologies are threatening the country's food sufficiency and security at present.</p> <p>BFAR-NIFTDC Dagupan City Planning Officer Evelyn Dangla gave a brief presentation on the history, functions, and projects of the NIFTDC. She said that the original name of the NIFTDC was Seafarming Research and Development Center (SRDC), which was established in 1985 with the main thrust of developing the oyster industry of the country.</p> <p>In 1997, the SRDC was turned over to BFAR which expanded its activities to include the propagation or breeding of aquaculture commodities like milkfish, saline tilapia, seabass, catfish, and many others. Since then, Dangla said, the Center has established various modern facilities for production and developed various aquaculture technologies</p>

<p><i>Continuation...</i> Aquaculture and Fisheries Resources</p>				<p>on finfish and shellfishes. It also offers on-the-job (OJT) training programs and is accepting an average of 909 OJTs from about 50 schools every year. Currently, the NIFTDC has hatchery projects for its prime commodities such as oyster, milkfish, giant freshwater prawn, and molobicus tilapia.</p> <p>Department of Agriculture (DA) Undersecretary Cheryl Marie Natividad-Caballero lauded the objectives of the bill. However, she suggested that the bill specify the focus areas of the proposed PCAFD and to look into possible duplication of functions with the existing National Fisheries Research and Development Institute (NFRDI) of the DA.</p> <p>Department of Budget and Management's Chief Budget and Management Specialist Johnry Castillo recommended that the bill be studied further particularly with regard to the creation of PCAFD as a corporate body and its financial capability as a self-sustaining body or a government-owned and controlled corporation (GOCC). He explained that if the PCAFD would continuously require financial assistance from the government later on, then it is better off as an attached agency of the DA. He also said that consultations have to be made with the Department of Finance (DOF) on the funding source of the bill.</p>
<p>Climate Change</p>	<p>HR 1391</p>	<p>Rep. Chatto</p>	<p>Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives for the Government of the Republic of the Philippines to submit the first Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on or before 31 December 2020</p>	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Edgar Chatto (1st District, Bohol), adopted HR 1391.</p> <p>Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Environmental Management Bureau's (DENR-EMB) Climate Change Division Chief Albert Magalang informed the body that the DENR, as Chair of the Climate Change Adaptation, Mitigation and Disaster Risk Reduction Cabinet Cluster (CCAM-DRR Cluster), will heed the recommendation of the Committee to submit the NDC on or before December 31.</p> <p>Magalang said that the Climate Change Commission (CCC), which is the Secretariat of the CCAM-DRR Cluster, will produce the formal technical guidelines in the formulation of the NDC. He also apprised the body that the CCC has already started coordinating and consulting with concerned government agencies for the integration of the NDC.</p> <p>Reps. Leo Rafael Cueva (2nd District, Negros Occidental) and Jocelyn Sy Limkaichong (1st District, Negros Oriental) agreed that the country's first NDC should be submitted to the UNFCCC by the end of the year.</p> <p>This position was likewise adopted by the representatives of the CCC, National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities (ICSC), Greenpeace Philippines, and Aksyon Klima.</p>

Continuation... Climate Change				Aksyon Klima convenor Rodne Galicha underscored that the quality of the NDC should not be compromised in the rush to comply with the deadline for submission.
Health	HBs 7200, 7202, 7934 & 8093	Reps. Delos Santos, Ong (R.), Tan (A.), and Villafuerte	Protecting Filipinos from the harmful effects of trans-fatty acids	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Angelina "Helen" Tan, M.D. (4th District, Quezon), approved the four bills.</p> <p>The Secretariat was directed to draft and subsequently file the substitute bill, subject to style and amendment.</p> <p>Rep. Tan said that the bills seek to protect Filipinos from the threat of death and diseases that are linked to trans-fatty acid (TFA) consumption by removing industrially-produced TFA from the country's food supply. Specifically, she said the proposed law will regulate the use of TFA and impose penalties against the manufacture, importation, distribution, and sale of partially hydrogenated oils (PHOs) or oils and fats with high TFA. The proposed law likewise mandates the Department of Health (DOH) to convene and lead an Inter-Agency Task Force on TFA for the effective implementation of the proposed law.</p> <p>Rep. Tan underscored the urgency of passing the measure into law, especially in this time of pandemic, where patients with comorbidities have higher risk of serious illness or death. She said that now, more than ever, preventive health care and healthy lifestyle must be achieved in line with the vision of RA 11223 or the Universal Health Care Act. Moreover, she noted the position of the World Health Organization (WHO) that TFA elimination is considered as one of the simplest and most straightforward public health interventions to reduce the risk of cardio-vascular diseases (CVDs) and improve the nutritional quality of diets.</p> <p>Rep. Ronnie Ong (Party-List, ANG PROBINSYANO), author of HB 7202, noted that due to the impact of COVID-19 health crisis, people are now aware of the importance of having a strong immune system and healthy lifestyle.</p> <p>Rep. Ong disclosed that, as of June 8, 2020, 49% of the COVID-related deaths in the country had comorbidities such as CVDs that are linked to TFA. Rep. Ong urged the stakeholders and experts to find the right balance in finally making the Philippines trans-fat free.</p> <p>Department of Finance (DOF) Fiscal Policy Planner and Economist Charmaine Odicta said that the Department's official position paper on the bills is still being prepared.</p>

Continuation... Health				<p>Manifesting their support for the bills were representatives from the Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Agriculture, DA-Bureau of Agricultural Research, Department of Science and Technology-Food and Nutrition Research Institute, DOH-Disease Prevention and Control Bureau, Food and Drug Administration, National Nutrition Council, Philippine Coconut Authority, Nutritionist-Dietitians' Association of the Philippines, Philippine Association of Nutrition, and Imagine Law.</p> <p>Imagine Law is a non-stock, non-profit public law organization that designs and advocates evidence-based policy solutions to enable people to live healthy and meaningful lives.</p>
	HBs 5688, 6479, 6828, 7074, 7408 & 8048	Reps. Agabas, Acosta, Arroyo (M.L.), Abunda, Abu, and Tan (A.)	Converting/upgrading/increasing the bed capacity of hospitals in certain parts of the country and appropriating funds therefor	<p>The Committee approved the six bills subject to style and amendment.</p> <p>The authors took turns explaining the merits of their respective bills.</p> <p>Rep. Tyrone Agabas (6th District, Pangasinan), author of HB 5688, said that his bill seeks to upgrade the Eastern Pangasinan District Hospital (EPDH) to enhance the delivery of its services. Rep. Agabas emphasized that EPDH is the only hospital in the 6th District of Pangasinan which has a mass-based health care program which caters to poor and indigent patients.</p> <p>Rep. Gil "Kabarangay Jr." Acosta (3rd District, Palawan), author of HB 6479, explained that his bill seeks to increase the bed capacity of Ospital ng Palawan in Puerto Princesa City from 100 beds to 400 beds in order to institutionalize the operation and improve the delivery of basic health services to the growing populace.</p> <p>Rep. Ma. Lourdes Arroyo (5th District, Negros Occidental), author of HB 6828, said her bill seeks to increase the bed capacity of the Ignacio L. Arroyo Sr. Memorial District Hospital (ILASMDH) in Negros Occidental from 25 to 100 beds. Rep. Arroyo added that she also filed HB 6963 which seeks the re-nationalization of ILASMDH, placing it under the direct control, management, and supervision of the DOH. HB 6963 is yet to be deliberated on by the Committee.</p> <p>Eastern Samar Rep. Maria Fe Abunda, author of HB 7074, explained that her bill seeks to increase the bed capacity of the Eastern Samar Provincial Hospital to 300 beds, upgrade its facilities and equipment, as well as augment the number of its personnel to be able to cater fully to the medical needs of the people of Eastern Samar. Rep. Abunda said that the hospital's lack of medical equipment and supplies, which became more evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, compels</p>

Continuation... Health				<p>many of the residents to travel for at least four hours to Tacloban, Leyte to receive appropriate health care.</p> <p>Rep. Raneo "Ranie" Abu (2nd District, Batangas), author of HB 7408, underscored the need to upgrade the Mabini Community Hospital into a Level I Tourism Specialty Hospital and increase its bed capacity to 50. Rep. Abu explained that it is the only hospital in the Municipality of Mabini and has only a 20-bed capacity, and the nearest private or government hospital is 10 kilometers away.</p> <p>Rep. Tan, author of HB 8048, said her bill seeks to upgrade the Alabat Island District Hospital in the Province of Quezon into a Level III General Hospital to be known as the Alquerez General Hospital under the direct supervision and control of the DOH. Rep. Tan said that Alabat Island is a center of tourism and thus access to adequate healthcare is a necessity.</p> <p>DOH Development Management Officer IV Roderick Napulan recommended that the Alabat Island District Hospital be upgraded into a Level II Tertiary Hospital first instead of directly upgrading it to a Level III General Hospital. Rep. Tan agreed to Napulan's proposed amendment to her bill.</p> <p>With regard to the other bills seeking to upgrade and increase the bed capacity of hospitals, Napulan explained that the DOH is currently conducting a study to determine the most appropriate bed capacity for each hospital level based on the DOH's Hospital Development Plan. He also mentioned that there is a pending bill in the Senate which is referred to as the "DOH Bed Capacity and Service Capability Rationalization Act" that will govern the determination of the appropriate bed capacity of hospitals.</p>
	HBs 6372 & 6966	Reps. Andaya (dec.) and Enverga	Re-nationalizing the Ragay and Sipocot District Hospitals in the Province of Camarines Sur, and the Polillo Medicare Community Hospital in the Province of Quezon, respectively, placing them under the control and supervision of the Department of Health (DOH), and appropriating funds therefor	<p>The Committee approved HBs 6372 and 6966, subject to style and amendment.</p> <p>Rep. Tan said that HB 6372, authored by the late Rep. Marissa Andaya (1st District, Camarines Sur), is now being taken care by Rep. Michael John Duavit (1st District, Rizal).</p>
	HBs 6391 & 7387	Reps. Daza and Mercado	Converting the Northern Samar Provincial Hospital in Catarman Northern Samar into the Northern Samar Medical Center and the Salvacion Oppus-Yñiguez Memorial Provincial Hospital in the City of Maasin, Southern Leyte into a tertiary Level III hospital to be known as the Salvacion Oppus-Yñiguez Medical Center, respectively, increasing their bed capacity to 300, upgrading their service facilities and professional health care, authorizing the increase of their medical personnel,	<p>The Committee deferred the approval of HBs 6391 and 7387.</p> <p>Rep. Jose "Jun" Ong Jr. (2nd District, Northern Samar), co-author of HB 6391, asked the Committee to defer the consideration of the bill upon the request of the Provincial Health Board of Northern Samar which conveyed its desire to introduce some new provisions to the bill.</p> <p>With respect to HB 7387, authored by Southern Leyte Rep. Roger Mercado, the DOH</p>

Continuation... Health			placing the hospitals under the supervision, control and management of the Department of Health (DOH) and appropriating funds therefor	recommended that the bill be consolidated with another bill seeking to establish a Southern Leyte Hospital System which will subsume other hospitals including the Salvacion Oppus-Yniguez Memorial Provincial Hospital in the City of Maasin, Southern Leyte.
Mindanao Affairs	HR 520	Rep. Dimaporo (M.K.)	Formulating a three-year security and development plan for the whole of Mindanao	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Mohamad Khalid Dimaporo (1st District, Lanao del Norte), will continue with its discussion of HR 520 in its next meeting.</p> <p>Rep. Dimaporo, author of HR 520, said that real and sustainable peace and development in Mindanao cannot be attained without addressing the issues of local communist insurgency and terrorism perpetrated by ISIS-affiliated groups in Mindanao. A Security and Development Plan is therefore needed to ensure that the peace and development achieved by the implementation of Martial Law in the region is maintained.</p> <p>He requested concerned government agencies to apprise the Committee of the implementation of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) as well as the Government of the Philippines-Moro Islamic Liberation Front (GPH-MILF) Peace Process.</p> <p>Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Major General Benedict Arevalo said that the NTF-ELCAC was created by virtue of Executive Order 70 series of 2018, which seeks to institutionalize a whole-of-nation-approach in attaining inclusive and sustainable peace and adopt a National Peace Framework. The NTF-ELCAC has 12 clusters which include the Peace, Law Enforcement and Development Support (PLEDS) Cluster led by the Department of National Defense-AFP.</p> <p>As reported by Arevalo, the PLEDS Cluster accomplished the following: neutralized 128 communist key leaders; reduced armed groups; cleared guerilla fronts; unified and harmonized peace and development efforts at different levels; and established conflict-resilient and developed communities.</p> <p>Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) Undersecretary David Diciano, chair of the GPH Peace Implementing Panel, presented the roadmap of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB), which consists of two inter-related components, namely: the Political Track and the Normalization Track. Under the roadmap, the Political Track shall deal with the establishment of the Bangsamoro through the passage of the Bangsamoro Organic Law, conduct of plebiscite, the establishment of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA), and the election of Bangsamoro officials.</p>

<p>Continuation... Mindanao Affairs</p>				<p>The Normalization Track, on the other hand, deals with aspects relating to security, socio-economic development, and confidence building measures, and transitional justice and reconciliation. Diciano said that the Normalization Track should already be in Phase 3. However, several of its components are yet to be achieved.</p> <p>Moving forward, Diciano sought the commitment and support of Congress on the following: funding for the delivery of socioeconomic packages for the MILF decommissioned combatants and their communities; decommissioning of 28,000 or 70% of the 40,000 MILF combatants by 2022; transformation of MILF camps into peaceful, civilian and productive communities; and continuous capacity building of the BTA and full transfer of powers to the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.</p> <p>Rep. Dimaporo held that the Normalization Track, particularly the decommissioning of 40,000 MILF combatants, is moving too slowly. He asked OPAPP to explain the problems it is encountering which may hinder the achievement of all components of the Normalization Track before the end of the Duterte administration.</p> <p>Diciano explained that the decommissioning process was greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent community quarantines, which restricted the movement of people. So far, he said, 12,000 or 30% out of the 40,000 MILF combatants have already been decommissioned. Another 14,000 MILF combatants would have been decommissioned this year, but did not materialize because the MILF has not yet submitted the list of the names of these combatants.</p> <p>When asked if budgetary constraints adversely affect the decommissioning of the MILF combatants, Diciano answered in the affirmative.</p> <p>Mindanao Development Authority (MinDA) Secretary Emmanuel Piñol agreed with Rep. Dimaporo that armed conflict continues to be a hindrance to sustainable peace and development in Mindanao. He also called for government support in providing the people of Mindanao wider access to financing especially those engaged in agriculture and fisheries. Providing support to the fisheries and agriculture sectors would help the Mindanao Region attain self-sufficiency.</p> <p>Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Undersecretary Ricojudge Janvier Echiverri expressed support for the measure saying that the active involvement of local government units (LGUs) will play a big part in ensuring the successful implementation of the Security and Development Plan.</p>
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Continuation... Mindanao Affairs				Echiverri promised to solicit the position of the National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM) on the inclusion of former armed combatants in the Philippine National Police ranks.
	HR 1164	Rep. Dimaporo (M.K.)	Expressing support for the declaration of Martial Law and suspending the writ of <i>habeas corpus</i> in the Province of Sulu, or where needed in the region of Mindanao, and requiring the Department of National Defense (DND) to provide a basis thereof to the Committee on Mindanao Affairs	<p>The Committee will archive HR 1164 based on the remark of Rep. Dimaporo that discussion on HR 1164, which he authors, is already moot and academic as it has been overtaken by events with the passage of RA 11479 or the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020. Rep. Dimaporo explained that the declaration of Martial Law in the Province of Sulu or in Mindanao is no longer necessary because RA 11479 already provides the mechanisms to run after terrorists.</p> <p>Nevertheless, the Committee invited the Department of Justice (DOJ) to apprise the body of the important provisions of RA 11479 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).</p> <p>DOJ Undersecretary Adrian Ferdinand Sugay said that RA 11479 is the most recent effort of the government to address the issue of terrorism and all allied activities, at the same time ensuring the protection of the people's civil and political rights. He also discussed the acts punishable under the law; the elements of the crime of terrorism; and the designation or identification of terrorist individuals, groups of persons, organizations, or associations, among others.</p> <p>Sugay clarified that under the IRR of the law, the following acts are not considered as acts of terrorism: advocacy; protest; dissent; stoppage of work; industrial or mass action; creative, artistic, and cultural expressions; and other similar exercises of civil and political rights. Likewise, he said that the IRR provides a remedy for groups or individuals marked as terrorists to have their names delisted or removed from the list of designated terrorists.</p>
National Defense and Security	Substitute Bill to HBs 206 & 2246	Reps. Garcia (J.E.) and Cabochan	Establishing a Philippine Self-Reliant Defense Posture Program (SRDP)	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Raul "Bobby" Tupas (5th District, Iloilo), approved the substitute bill and the corresponding Committee Report.</p> <p>Rep. Tupas presented the salient features of the proposed law. He also said that the SRDP Bill will strengthen the Department of National Defense's (DND) capabilities to develop the domestic defense industry, provide incentives to enterprises within the industry to propel their growth, and ensure government funding allocation for the program.</p> <p>Rep. Manuel Cabochan III (Party-List, MAGDALO), author of HB 2246 and head of the technical working group (TWG) which prepared the substitute bill, stated that the proposed law has undergone thorough discussions during the TWG meetings and that</p>

Continuation... National Defense and Security				<p>the suggestions of the stakeholders were already incorporated in the substitute bill.</p> <p>Representatives from the DND and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) both expressed support for the bill.</p>
	HBs 941, 4048 & 4050	Reps. Cabochan and Pimentel	Prescribing fixed terms for the Chief of Staff and Major Service Commanders of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP)	<p>The Committee agreed to create a TWG to study and consolidate the bills.</p> <p>Muntinlupa City Rep. Rozzano Rufino Biazon, author of HB 7677, was designated as head of the TWG.</p>
	HB 7677	Rep. Biazon	Prescribing a fixed term for the Chief of Staff and a minimum term for the Major Service Commanders of the AFP	<p>Rep. Tupas, author of HB 8056, said his bill seeks to professionalize the position of the AFP Chief of Staff (COS) to ensure that persons chosen to serve in such capacity shall be the most qualified. The bill also seeks to avoid the practice of revolving or rotating AFP Chiefs of Staff wherein senior officers who are retiring in a few months are being appointed to the position, thereby creating frequent leadership changes in the AFP.</p>
	HBs 7939 & 8056	Reps. Vargas and Tupas	<p>Strengthening professionalism and continuity of policies and modernization initiatives of the AFP by prescribing fixed terms for the Chief of Staff/Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and other key officers thereof, increasing the mandatory age of retirement of General/Flag Officers, providing for a more effective attrition system, repealing Sections 5, 10, 11 & 12 of PD 1638 (the law establishing a new system of retirement and separation for military personnel of the AFP), as amended, and Sections 3 and 4 of RA 8186 [the law prescribing officer grade distribution in the active force of the AFP and limiting the tenure of officers in the grade of Colonel/Captain (Philippine Navy) and General/Flag Officers in the AFP], as amended; and amending Section 1 of RA 9188 (the law strengthening the professionalism in the AFP)</p>	<p>Rep. Cabochan, author of HB 941, said that his bill sets a fixed term of three years for the COS and major service commanders of the AFP in order to provide continuity and stability in the leadership of the AFP and shield them from partisan politics.</p> <p>Likewise, Rep. Biazon said that his bill provides for a fixed term of office of three years for the COS and a minimum term of two years for the major service commanders of the AFP. He further explained that the bill provides that when the officer appointed to the position of COS reaches the compulsory retirement age before the end of the three-year term, the statutory compulsory retirement of the COS shall be deferred until the completion of the prescribed term. This will allow the COS to continuously implement the policies, plans, and programs he set for the AFP, Rep. Biazon added.</p> <p>Rep. Aurelio "Dong" Gonzales Jr. (3rd District, Pampanga) sponsored HBs 4048 and 4050 on behalf of the author, Rep. Johnny Ty Pimentel (2nd District, Surigao del Sur). Rep. Gonzales said that the two bills aim to provide a fixed term of office of three years for the COS of the AFP in order to adequately plan and implement long-term and continuing programs of the AFP.</p> <p>Expressing support for the bills were DND Undersecretary Cesar Yano and AFP Chief of Staff Gilbert Gapay. They promised to submit their respective position papers on the bills for the consideration of the TWG.</p>
Trade and Industry	HBs 7312 & 7672	Rep. Cabatbat and Deputy Speaker Legarda	Institutionalizing the "One Town, One Product" (OTOP) Philippines Program, appropriating funds therefor	<p>The Committee, presided by Deputy Speaker Wes Gatchalian (1st District, Valenzuela City), directed the Secretariat to prepare the Substitute Bill to the two bills for the Committee's consideration in its next meeting.</p>

<p>Continuation... Trade and Industry</p>			<p>Deputy Speaker Gatchalian, who was the Chairperson of this Committee prior to his election as Deputy Speaker on December 7, expressed his support for the passage of the proposed law. He said it is high time to enact a law that will support local products to help micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), which have experienced downturns due to the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Rep. Argel Joseph Cabatbat (Party-List, MAGSASAKA), author of HB 7312, said that since OTOP's implementation in 2004, the program has proven its ability to aid the MSMEs increase domestic sales and exports and improve their business skills while showcasing Filipino culture, tradition and creativity, aside from generating jobs.</p> <p>However, despite these achievements, the OTOP program has encountered challenges that limited its capacity to engage the MSMEs in the program. Thus, according to Rep. Cabatbat, his bill seeks to institutionalize the OTOP program and secure an annual funding in order to provide increased level and value of assistance to MSMEs. This would likewise help promote the convergence of initiatives among the local government units (LGUs), national government agencies, and the private sector in the development and promotion of Philippine products whether for export or domestic market.</p> <p>Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Secretary Ramon Lopez expressed his support for the proposed law as this will ensure the sustainability of the OTOP program even when administrations change. He said that the assistance and support that will be extended to MSMEs under the proposed law will greatly improve the sale and marketing of their products.</p> <p>DTI Assistant Secretary for Regional Operations Group Demphna Du-Naga presented the accomplishments of the OTOP program for the period January to October this year. She said that 13,031 MSMEs were assisted, 3,966 products were developed, and P1.3 billion of sales were generated nationwide amidst the pandemic. The top-selling products include turmeric, banana chips, cornick, dried mango, cacao, and coffee. She added that 39 OTOP hubs were also established with a plan to add 16 more hubs across the country.</p> <p>Rep. Sharon Garin (Party-List, AAMBIS-OWA) recommended to come up with a roadmap to clearly identify the goals of the program and the corresponding steps that need to be undertaken to achieve these goals.</p> <p>On Rep. Garin's query whether the OTOP program was designed only for agricultural</p>
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Continuation... Trade and Industry				<p>products, Rep. Cabatbat said that it is not exclusively for agricultural products, but the raw materials are mostly sourced from agricultural produce.</p> <p>Moving on to a new leadership role in the House of Representatives, Deputy Speaker Gatchalian thanked the Committee Members, resource persons, and the Secretariat for participating and/or extending assistance in the deliberations of important measures. He said that for the past 18 months during his term as Committee Chair, the Committee was able to approve the following measures which were subsequently approved by the House of Representatives on Third Reading: Foreign Investments Act, Retail Trade Liberalization Act, Corporate Social Responsibility Act, and the Internet Transactions Act.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Gatchalian assured the body that he will still actively participate in all the meetings and activities of the Committee.</p>
Transportation	<p>HB 2482</p> <p>HB1388</p> <p>HB 2112</p>	<p>Rep. Bautista</p> <p>Rep. Espina</p> <p>Rep. Aumentado</p>	<p>Declaring May 8th of each year as a special working holiday all over the country to honor our public transportation drivers</p> <p>Providing for the development, rehabilitation, and modernization of the Naval Airport in the Province of Biliran and appropriating funds therefor</p> <p>Providing for the Ubay Airport development to accommodate commercial, domestic and aviation training flights, appropriating funds therefor</p>	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Edgar Mary Sarmiento (1st District, Western Samar), approved HB 2482.</p> <p>Rep. Claudine Diana Bautista (Party-List, DUMPER PTDA), author of HB 2482, said that she filed the bill to honor public transportation drivers and to give them due recognition for their crucial role in the overall development of the country. She added that the sector remains vulnerable and in need of assistance. The proposed law may be the beginning of a broader recognition through more legislations and more governmental actions that will promote their well-being.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Rufus Rodriguez (2nd District, Cagayan de Oro City) and Rep. Anthony Peter "Onyx" Crisologo (1st District, Quezon City) expressed support for the bill.</p> <p>Also expressing support for the proposed law were representatives from the Department of Transportation (DOTr), Land Transportation Office (LTO), Alliance of Concerned Transport Organizations (ACO), and Move as One Coalition.</p> <p>Move as One Coalition representative, Robert Siy, suggested that every May 8th, only public utility vehicles should be allowed to use the roads following the global trend of appreciating public transportation.</p> <p>The Committee agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to study further the five bills seeking to modernize, develop, or establish airports in certain parts of the country.</p> <p>Rep. Ramon "Mon-Mon" Guico III (5th District, Pangasinan) was designated as head of the TWG.</p>

Continuation... Transportation	HB 4238	Rep. Arbison	Providing for the establishment and construction of an airport in the Municipality of Luuk, Province of Sulu, for the benefit of the entire Province of Sulu, to be known as Luuk Airport, and appropriating funds therefor	Rep. Sarmiento requested the DOTr to submit its airport master development plan, which will serve as reference in the deliberation of the bills. The plan should include the feasibility study on the site condition, review of the terrain, and budgetary requirement for the establishment of an airport.
	HB 4393	Rep. Almario	Designating Mati Airport in Davao Oriental as the official alternate airport to the Davao International Airport and appropriating funds therefor	DOTR Undersecretary Manuel Antonio Tamayo expressed support for the enactment of the measures that will further develop the Naval Airport in Biliran (HB 1388), Ubay Airport in Bohol (HB 2112), and Mati Airport in Davao Oriental (HB 4393). He shared that these are existing airports needing upgrade or modernization the fulfillment of which will be expedited upon the enactment of the bills mentioned. As for the establishment of an airport in Luuk, Sulu (HB 4238) and in San Francisco, Cebu (HB 7847), Tamayo suggested the conduct of a technical study to determine their viability.
	HB 7847	Rep. Frasco	Establishing a domestic, commercial airport in the Municipality of San Francisco, Province of Cebu, and appropriating funds therefor	
	HB 2769	Deputy Speaker Rodriguez	Providing for the establishment and construction of an international airport in the center of Mindanao, particularly in the area between Damulog, Bukidnon in the North; Antipas, North Cotabato in the East; Carmen, North Cotabato in the South; and Alamada, North Cotabato in the West, and appropriating funds therefor	The Committee decided to lay on the table HB 2769. Deputy Speaker Rodriguez, author of HB 2769, said that his bill was already "overtaken by positive developments" since an airport project located in Don Carlos, Bukidnon is now being implemented, which meets the purpose of the bill.
	HBs 438 & 2394	Rep. Revilla and Speaker Velasco	Requiring parking space from motor vehicle buyers in metropolitan areas as a pre-requisite for the purchase of a motor vehicle and registration with the Land Transportation Office (LTO)	The Committee agreed to consolidate HBs 438 and 2394 with the other bills that were referred to the TWG currently deliberating on similar measures requiring proof of parking for ownership or purchase of vehicles.
Youth and Sports Development	HB 1526	Rep. Garbin	Banning minors from full-contact competitive sports, imposing penalties for violation thereof	The Committee, chaired by Rep. John Marvin "Yul Servo" Nieto (3 rd District, Manila), agreed to refer HB 1526 to its Subcommittee on Sports to further study the bill. The Subcommittee on Sports is chaired by the Committee Vice Chair, Rep. Alberto "Bobby" Pacquiao (Party-List, OFW FAMILY). Rep. Alfredo Garbin Jr. (Party-List, AKO BICOL), author of HB 1526, said that his bill prohibits the participation of minors in full-contact sports competitions but allows their participation in recreational or non-competitive sports, provided that protective and safety gears are used to prevent unnecessary injuries to athletes who are minors. Expressing his opposition to the bill, Rep. Abraham "Bambol" Tolentino (8 th District, Cavite) argued that the proposed measure is counter-productive considering that 90% of the elite athletes started their careers when they were still young. According to Rep. Tolentino, this will further hamper policies and programs intended for sports promotion and

<p>Continuation... Youth and Sports Development</p>				<p>development and affect the country's representation in the international sports arena.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Eric Martinez (2nd District, Valenzuela City) commented that the proposed law recognizes the paramount need to ensure the safety and protection of minor athletes, and not to totally ban them from engaging in sports.</p> <p>Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) President William Ramirez suggested to modify the bill by including a provision that will prohibit athletes below 13 years of age to practice for more than 12 hours a week. Ramirez added that medical and health protocols should be in place and that only qualified coaches with appropriate bachelor's degree are allowed to conduct trainings of athletes.</p> <p>Citing RA 6847 or the law creating the PSC, Rep. Jericho Jonas Nograles (Party-List, PBA) pointed out that the Commission can step in without the need of a new law requiring national sports associations (NSAs), schools, and sports education institutions to make sure that protective equipment are being used in all full-contact and semi-contact sports.</p> <p>Coordinating Council of Private Educational Associations (COCOPEA) Managing Director Joseph Noel Estrada suggested that there should be a clear definition and distinction between full-contact and semi-contact sports in the bill.</p> <p>Association of Boxing Alliances in the Philippines (ABAP) Secretary General Edgar Genaro Picson spoke of the need to strengthen the role of NSAs in the promotion and development of the particular sport for which they are organized since they already have the rules and standards in place.</p> <p>The representative from the Department of Health (DOH) manifested support for the bill.</p>
	<p>HB 5808</p>	<p>Rep. Villa</p>	<p>Assisting young athletes by providing programs and incentives for their development</p>	<p>The Committee deferred its consideration of HB 5808 to allow the bill's author to hear and comment on the recommendations of the resource persons.</p> <p>Siquijor Rep. Jake Vincent Villa, author of HB 5808, was not able to attend the meeting and instead sent a letter to the Committee to explain the merits of his bill. Rep. Villa cited the importance of training and developing young athletes at the earliest stage of their career and providing them financial incentives and support to improve their athletic performance.</p> <p>Rep. Nieto recommended to rephrase the provision under Section 5 (Get Started in</p>

Continuation... Youth and Sports Development				<p>Sports Fund) of the bill that would allow vouchers to be issued directly to the association or club and not to the athlete and to expand the use of the fund not only for payment of participation fees of athletes but also for travel, accommodation, and purchase of sports uniforms.</p> <p>The PSC president suggested the inclusion of a provision in the bill that will clearly define the duties and responsibilities of the PSC under the proposed law. He added that cities and municipalities nationwide should likewise be involved in providing incentives and financial assistance to athletes.</p>
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TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP MEETING ON HOUSE MEASURES				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/ DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Energy jt. w/ Trade and Industry (Technical Working Group)	Draft Substitute Bill to HBs 302, 5642 & 7251	Reps. Yap (V.), Ty (A.), and Deputy Speaker Gatchalian	Establishing the regulatory framework for the safe operations of the liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) industry, delineating the powers and functions of various government agencies, defining and penalizing certain acts	<p>The joint technical working group (TWG), chaired by Rep. Jesus "Bong" Suntay (4th District, Quezon City), will deliberate further on the draft substitute bill in its next meeting.</p> <p>The working document used by the TWG in its discussion in today's meeting was the comparative matrix on the provisions of the draft substitute bill to the three House Bills and Senate Bill 1188, its counterpart measure in the Senate filed by Sen. Win Gatchalian.</p> <p>The TWG thoroughly discussed Sections 1 to 19 of both bills including the Definition of Terms. It also noted the comments and suggestions of the resource persons from the Department of Energy (DOE), Philippine LPG Association (PLPGA), LPG Marketers' Association (LPGMA), and the LPG Industry Association, Inc. (LPGIA).</p> <p>Upon the recommendation of the DOE, the TWG agreed to remove the provision on the Certificate of Non-Coverage (CNC) found in Section 19, wherein a bulk consumer shall secure a CNC from the DOE in lieu of a license to operate.</p> <p>DOE's Oil Industry Management Bureau (OIMB) Director Rino Abad explained that this is no longer necessary as the term "bulk consumer" is already defined in the proposed law as duly-authorized natural or juridical person who purchases LPG in large quantities for his own use and does not engage in the distribution or retail of LPG to the end consumer. An example would be an Auto-LPG garage-based operation which involves the operation of a motor vehicle fleet with at least thirty vehicle units, parked and serviced in a confined area or garage not rendering any retailing services. Abad added that this provision is not included in the Senate version.</p>

Continuation... Energy jt. w/ Trade and Industry (Technical Working Group)				<p>CNC refers to a written document issued by the DOE attesting to the fact that an LPG industry participant is a bulk consumer and is not engaged in any other activity that will require a license to operate.</p> <p>Rep. Suntay underscored the need to harmonize the provisions of the draft substitute bill with the Senate version for the immediate passage of the proposed law in both chambers.</p>
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DISCUSSION WITH AGENCIES/ENTITIES		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Trade and Industry	Update by concerned government agencies and private entities on recent resolutions/policies in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as allowing minors to go to the malls provided they are accompanied by their parents	<p>The Committee, presided by Deputy Speaker Wes Gatchalian (1st District, Valenzuela City), listened to the views of the stakeholders, especially the health sector and business establishments, with regard to the proposal allowing minors to go to the malls during the holidays.</p> <p>Discussions on the matter stemmed from the statement of Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Eduardo Año made during the meeting of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) on November 30. Año said that the DILG has ordered the gradual expansion of the age group who will be allowed to go out so that children could enjoy the Christmas holidays. He said that minors may go out and go to the malls if accompanied by their parents. However, this will only be applicable to localities with local ordinances allowing minors to go out and visit the malls during the holidays.</p> <p>Department of Health (DOH) OIC-Undersecretary for Health Regulation Team Maria Rosario Singh-Vergeire stressed that the DOH maintains its position that people should avoid going to crowded places, especially the malls, during the holiday season because of a possible surge of COVID-19 cases. She added that this limitation should all the more apply to children who are part of the vulnerable sector. Thus, the DOH recommends that minors should still not be allowed to go outside of their homes.</p> <p>Pediatric Infectious Disease Society of the Philippines' (PIDSP) former President Anna Lisa Ong-Lim concurred with the position of the DOH Undersecretary. She explained that children are prone to getting infected and allowing them to go outside increases the risk of infection in their household.</p> <p>DILG Undersecretary Ricojudge Janvier Echiverri explained that the decision to allow minors to go out was in response to the call of the business sector in order to increase customer traffic in their establishments. He said that the DILG will support the local government units (LGUs) in their decision allowing minors (15 years old and above) to go outside provided that they are accompanied by their parents.</p> <p>Resource persons representing private malls said that they will comply with the guidelines set by the LGUs.</p> <p>When asked about the revenue losses of business establishments as a result of not allowing minors to visit the stores, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Secretary Ramon Lopez said that there is a 30-50% drop in the total sales. He suggested the gradual opening of malls to certain age segments if these malls will be able to strictly observe and implement the standard health protocols imposed by the government.</p>

<p><i>Continuation...</i> Trade and Industry</p>	<p>Briefing by the Philippine International Trading Corporation (PITC) on its mandate, functions, operations, and performance</p>	<p>DTI Secretary Lopez briefed the Committee on the mandate and functions of the PITC.</p> <p>According to the Secretary, the PITC, which was established in 1973 through Presidential Decree 252, is a state trading corporation helping businesses and government agencies benefit from international trade. Under Executive Order No. 133, series of 1987, which reorganized the DTI and its attached agencies, the PITC is authorized to “collaborate or associate in joint venture with any person, association, company, or entity, whether domestic or foreign, in the fields of production, marketing, procurement, and other related businesses.”</p> <p>The PITC also became the lead coordinating agency to make quality and essential medicines available, affordable, and accessible to the Filipinos by virtue of EO No. 442, series of 2005. In collaboration with the DOH, Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth), the PITC was specifically tasked to undertake the procurement, sourcing and marketing of quality, essential and low-priced generic medicines through parallel drug importations and local sourcing of medicines from reputable and reliable suppliers and ensuring the widest distribution of these medicines nationwide.</p> <p>Lopez also explained that the PITC is under the regulation and monitoring of the Governance Commission for Government-Owned and Controlled Corporations (GCG). In addition, he said, a resident auditor is assigned by the Commission on Audit (COA) to the PITC to audit its funds and examine its financial transactions.</p> <p>With regard to the service fees being collected by the PITC from its clients (businesses or government agencies), Lopez said that 50% of the collections is being remitted to the National Treasury.</p> <p>PITC President and CEO Dave Almarinez reported that as of the third quarter of 2020, interest income amounting to P6.6 million was also remitted to the National Treasury. He also presented the ongoing procurement projects of the PITC amounting to P32.6 billion.</p> <p>Replying to the query of Deputy Speaker Gatchalian, Almarinez clarified that it is not mandatory for government agencies to get the services of the PITC for their procurement projects.</p> <p>Baguio City Rep. Mark Go said that the PITC’s procurement process should ensure fairness and must avoid favoring certain suppliers.</p> <p>Secretary Lopez replied that procurements made by the PITC undergo a competitive bidding process thereby giving all qualified suppliers a chance to participate in the process.</p> <p>Rep. Stella Luz Quimbo (2nd District, Marikina City) inquired on the alleged “idle funds” of the PITC. Almarinez and Lopez clarified that PITC funds are already allocated to various ongoing procurement projects and those projects with contracts already awarded.</p>
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FORUM		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
<p>Women and Gender Equality</p>	<p>Virtual Forum on the State of Local Response Mechanisms for Gender-based Violence (GBV) and Violence Against Women (VAW), as part of the observance of the 2020 18-Day Campaign to End VAW from November 25 to December 12 with the theme: “VAW-Free Community Starts with Me”</p>	<p>The Committee on Women and Gender Equality held a virtual forum on the State of Local Response Mechanisms for GBV and VAW as part of the observance of the 2020 18-Day Campaign to End VAW from November 25 to December 12. The forum was conducted in partnership with the Association of Women Legislators Foundation, Inc., Gender and Development Focal Point System (GFPS) of the House of Representatives, Angat Bayi, and Lunas Collective.</p>

Continuation...
Women and Gender
Equality

At the outset, Committee Secretary Joy Elena Piccio explained that the 18-Day Campaign to End VAW aims to promote awareness in the various forms and experiences of violence against women and girls; provide information on laws protecting them; feature VAW-related services that people can accept and receive; help strengthen a preventive and responsive power to end VAW; and gather public support for the campaign.

The Committee Chair, Rep. Ma. Lourdes Acosta-Alba (1st District, Bukidnon), said that the COVID-19 pandemic worsened GBV in the homes and communities. She added that the health crisis and the subsequent community quarantines restricted movements of people, hence incidence of domestic violence has increased but underreported.

In today's virtual forum, Rep. Acosta-Alba said that the participants will understand more the impacts of GBV to women and the society. Likewise, it will provide information on how the communities and local government units addressed VAW and what it entails to localize response to GBV. She encouraged her fellow legislators to help lay down policies and interventions that would reinforce the initiatives of the local communities.

Psychological Association of the Philippines Member Professor Beatriz Torre elucidated the mental health consequences of VAW and how children of victims may likely perpetuate its occurrence if not addressed accordingly. She said that regardless of age, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or ability status, violence can severely damage a person's physical and mental health. In the most extreme cases, it can cause their death either through injuries or by suicide.

Lunas Collective Founder Professor Sabrina Gacad noted that while there is a 44% decrease in reports of violence against women and children (VAWC) since the imposition of the enhanced community quarantine in March, it could be because the victims were not able to report such incidents under such physically restrictive circumstances. Thus, the Lunas Collective was launched wherein social media support is utilized to promote help-seeking. (Lunas Collective is a volunteer-powered helpline in the Philippines, supporting survivors of GBV or VAW.)

Regarding the GBV and VAW response in the local context, University of the Philippines Center for Women and Gender Studies Director Nathalie Lourdes Verceles cited Angat Bayi Women's Political Empowerment Fellowship Program as one of its major programs which aims to develop women leaders at the provincial, city, and municipal levels who will carry and advance a simultaneously people-centered, rights-based, gender-transformative, participatory, empowering, equitable, inclusive and sustainable development agenda.

Local officials – Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte, San Fernando, La Union Councilor Chary Nisce, and Ilocos Sur Board Member Mika Mendoza – shared their best practices and initiatives to address GBV and VAW in their respective localities.

Delivering their solidarity messages during the forum were Speaker Rep. Lord Allan Jay Velasco (Marinduque), Deputy Speaker Rose Marie "Baby" Arenas (3rd District, Pangasinan), Canadian Ambassador to the Philippines Peter MacArthur, House of Representatives (HRep) Secretary General Mark Llandro "Dong" Mendoza, and Philippine Commission on Women Chair Sandra Montano.

Speaker Velasco said that statistics have shown that 1 out of 4 Filipino women aged 15 to 49 has experienced physical, sexual or emotional

<p>Continuation... Women and Gender Equality</p>		<p>violence from her husband or partner. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent community quarantine, an average of eight women per day experienced GBV from March to May 2020. This, according to the Speaker, is completely unacceptable and a very serious cause for concern. As Speaker of the House, he supports the 18-day Campaign to End VAW to raise awareness about this pervasive problem. He looks forward to how the House could improve processes to make local response mechanism to GBV more effective. "Violence against women and girls is a social ill that must never be normalized. All of us are affected and all of us must do our part to end it." Speaker Velasco further said.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Arenas, who is also the Chair of the Association of Women Legislators Foundation, Inc., said that women are at the frontline of the crisis constituting 70% of healthcare providers. She then suggested that response to COVID-19 should incorporate the following: expand shelter options and safe passage for victims of GBV; provide more economic stimulus package for industries and professions that employ more women; and intensify information campaign against domestic violence down to local levels.</p> <p>Secretary General Mendoza, who is also the Chair of the HRep's Gender and Development Focal Point System, said that the HRep, through the leadership of Speaker Velasco, remains faithful to its commitment to support the government's goal of stopping all forms of GBV. He said that GBV is another form of pandemic which has existed even before the COVID-19 disease. To address it, the House Members of the 18th Congress continue to propose meaningful measures to prevent VAW, address power imbalances among genders, and find ways to make perpetrators totally accountable.</p> <p>In closing, Committee Vice Chair Rep. Geraldine Roman (1st District, Bataan) underscored that the pandemic is an eye-opener to the persistence and prevalence of GBVs despite efforts to address these. She stressed the need to stop GBV and VAW by all means, adding that change should start "within ourselves, our homes, and the institution that we represent."</p>
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