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RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:00 p.m., the session was resumed with Deputy Speaker Conrado M. Estrella III presiding.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella.). The session is resumed.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. REMULLA. Mr. Speaker, I move for the suspension of the session for a few minutes.

I so move.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The session is suspended.

It was 3: 00 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:04 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The session is resumed.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the honorable Chairman of the Committee on Appropriations, Hon. Eric Go Yap, on a question of privilege.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). What is the nature of the question of privilege of the Gentleman?

REP. YAP (E.). Mr. Speaker, tungkol ito sa isang balitang malicious—at para sa akin po ay hindi tama—tungkol sa akin.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The Gentleman from the province of Benguet has 10 minutes. Proceed please.

QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE OF REP. YAP (E.)

REP. YAP (E.). Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a matter of personal and collective privilege.

Kaninang umaga, tayo po ay na-interview ni Ms. Karen Davila sa ANC tungkol sa iba't ibang issues, kasama na rin dito ang issue tungkol sa ABS-CBN. Sa gitna ng aking interview, isa sa ginawa kong halimbawa ay ang naging issue noon kay Deputy Speaker Paolo Z. Duterte kung saan nasira ang pangalan niya at ng kaniyang pamilya dahil sa mga balita sa media na hindi naitama at hindi po totoo. Isa sa mga naitanong ay kung ito ba ang dahilan ni Deputy Speaker Paolo Duterte kaya na-file ang House Resolution No. 853 na naglalayong magkaroon ng inquiry para sagutin ang mga probable violations ng ABS-CBN. Sinagot ko po na: “Siya hindi pero ako, iyon ang dahilan.” Marami at mahaba po ang usapan na iyon at ang halimbawa natin, hindi lang iyon ang naging kadahilanan. Naipaliwanag ko po na hindi lang po iyon ang dahilan. Iyon po ay naging halimbawa ko lang sa aking panayam.

Lilinawin ko po, Mr. Speaker, hindi po ito personal na galit kaya isinumite ang House Resolution No. 853. Ang personal po sa akin ay ang maging tama ang pagbabalita ng media dahil very powerful po ang media. ‘Ika nga nila, “with great power comes great responsibility.” Trabaho po ng media ang maglahad ng facts at kunin ang lahat ng panig. Hindi ako pro or against ABS-CBN pero ako po ay tumatayo ngayon para sa tamang pagbabalita.

Pagkatapos po ng interview, ito po ang bumulaga sa social media. Ayan po ang news ng *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. (Pictures shown)

Kung titingnan ninyo, dalawa po diyan, Mr. Speaker, ang pinagtabi ko po at nilagyan ko po ng isang larawan sa gitna. Kung makikita ninyo, tama iyong picture pero iba ang gustong palabasin sa news. Ito po iyong ating nilalabanan, Mr. Speaker. Ito po iyong ating sinasabi na kapag tayo ay magbabalita, dapat po sana ay kunin nila ang side noong kanilang kino-quote. Sila po, baka nakinig lang sila sa ANC at gumawa na po sila ng balita pero bilang media at bilang mga journalists ay trabaho po nilang kunin ang lahat ng panig.

Okay. Ang sinabi po dito: “Solon admits ‘personal

reason' in seeking probe into alleged ABS-CBN franchise violations." Hindi po nila ako tinanong kung ito ba ay personal sa akin o ano po ba ito, sila po ay naging parang isang tsismoso lang po sa palengke na nakarinig ng tsismis at hindi po nag-validate.

Bakit po naging personal sa akin ito? Ang sinabi ko po sa ANC kaya po personal ito, hindi po iyong kay Paolo Duterte, iyon po ay isang halimbawa. Ang personal po sa akin ay iyong masisira mo ang buhay ng isang tao, na ang ni-report mo ay ang mali at hindi tama at pagkatapos ay hindi mo na babawiin iyon. Iyon po ang personal sa akin— kaya ako nag-file ng House Resolution No. 853 ay dahil gusto ko pong matuldukan ang maling practice ng ilang kasamahan natin sa media, na basta-basta na lang sila ay magre-report ng hindi totoo, allegations, at hindi na po itatama. Marahil, ito po siguro ang mabenta, mas maraming likes o mas maraming views at shares.

Pero, Mr. Speaker, papaano naman po iyong mga pamilya, papaano naman po iyong mga mahal sa buhay na nasira dahil po sa maling pagre-report? Hindi po ba sinasabi nila na 11,000 employees ang isinasang-alang-alang ng ABS-CBN? Ang sa akin naman po dito, at sinabi ko rin kay Ms. Karen Davila, na papaano po iyong daan-daang libong taong apektado ng maling pagbabalita?

Makapangyarihan ang media dahil kayo ang napapanood, nadidinig at nababasa ng tao pero kung mali ang balita, ilang buhay po ang masisira dito? Bakit po ako tumatayo dito ngayon? Upang itama ang kultura ng pagbabalita sa ating bansa. Mahirap ba na diretsuhin ang gagawing pagbabalita? Mahirap bang gawing straight to the point ang headline? Bakit po ba ang headline na parating, dapat ba nating isipin kung ano iyong medyo may malisya, kung ano iyong medyo mapapaniwalaan ng tao kapag binasa? Bakit po ba dapat controversial ang headline? Bakit po ba hindi tayo magbalita ng maganda at tama?

Sa bawat pagkakamali at sa bawat maling pagbabalita ay buhay po ng tao ang nasisira, at hindi lang po ng iisang tao kung hindi pati ang mga mahal niya sa buhay, ng mga taong naniniwala sa kaniya at ng mga kaibigan niya. Panahon na po upang itama natin ang pagbabalita at hindi iyong laging sasabihing pini-personal ang ABS-CBN at ang press freedom ay kinikitil. Hindi ninyo ba naiintindihan na sa maling pagbabalita ay buhay ng tao ang tinatangal ninyo? Iyon po dapat ay magbago, Mr. Speaker.

Iyon lang po ang aking dahilan kung bakit nandirito ako ngayon. Sa mga kasamahan ko sa media, hindi naman po lahat, pero doon po sa mahilig mag-twist ng kanilang mga balita, maging isang leksiyon po ito. Sa bawat maling ibabalita ninyo, isipin ninyo po ang mga buhay na inyong sisirain.

Tayo pong lahat ay may obligasyon. Mayroon po tayong lahat pananagutan sa ating bansa. Sa inyo po sa mga kasamahan ko sa media na nagbabalita

ng malicious ay sana po magkaroon po kayo ng konsensiya.

Maraming, maraming salamat po, Mr. Speaker, at maraming salamat po sa mga kasamahan ko dito sa Kongreso. Mabuhay po tayong lahat. Mabuhay ang Pilipinas. We heal as one po. Magandang hapon po.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we refer the speech of Hon. Eric Go Yap to the Committee on Rules for appropriate action.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The speech of the Gentleman from ACT-CIS and Benguet is hereby referred to the Committee on Rules.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 6815

Continuation

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we continue the consideration of House Bill No. 6815 under Committee Report No. 312, and that we request that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the said measure.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Secretary General is hereby directed to read only the title of the measure.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 6815, entitled: AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN ECONOMIC STIMULUS STRATEGY FOR THE COUNTRY'S GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE AFTERMATH OF COVID-19, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary status of this Bill is that we are in the period of sponsorship and debate, and with that, Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Sponsors, Hon. Stella Luz A. Quimbo, Hon. Sharon S. Garin and Hon. Joey

Sarte Salceda, to continue with the sponsorship of the said measure.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The distinguished Sponsors, the hardworking Sponsors are hereby recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, first to interpellate our Sponsors, I move that we recognize the Representative of the Third District of Camarines Sur, Hon. Gabriel H. Bordado Jr.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The distinguished Gentleman from Camarines Sur is hereby recognized.

Please proceed.

REP. BORDADO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Majority Leader.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, Cong. Edcel Lagman had propounded virtually all of the critical and relevant questions regarding the PESA particularly the funding sources to support the Act, the allocation for the various sectors including the local government units, and also the continuation of the Social Amelioration Program. So, Mr. Speaker, I will just deliver a very, very short manifestation.

I welcome the entry of this Philippine Economic Stimulus Act, the PESA Bill or the PESA, and the PESA directly addresses the problems and complications spawned by the pandemic and I am hoping, Mr. Speaker, for the eventual passage of this Act. I understand, from the pronouncements made by Cong. Sharon Garin, that more than 80 percent of the Members of the House of Representatives signed as coauthors of the PESA. So, I am hoping that this will be immediately approved because of its importance, its significance and its ability to really address the concerns of the country in the presence of the pandemic.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much, Majority Leader.

REP. GARIN (S.). Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Thank you very much, distinguished Gentleman from Camarines.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, next to interpellate our good Sponsor, I move that we recognize Hon. Francisco "Kiko" B. Benitez of the Third District of Negros Occidental.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The Gentleman from the Third District of Negros Occidental is hereby recognized.

REP. BENITEZ. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Majority Leader.

Mr. Speaker, I actually only wish to give a manifestation of my strong support to the enactment of the Philippine Economic Stimulus Act. Mr. Speaker, dear colleagues, our economy is reeling under the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are forced to close shop or limit activities when the country went into lockdown in March in order to save lives. Businesses are struggling to cope with massive losses by laying off workers or cutting wages. The pandemic has triggered an unprecedented global economic crisis and has threatened to sink families into extreme poverty.

We were already in a learning crisis prior to COVID-19 as evidenced by our poor showing in the international exams last year, and the joint pressure of a lockdown and an economic downturn has further disrupted our education sector's operation. There is an estimated revenue loss of P19 billion per month for as long as schools remain closed. School closings and educational disruptions can potentially lead to learning losses, increased dropouts and, in fact, higher inequality.

In the long run, the social costs in terms of human and social capital and development and welfare will be very difficult to quantify. That is why, I laud the authors of the Philippine Economic Stimulus Act for recognizing the plight of our education sector. The health and well-being of our 13 million Filipino students are obviously of paramount importance, but education is one of the topmost industries impacted by the virus. With schools being closed, the estimated 263,000 teachers in private basic education and 77,000 faculty members in private higher education, plus the administrative staff and counterparts, are anxious about their jobs and their future as the operational continuity in their sector is uncertain. Estimates from the DOF, which range from 130,000 to 170,000 jobs, show these might be lost in this sector in this year alone.

Further, as families of OFWs, whose posts have disappeared due to the global pandemic, struggle to make ends meet and the interruption in their children's education is inevitable. At the same time, we need to distinguish schooling from education. With or without schools being opened, the need for learning continues and in fact becomes more urgent as we adjust and retool our people for a post-COVID world. The educational system's role in the development and socialization of our students cannot be underestimated and studies have shown that interruptions in schooling increases dropout rates with great social costs to us all.

The lockdown has forced the schools to suspend classes and facilitate education through flexible and alternative learning modes to mitigate learning lost opportunities, while ensuring inclusive education through blended learning and various platforms, both digital and non-digital. In this context, we must make sure that education's promise of social mobility and equity are fulfilled and that students without access to digital technologies are not left behind.

I congratulate the authors because not only does the Bill extend support to schools and teachers through potential loans and wage subsidies, but it also extends help to the millions of students whose education would be disrupted by COVID-19 and its economic consequences. Furthermore, through this Bill and its provisions for ICT infrastructure for the schools of the future, we will be able to finally start to bridge the digital divide precisely at the time when we most urgently need to reskill and retool our people and prepare students of our nation for the emerging post-COVID-19 world. These provisions for education, in fact, are not just dole-outs to maintain businesses, or spur consumption of goods such as those made by the Marikina shoe makers in the example in Cong. Stella Quimbo's opening remarks, but this is an investment in our society's future. We will all go far in ensuring our nation's common social development and in making sure that it is sustained in the years to come. The 30 million Filipino students deserve no less.

Mr. Speaker, in view of its urgency, its necessity and its impact, it is my hope that we deliberate carefully but quickly, so that we can approve this measure at the soonest possible time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker; and thank you distinguished hardworking Sponsors.

REP. GARIN (S.). Thank you, Congressman Benitez.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). From one coauthor to another, the Chair would like to thank the distinguished Gentleman from the Third District of Negros Occidental for his manifestation of support.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. NIETO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Lady from Party-List ACT TEACHERS, Hon. France L. Castro, for her interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The distinguished Lady from ACT TEACHERS Party-List is hereby recognized.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Majority Leader.

Would the Sponsor of the Bill yield to some clarificatory questions.

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Proceed please.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Mr. Speaker, on Section 6 of the Bill, Mr. Speaker, on "Mass COVID-19 Testing," so it says here that there would be a P10 billion appropriation for Fiscal Year 2020 and another P10 billion for Fiscal Year 2021. Another provision states that the DILG shall identify and prioritize areas and business activities critically impacted and severely affected by COVID-19.

My question, Mr. Speaker, kasama po ba dito iyong mga private schools at saka iyong mga public schools po? Kasi po isa rin po sa kampanya ng mga teachers ay ang magkaroon ng scientific mass testing. Ito po ay targeted mass testing, especially po iyong mga vulnerable, iyon pong may mga symptoms o na-expose sa mga nag-positive sa COVID, iyon naman pong mga asymptomatics na na-expose din po at saka iyong mga buntis at senior citizens. So, kasama po ba sila dito sa Bill na ito or isa sa mga targeted sectors sila dito sa Section 6?

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, Mr. Speaker, the intention of the Bill is to include that sector.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Yes, kasi nga alam po natin na on August 24, matuloy man o hindi ang opening ng klase, mahalaga din po, Mr. Speaker, na masama ang ating mga teachers, mga school personnel at iba pang mga vulnerable para magkaroon naman po ng kumpiyansa ang ating mga magulang at estudyante sa pagpasok sa school, whether it is online teaching, face to face or distance learning.

Second question po ay Section 9, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, on the educational subsidy to students. So, nakalagay po dito iyong emergency subsidy for COVID-19-impacted tertiary education students in the private higher education institutions, including students who are not listed in the listahanan of the DSWD, with priority given to children of displaced OFWs.

Nakalagay din po dito, Mr. Speaker, ang P7,500 subsidy per student for the payment of the second semester tuition and other fees directly to schools for the salaries of teachers and non-teaching staff. Mayroong P18 billion for 2020 and P9 billion for 2019. Mayroong din pong emergency subsidy for COVID-19-impacted students in private education institutions to be granted to students who are currently not grantees and recipients of any existing government subsidies and facing financial difficulties due to work stoppage, closure of establishments, with priority given to children of displaced OFWs, and a P15 billion appropriation.

Ang tanong, Mr. Speaker, bakit po magkaiba iyong amount granted to PS qualified na P7,500 pero sa mga non-PES ay P7,000 lang? Pareho lang naman po ang tuition sa mga private HEIs or private education institutions.

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, Mr. Speaker, we agree with her on the disparity between the two provisions and the Committee is willing to adjust that. Both sections will have the same amount of P7,500, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Isa pa po regarding dito sa education subsidy to our students, bakit po excluded ang iba sa listahan—iyong listahanan ng DSWD—dahil po ba sa mga SUCs or local colleges lang sila puwede mag-aral ng libre? Iyong mga nasa listahanan naman ng DSWD ay ginagamit nila iyong subsidy for daily expenses. Parang mayroong discrimination, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, it is just to distinguish between the two. There is a listahan under the DepEd and the listahan under the poorest of the poor. So as not to confuse it, we rely on the listing of the Department of Education.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. So sana, Mr. Speaker, matanggal iyong discrimination, at kung magre-rely tayo sa listahanan, okay mag-rely tayo dito pero siguraduhin po natin na ito ay updated at wala pong maiiwan sa ating mga estudyante whether mag-enroll man sila sa SUC, sa local college o sa private HEI.

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, Mr. Speaker, we will note that and we will be adding provisions to avoid any discrimination on the students, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Another one, Mr. Speaker, on the expansion of GASTPE, those who are not recipients of ESC or iyong tinatawag nating senior high school voucher program shall receive tuition subsidy of P4,000 each. Wala po bang programa ang gobyerno sa PESA, halimbawa po, iyong teacher's salary subsidy ng private school teachers.

Alam ninyo, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, mula po noong nag-lockdown ng March 15, karamihan po sa mga small and medium schools natin—ang mga teachers natin na mula sa small and medium schools ay talaga pong no work, no pay sila, at ngayon nga po, sinasabi natin na madaliin iyong subsidy po doon sa ating mga private school teachers po natin dahil sila po iyong mga naapektuhan. Isa pa po, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, malawakang tanggapan din ang nangyayari at mayroong din salary freeze sa mga malalaking schools dahil sa mababang enrollment. Ang private schools or the private higher education institutions ay

matutulungan ng Bill pero ang private school teachers ay hindi po. Saan po nakalagay dito, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, iyong tulong natin doon sa ating mga guro o mga school personnel na naapektuhang masyado ng COVID-19 na pandemya na ito?

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, Mr. Speaker, I agree. The provision on the Bill's assistance to the students will address the needs of the students, while the needs of the teachers, especially for those who have not received their salaries, will be addressed under the wage subsidy and they can avail of a two-month subsidy considering they belong to an affected industry as well, Mr. Speaker. So, both the teachers and the students will get interventions from the government and these are based on different provisions of the proposed Bill, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Mr. Speaker, kailangan mailagay natin ang provision na ito kasi hindi lang naman po sa dalawang buwan apektado iyong ating mga teachers sa private schools, lalong-lalo na po iyong mga personnel din. Kasi kung ang magiging pagbubukas pa po ng klase ay sa August 24, so, ang ibig sabihin noon ay may tatlong buwan pa sila na no work, no pay. Kailangan pong matiyak natin, una, iyong mabilis na pagbibigay ng dalawang buwan na subsidy doon sa ating mga private school teachers at mailagay ito dito sa Bill iyong kanilang wage subsidy sa susunod na tatlong buwan, o hanggang hindi pa talaga nagiging regular ang klase or regular ang kanilang suweldo, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

REP. GARIN (S.). Thank you. Mr. Speaker, we will consider and we will make calculations, and the Committee will make the proper amendment at the proper time, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay, on to my next set of questions. In Section 26, on "Enhanced Build, Build, Build Program," Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, there would be P650 billion appropriated over three years starting in 2021.

Paragraph (b) thereof states: "The construction and the improvement of public-school facilities, and provision of efficient internet connectivity to all public schools and state universities and colleges, with the aim of creating 'Schools for the Future,' or schools geared towards competitiveness in the Fourth Industrial Revolution."

My question, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, ano po ba iyong mga tinutukoy natin dito na mga school facilities? May dagdag po bang washing areas or toilets? Kasi po kahit tubig, wala ang karamihan sa ating mga public schools.

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, Mr. Speaker, these are

considered also in the programming of the Enhanced Build, Build, Build Program. Not only the basic facilities, but also the digitalization or broadband or whatever the students will eventually need because of the effects of the COVID-19, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. So, kailangan, Mr. Speaker, mailagay dito sa Bill, halimbawa po, iyong talagang, ano po, maitutulong din natin kaugnay noon, iyong tulong po din natin doon sa internet access ng ating mga teachers kasi alam naman natin na they will go on different kinds of modalities, including internet connection. So, ano po ba, bibigyan po ba natin sila ng something like an allowance sa internet expenses ang ating mga teachers?

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, we have anticipated the limitation of the broadband capacity within the country and so, included in the Enhanced Build, Build, Build Program is the enhancement and this has been specified in the provision that there should be a construction, improvement and renovation of digital infrastructure to complement the national broadband plan. We cannot just give subsidies if there is no capacity in the country, so we have to address that first, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Yes, opo, tama po iyon, Mr. Speaker. I agree with the Sponsor dahil alam naman natin na ang Pilipinas ang pinakahuli po in terms of iyong bilis ng broadband sa buong Southeast Asia. Three years na nating pinag-uusapan na pabilisin iyong internet access natin o signal pero ngayon na naabutan na tayo ng COVID-19, hanggang ngayon ay mabagal pa rin ang internet connection. Kahit naman sa mga eskuwelahan, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, talagang mahina din ito. Kung pupunta ka sa mga eskuwelahan, ang Principal's Office lang ang mayroong internet connection pero hindi sa lahat ng classroom. Paano tayo makaka-cope up doon sa sinasabi nating different kinds of modalities?

Next, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, kasama ba dito iyong mga additional classrooms para may social distancing or para ma-decongest iyong mga class size natin kasi ito naman iyong sinasabi nating health protocol at the very least.

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, Mr. Speaker, this is included. In fact, it is over and above what the regular budget of the Department of Education provides, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor. Mayroong pronouncement, if I am right, o mayroong proposal ang Department of Education na para hindi po mahuli iyong ating mga teachers, mayroon po bang probisyon dito para sa

pagbili ng mga laptops, computers or any related na infra or gadgets para doon sa ating mga teachers at mga students din po?

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, due to the limitations of funding, this is not yet addressed with the funding that we have provided but the education institutions can avail of cheap loans in order to assist their teachers, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Nakakalungkot po, ano, kasi nga sa ngayon, may scarcity talaga ang mga gadgets na iyan at nakita na natin sa ngayon na ang ating mga teachers, ang ating mga estudyante, ay talagang hindi ready iyong ating educational system sa ganitong moda ng pagbabago o iyong new normal kaya sana po ay mapagsikapan at mabigyan din po ng probisyon iyong ating mga teachers para sa mga mahahalagang infrastructure.

Next question po, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, nakita ko dito iyong mga infrastructure sa "Build, Build, Build" provision. I also attended a hearing, the discussions on the CURES Bill. So, nakita natin sa CURES Bill na puro Build, Build, Build din naman, puro din naman ito infrastructure, ang paggagawa ng kung anu-anong mga buildings. Ano po iyong pagkakaiba ng PESA Bill provisions dito sa mga probisyon na nakalagay sa CURES Bill po, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor? Kasi puro capital outlays din po ito. Hindi ba magkakaroon ng redundancy? Papaano natin ito pag-iibahin?

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, the status of the CURES Bill is that it is still currently under Committee deliberations. In fact, the two bills can go hand-in-hand as both are for a three-year implementation. These do not contradict but they can, in fact, complement and should the time come, the CURES Bill can even amend what is provided in this Bill should this Bill be passed first, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Alam po ninyo, Mr. Speaker, napansin ko po kung papaano pinoproseso iyong mga bills natin, na dahil mayroon tayong COVID-19, ang mga ito ay minamabilis, halimbawa po, para sa new normal itong PESA, iyong CURES at mayroon pa yatang FIST. Kaya po baka magkaroon ng paulit-ulit o redundancy sa mga proposals, sa mga provision nito, so sana po makita natin later. Kaya nga po nagtaka po ako na parang mayroon ding dito na nakita ko sa CURES, na the same din dito sa ating PESA na tinatalakay po natin ngayon, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

REP. GARIN (S.). Thank you. That is duly noted. We will review the CURES Bill so that we can avoid any contradiction between the two proposals, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Thank you, Mme. Sponsor.

On Section 33 of the Bill, on the Special Power to Reallocate and Realign Appropriations, so again, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, parang binibigyan na naman natin ng so much power ang President kaugnay noong reallocation and realignment of appropriations. In fact, kapag naayos po talaga iyong allocation noong mga sinasabi nating provisions dito for education, health, baka hindi naman ito kailangan. Ano po ba iyong special power na tinutukoy natin dito, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, the Bayanihan Act actually expires in or it is only for as long as three months, so, it gives the President emergency powers to reallocate and realign appropriations. This provision, however, is different. The intention of the authors is to allow him to realign or to reappropriate funds for non-infrastructure projects, Mr. Speaker. Hence, the authors and the Committee have amendments or proposals to clarify such and to limit the powers granted under the provision, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you, Mme. Sponsor. Medyo dangerous po iyan, ano, na magbibigay tayo na naman ng special power to reallocate and realign appropriations. For three years po kasi ito, so, ibig sabihin noon ay bibigyan natin ng free hand ang Office of the President na mag-reallocate for three years. Unlike in the Bayanihan Act, there is a prescribed time talaga kung three months iyan, two months iyan, so, iyon ang pagkakaiba po nito sa Bayanihan. Kung ilalagay natin itong special provision na ito o itong special power to realign and reallocate, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, that would be dangerous. Three years iyan, hindi po ba, ito iyong itatagal nitong proposed Bill na ito.

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, the authorization is only for six months and the powers vested under this provision have more limitations and there are very specific items only that can be realigned or reallocated, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Thank you for the clarification. Even then, kahit na po six months iyan ay medyo dangerous din.

In Section 34, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, on Financing. As regards Section 34 on the authority to borrow, puwede po ba ma-refresh ako, sa Bayanihan Act, ilan na po ba iyong na-borrow o nautang po natin doon sa pagpapatupad noong ating COVID-19 response? So, papaano po ba iyon, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, how much is the

total loan that we have taken out for Bayanihan, is that the question?

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Yes, Mme. Sponsor.

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, as we have gathered from the news and as well as information from the departments, it is around P426 billion, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. So, iyong P426 billion po na nautang na natin para sa COVID-19 response, hindi pa po ba ito sapat, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, para sa ating COVID response po? Ano naman po ang iniisip natin through this Bill na pagkakagastusan po natin kung bakit tayo mangungutang?

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, the P426 billion or even the rest of the cash available right now for the national government is being utilized for the Bayanihan Act. It is for the Special Amelioration Program and any other programs and projects that we need to do to address the COVID-19. What we are proposing is, after COVID-19, we anticipate that there will be a lack of funds by then, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. So, I hope, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, iyong pangungutang na ito ay hindi na naman o huwag madagdag doon sa marami na namang utang na babayaran ng mga Pilipino in the future.

Panghuli, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, I hope itong PESA Bill na ito ay tumutuntong doon sa tamang oryentasyon. Hindi ba after COVID-19, pupunta tayo sa new normal at ayaw na natin ng old normal na sinasabi natin? I hope itong mga proposal natin na ito ay magre-redound para doon sa pagbabago talaga—transformation talaga para sa ikauunlad ng ating mga mamamayan at hindi magbu-bulid na naman ng maraming utang na mamanahin ng ating mga anak.

Thank you, Mme. Sponsor. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (S.). Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The Chair wishes to thank the Representative from ACT TEACHERS Party-List.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. NIETO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Gentleman from the Third District of Negros Occidental,...

REP. GARIN (S.). Tapos na siya.

REP. NIETO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize

the Gentleman from the Third District of Bukidnon, Hon. Manuel F. Zubiri, for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The distinguished Gentleman from the Third District of Bukidnon is hereby recognized. Proceed, please.

REP. ZUBIRI. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, first of all, I would like to thank our main sponsors, Congresswoman Garin (S.), Congresswoman Quimbo and Congressman Salceda for a job not just well done but very, very well done. Maraming salamat po.

Mr. Speaker, now on to my manifestation. The aviation industry is at risk of collapsing if not given the proper boost to keep it flying. This is the title of my manifestation.

Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker, and of course, to my dear colleagues, magandang hapon po sa inyong lahat. I stand here today in defense of our aviation industry. After so many Zoom meetings and discussions on what is needed by this industry because of the effects of the COVID-19, I am here today to ask you and the rest of our colleagues, together with the Executive Department, to help this industry that has been tremendously hit by this pandemic.

Ikinalulungkot ko po, Mr. Speaker, na itong industriya ay talagang tinamaan nang husto at kung hindi po natin matutulungan sila nang maigi ay baka hindi na po sila makabangon. All over the world, Mr. Speaker, airlines are filing for bankruptcy—including ours under Chapter 11—receivership and requesting for relief packages from their governments. The US government alone, for example, will help and use US\$58 billion for workers' protection and loans for the industry. India is planning a US\$1.6 billion rescue package for the industry. Australia will help with AUD\$715 million as their relief package. Canada, on the other hand, is setting aside CAD\$82 billion relief program for the industry.

Maraming, marami pa po na mga gobyerno ang tutulong sa kanilang mga kababayan na naapektuhan sa ganitong industriya. Right now, the airlines are in a survival mode. The aviation industry has been hit so hard that if we do not reach out to them immediately, we stand the chance of losing them and the jobs therein that our people truly need.

Together with this, the tourism industry, Mr. Speaker, will also suffer the same fate. How can we jump-start the tourism industry if the aviation industry is on the brink of possible collapse? The two industries go hand in hand, they are synonymous with one another. A total of 6 to 6.5 million people depend on these two industries alone, Mr. Speaker. Matatamaan din po iyong mga industriya mismo kung hindi natin tutulungan itong sektor. Milyon-milyong mga trabaho ay posibleng

mawala kung hindi natin bibigyan ng karapat-dapat na tulong o relief package.

What can we do, Mr. Speaker? Ano ba ang kailangan nila in capital and credit lines? Emergency lines of credit, good work facility, temporary waiver of charges, workers' relief and protection package; if liquidity is the problem, then credit and credit guarantee for a certain amount with a fixed allowable term in order for them to be able to bounce back to life—simple lang po ang mga ito. Kung hindi po natin sila tutulungan, maraming trabaho ang mawawala, mga maliliit na mga kumpanya ang hindi na natin makikita muli.

Again, Mr. Speaker, it is very simple. No companies, no jobs. No jobs, no revenue. Think about it. What will happen to our beloved nation? After so many decades of pushing and pushing these industries for revenue, it is about time that we push and position ourselves to give back and help save these industries and many others because of the people who depend on them. We save the industry, we save the companies. We save the jobs that our countrymen rely on, we save our people. In the end, it is all about the people, Mr. Speaker. We have to save them.

Maraming salamat po. If we do this right, then this will be the best stimulus bill the country has ever seen. We just need to implement it efficiently and properly for the sake of our people.

Maraming salamat po. Mahal kita, Pilipinas.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Thank you, Gentleman from the Third District of Bukidnon.

REP. GARIN (S.). Thank you, Congressman.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. NIETO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Gentleman from Party-List BUHAY, Hon. Jose L. Atienza Jr., for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The distinguished Gentleman and statesman from BUHAY Party-List is hereby recognized.

Proceed, please.

REP. ATIENZA. Maraming salamat po, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

We would like to clarify from the Sponsor certain basic issues na hindi namin po nakita rito sa kanilang draft Bill, sa kanilang proposed Bill. Ang tatanungin ko lang po ay simple—iyong agam-agam ng aming partido na baka ito ay paraan na mabuksan ang ating caja de yero, “bahala na kayo, ito ang mga pondo ninyo, daan-daang bilyon.” We are not talking about millions

here. We are talking about P1.3 trillion or P1.5 trillion depending sa anong press release iyong nabasa ninyo.

At this point in time, I would like to ask the Lady Sponsor, Congresswoman Garin. Magkano po ba ang total na iniisip ninyong uubusin dito sa programang ito na napakaganda ng pagkakagawa subalit napakaraming mga opening for possible wrongdoing? We are talking about the future of our people and our economic condition. If the purpose is to help the economy and to help our people, tatanungin ko po, magkano po ba ang tunay na inilalaan natin sa magandang programang ito?

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, P650 billion is for the Build, Build, Build Program and that is for infrastructure, and P640 billion is for the other interventions, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ATIENZA. My question, therefore, is why do we have to appropriate P650 billion once again for infrastructure when the Department of Public Works is well-financed in the present budget and we will soon talk about the next budget for next year at malalagyan sila ng mas malaking pondo pa? Why should we now hurry a big appropriation like P650 billion for the Department of Public Works and with us presuming that they will be the one who will use this money. Tama po ba iyong aking assumption?

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, Mr. Speaker. The P650 billion, however, is an enhanced one in which we will address what we have learned or what we have not addressed in the 2020 or previous budgets. This is focused on broadband, on education, on health and various other projects in order for us to cope with the effects of the COVID-19, Mr. Speaker. In addition to that, ang multiplier effect ng infrastructure is 3.4, so, if you invest P1, you get P3.44, Mr. Speaker. Historically, in the Philippines ...

REP. ATIENZA. Mr. Speaker, naiintindihan ...

REP. GARIN (S.). ... and in other countries, infrastructure is one of the main drivers of the economy, in addition to the job generation that it delivers as well, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ATIENZA. Mr. Speaker, naiintindihan po natin iyong sinabi ng ating Sponsor pero ang tanong ko po ay bakit infrastructure ang ating bibigyan ng tulong e samantalang nakadapa ang ekonomiya ngayon? Lahat ng mga negosyante ngayon ay dumaraing. Ubos na ang kanilang puhunan, baka mag-lay-off na sila sa buwang ito o sa susunod at baka hindi na sila makabangon. Why do we not talk about specifics of the industries affected by this COVID-19, which we are assuming

na lahat po ng mga industriya ay tinamaan dito except the multibillion businesses controlled by the present oligarchs.

Iyong mga small and medium enterprises, nakadapa na pong lahat. We do not need to be more inquisitive than knowing and accepting reality. I know of small businessmen who do not have hope anymore for this year. Are they going to get a direct support from the government o dadaan na naman ito sa bureaucracy at hindi nila mararamdaman?

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, one of the foundations of this proposal is the wage subsidy in which all industries that are affected can get subsidy from the government equivalent to two months as long as they do not retrench in order to protect employment, Mr. Speaker, if that is not enough, then we have financing interventions in which they can get zero or interest-free loans or cheap loans, Mr. Speaker.

To address the specific sectors, Mr. Speaker, mentioned by Congressman Atienza, we have identified the industries that are highly impacted and first and foremost, in all these interventions, the preference or the priority are the MSMEs, Mr. Speaker, as well as the informal sector. In addition to that, there is the tourism industry and service sector, the transportation industry like land, sea and air and also the agri-fishery industry, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ATIENZA. My next question, therefore, we are assuming that the different sectors will be benefitting indirectly. I am assuming that based on the answer of the Lady Sponsor. Now, who will control this money that we have? Have we put any safeguard? Wala po akong nabasa e, puro mga general definitions and there are general provisions on enhancing—that is a very broad word, “enhancing” the future of the industry. But at this point in time, we have not even recovered from the Bayanihan Act which we passed blindly. In one day we passed it because we wanted to be of help to our people in the different affected sectors, which is actually the whole nation.

At this point, marami pong nawalang pera dito sa Bayanihan Act na ito. Iyong mga ibibigay sa mahihirap, marami po akong nakausap na mga taga barangay na hindi pa umaabot ang pera sa kanila. Marami po naman ang mga nakita nating maling paghawak ng salapi—ipinamimigay sa kalye, nagbibilang ng peso por peso, libo-libong salapi ang hinahawakan ng sangkatutak na tao. Ito po bang pondong ito ay mayroon na tayong—natuto na ba tayo na kailangan mapag-ingatan ito para po ito ay makarating sa intended beneficiary at hindi po mapunta ito doon sa sinasabi ng mga eksperto na 30 percent of our appropriations go to corruption and that it still exists now. I would like to stress that. Corruption is the number one pitfall of this well-intentioned effort

of Congress. Ano po ang ating safeguards, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is a provision on curbing corruption in the Bill, but we have observed the problems in the implementation of some of the interventions under the Bayanihan Act and we have incorporated in the Bill the digitalization of the distribution as well as the utilization of the current programs of the government. For example, under the Department of Agriculture, they have specific programs and offices already, so accountability can be measured, and then also we have the Economic Stimulus Board that will monitor that, it is a multi-agency up to the level of agencies, Mr. Speaker. We have also made amendments on the involvement of the local government units, Mr. Speaker. So, we have the same concern, Mr. Speaker; it is the implementation part. The authors of the Bill and the Committee have worked hard to make sure that the measures are there and we have made sure that before we approve the budget, as well as the provisions, each agency has submitted its specific programs on what it intends to implement and how it will implement them, Mr. Speaker. Insofar as the Bill is concerned, that is how we are trying to curb corruption or losses in the implementation side, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ATIENZA. We appreciate the answer of the Lady Sponsor but I do not see what she has just mentioned in the letter of the Bill. It is all in her heart, clean conscience and mind, I am sure.

Ang sinasabi ko po, kapag ipinasa natin po itong Bill na ito as is, kumpleto po, maganda po, malalim po, malawak ang pananaw, subalit iyong salaping inilalaan natin—hindi katulad ng ating appropriations discussions where pesos and centavos are being discussed for every department, every bureau, anyone who will hold that money we are appropriating. This is a blanket authority. In fact, we are giving the President a blanket authority for three years to shuffle the funds from one place to another. Obviously, we are not sure what the money would be intended for or where it could be going. That is the reason why we have to ask these questions because later on, as we review this well-intentioned Bill, ang takot natin, baka hindi po umabot ito sa kinauukulan and we are talking about P1.3 trillion here.

When you talk of infrastructure, may nabasa ako rito sa isang press release ninyo, it will go to farm-to-market roads. Ano po ang kinalaman noong farm-to-market roads dito sa ating economic stimulus fund na pinag-uusapan ngayon? Puwede namang isama iyan sa susunod na budget. Malapit na po tayong mag-usap sa budget.

In this particular effort, in this instance, we are

giving everybody a blanket authority to make use of this money but we are not talking about safeguards. Wala po akong nakita ritong safeguards. Iyan po ay sinabi on the floor ni Congresswoman Garin but I did not see it in the letter of the law. If we approve it as it is structured, we are actually allocating P1.3 trillion and depending on the good intentions of those who are going to make use of the money.

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, Mr. Speaker, my apologies to Congressman Atienza if the Bill that he has now is not the same as what we have. We are on Section 20 already and the last submission to the Committee was a few days ago—so I can send to him a copy of the approved committee report so that his copy can be updated. But, yes, there are new safeguards that we have placed in there and if these are not to his satisfaction, we will be very much willing to accommodate his amendments, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ATIENZA. I would appreciate it, Mr. Speaker, if we are furnished copies of what the Lady Sponsor mentioned—safeguards, we are looking for the safeguards because iyon ang susi ng lahat ng ito. Kung ang pera ay pupunta sa farm-to-market roads eh baka (*Inaudible*) po, ibigay natin iyong pera sa mga farmers dahil marami na po tayong pondo para sa farm-to-market roads at nasa national appropriations po iyan at puwede po tayong maglagay ng mas malaki pang halaga subalit hihimay-himayin natin.

At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Estrella relinquished the Chair to Rep. Wilter “Sharky” Wee Palma II.

Dapat hindi ito parang blanket authority to open the Treasury, with the well-intentioned definition of “sectoral benefits,” but in reality, later on, magtatanong na naman ang mga tao: “Ano na naman ang ginawa ng Kongreso? Saan napunta ang pera?” dahil iyong SAP funds ay hindi pa rin nakakarating sa mga intended beneficiaries na ating ginugusto sanang tulungan.

Itong mga sektor na sinasabi ninyo, mayroon po bang self-guarding, self-policing mechanics diyan? Kung sinasabi ninyong mayroon na kayong pinag-usapan, I would appreciate it if you can say (*Inaudible*) our appreciation and our defense of this congressional wholesale appropriation of money which may cause a financial indigestion. Baka masayang lamang po samantalang hindi makikinabang ang talagang naghihirap na mga negosyo ngayon. Walang kadudaduda, hindi na tayo kailangang mag-usap pa ng mahaba, well-intentioned itong batas, pero katulad din po niyan iyong Bayanihan Act, maganda ang intensiyon pero hindi po yata natulungan ang lahat at mga 30 porsiyento

po ang nawawalang pera sa aming estimate, kung saan-saang balsa napunta iyon.

We do not want that to happen again because this is a bigger sum of money and a bigger responsibility on the part of Congress. We cannot just approve blindly a well-intentioned law. Kailangan diretso, malinaw, specific ang pupuntahan ng pera, sinong gagamit, sinong mananagot. Iyon po ang paalala ko at ng BUHAY Party-List. We cannot just blindly approve this on the basis of the good intention of the Lady Sponsor and the brilliance of my good friend, Joey Salceda.

Kaya pag-ingatan lang po natin, at ang paalala nating lahat...

REP. GARIN (S.). Sir, may Stella Quimbo pa.

REP. ATIENZA. ...sa ating mga kagalang-galang na mga Miyembro ng Kongreso, mag-ingat tayo. Baka magamit itong COVID-19 sa kanilang kupit.

Maraming salamat po, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (S.). Thank you, Congressman Atienza.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Rep. Palma). Maraming salamat po, Manong Lito Atienza of the BUHAY Party-List.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. NIETO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Gentleman from the Party-List IPACMAN, Hon. Enrico A. Pineda, for his interpellation.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Rep. Palma). The Gentleman from the IPACMAN Party-List, Hon. Eric Pineda, is now recognized. You have the floor.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. NIETO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the session for a few minutes.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The session is suspended.

It was 4:07 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 4:08 p.m., the session was resumed with Deputy Speaker Conrado M. Estrella III presiding.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The session is resumed.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. NIETO. Mr. Speaker, I move to withdraw my earlier motion and instead move to recognize Cong. Victor A. Yap from the Second District of Tarlac for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The Gentleman from the Second District of Tarlac is hereby recognized. Please proceed.

REP. YAP (V.). Mr. Speaker, good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity. I would like to make more of a manifestation on the PESA in support of our good and esteemed author and Sponsor, regarding the relevancy and urgency of the National Broadband Plan.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me commend the tireless efforts of our colleagues behind the significant and crucial legislation, the co-Chairs of the Defeat COVID-19 Committee's Economic Stimulus Cluster, Reps. Joey Salceda, Sharon Garin, Stella Quimbo. Indeed, this Bill would not only support our economy that was gravely affected by the COVID-19, but will also become a huge part of our history, to serve as a beacon of hope in fighting in times of crisis for our fellow countrymen whose lives were suddenly drawn to financial difficulties due to the pandemic. Today, I join the august Body in reviving the economy as I categorically express my support to the PESA.

What we went through and continue to experience right now under the different but equally challenging categories of community quarantine have taught us the value of embracing change, that nothing is permanent and that despite all the anxieties, we could rely on one important thing to go on with our daily lives and that is the Internet. With our intensified need for a fast, reliable, accessible and affordable Internet connection, our current situation has proven to us that connectivity is a recurring problem in the country despite the digital age.

In 2016, no less than the President himself, President Rodrigo Duterte, emphasized and saw the need for a faster broadband connection. We should develop a national broadband or the NBP to accelerate the deployment of fiber optic cables and wireless technologies to improve Internet speed. Addressing the problem of Internet speed improvement in this country has been repeatedly declared as the Duterte administration's tech priority, focusing and expanding the reach of broadband and Internet services. Through this Bill, Mr. Speaker, no less than Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano himself is commendable for his initiative in addressing the national broadband initiative to be integrated in the first draft of the Bill on the new normal. So, in response, the proposed PESA has incorporated this responsibility.

The application and tools to enable life in the new norm are available, often for free to those who can

access the Internet, yet, the Philippines and its people cannot fully make use of the Internet for the simple reason that our country severely lacks the digital infrastructure needed for digitalization and if I may say and emphasize, access is limited only to those who have money; the poor households do not have it. Despite that, the Internet coverage is limited, quality is poor, signal is unstable, and Internet service prices as well as access devices are sometimes out of reach.

The demand for faster Internet connection can be exemplified in the experiences of every Filipino: a grade-two student from Parañaque, whose school density is too high for physical distancing, may use this by August; a recently laid off tourism worker in Aklan can find an employment opportunity and initial skill sets training in a job mobile app created by the DOLE and TESDA, downloading the specific training and getting the test later on; a better agricultural online marketplace for buyers can minimize overproduction and sustain markets with whole year-round supply. Scenarios like these will abound. Moving forward to the new norm requires one essential thing: Internet connection for our most far-flung populations in the country. The present public crisis has shown that there is not only an opportunity but an urgent need to improve and enhance the Internet speed and access to health programs or applications such as telemedicine or more e-PhilHealth services for sick Filipinos and all hospitals, both government and private.

In order to fully realize the objectives of the NBP, we must do three things: that a bill be passed to establish a cross-sector infrastructure sharing and a policy to develop the country's ICT support and telecommunications network. The government has it on its roads, the government has it in the toll roads, the trains that will be built, the sewerage systems that Metro Manila has—we can use these for the cross-infrastructure sharing.

Second, we must incorporate that by this August. We mandated the DICT to incorporate all the private sector capacities that abound already, so the government will not build its own system alone for this. If they do this, then our target of August for schools with higher density, they can possibly start in areas where there are already networks and fibers installed.

Third is the first step that was made, the crucial step that is being done today, that has the leadership incorporating the needs for the funding for this project. I thank again the Sponsors and the well-meaning authors that have shared and gone through the debates and discussions for this.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (S.). Thank you, Congressman Yap (V.).

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Thank you to the distinguished Gentleman from the Second District of Tarlac.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. NIETO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Lady from the Party-List GABRIELA, Hon. Arlene D. Brosas, for her interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The honorable Representative from the GABRIELA Party-List is hereby recognized.

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on to my interpellation, talaga pong pambihira ang inilalatag na kalagayan ng COVID-19 pandemic dahil bukod sa kongkretong banta nito sa kalusugan ng marami, ay natutulak tayong i-review ang structure ng economy natin sa mga umiiral na interventions ng gobyerno kaya't positibo na nagbabalangkas tayo ngayon ng kongkretong tugon dito sa Kongreso para isalba ang mga trabaho at sikaping paandarin muli ang lokal na ekonomiya. Dati lagi kaming sinasabihan sa Makabayan bloc na hindi puwede ang masyadong intervention ng gobyerno sa ekonomiya, hayaan daw ang free market na gumalaw alinsunod sa doktrina ng neoliberalismo. Hindi raw puwede ang state-funded wage subsidies, halimbawa. Mabuti ngayon, pinag-uusapan na natin ang mga bagay na ito. Magkagayunpaman, nais naming tiyakin na ang binabalangkas na comprehensive Stimulus Package Bill ay talagang epektibong magsasalba sa pinakamaraming trabaho at kabuhayan ng mamamayang Pilipino.

Mr. Speaker, sa unang bahagi po, nais nating itanong ang hinggil sa mass testing. We commend the move of the Sponsors to include this in the latest version of the stimulus measure despite the insistence of, alam ninyo naman, ng Malacañang, ng Palasyo, that mass testing is impossible and merely ideal. Ipinipilit po sa atin na hindi puwedeng mass testing o maramihang testing kahit pa ginagawa ito sa ibang bansa. Malinaw sa panukalang ito na mayroon dapat mass testing kung kailangan paandarin muli ang ekonomiya, kaya iyong Section 6 po ng PESA na nag-state ng P20 billion, mayroon pong mga ilang katanungan lang doon.

Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, we assume that this is for rapid tests. Tama po ba? Ilang individual po, halimbawa, ang tinatayang mate-test batay sa pondong ito?

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, kapag sinabi po nating "mass testing," this includes both PCR pati na rin po ang rapid tests. Basically po, kung ano po ang inindorso ng DOH ay iyan po ang ating tinutukoy sa mass testing. Sa ngayon po, doon sa Return-to-Work Guidelines ng DOH, kasama po doon ang parehong PCR pati rapid test kits, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Ilan po ang assumption ninyo na masasaklaw, na mate-test nitong pondo na ito, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, just for costing purposes, costing lang po ito, in other words, indicative lang po, hindi siya definite dahil ang ating naging approach dito po sa PESA is that the implementing agencies shall be the one to issue the guidelines within 15 days. So sa ngayon po, again, just for costing purposes, ang na-assume po natin diyan is 10 million workers multiplied by P450 per rapid test kit, multiplied by two. Kasi ayon na rin sa patakaran ng DOH, ini-encourage po nila ang repeat testing para lang po ma-eliminate ang tinatawag po na false negative. So iyon po ang indicative costing po. So 10 million times P450 times two, that is nine billion pesos, plus another one billion pesos for other expenses tulad po ng training dahil napaka-importante po na ang test administrators, whether they are doing PCR or rapid test kits, be properly trained, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, itong testing po ninyo, kanina ay binanggit ninyo na may PCR.

Tama po ba, PCR test ang gagawin or rapid test?

REP. QUIMBO. Ang sabi po natin is, ang PCR or rapid test kits ay dapat po saklaw po ng probisyon na ito.

REP. BROSAS. Okay. Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, nais ko ring itanong kung sa probisyon na ito for mass testing, ang mga manggagawa at kawani na kasalukuyang bumabalik sa trabaho sa ilalim ng MECQ at GCQ ay nasasaklaw? Kasama rin po ba dito ang mga frontliner? Ite-test din po ba iyong mga frontliners dito, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. QUIMBO. Sa ngayon po, Mr. Speaker, sa definition ng mass testing ng DOH ay kasama po ang mga health care workers. Mayroon po silang tatlong category na saklaw ng mass testing. Ang number one po ay iyong tinatawag na symptomatic o iyong may sintomas. Ang number two ay ang mayroong history of travel and exposure or contact. Ang number three naman po, kasama po diyan ang mga health care workers.

REP. BROSAS. Kaya po natin naitanong, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, iyong kaugnay sa PCR test o rapid test, dahil alam ninyo naman po, mas gusto natin kung magpopondo na rin lang tayo ng mga test, na ito po sana ay iyong mainam na PCR test ang isagawa kaya po iyon ang hinahabol natin. Kung wala naman pong masyadong cost difference doon sa dalawa ay

maiging PCR test na ang gamitin, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, isa pang tanong kaugnay dito, napansin namin sa ilalim ng panukala, ang DILG ang mangangasiwa sa pamamahagi ng test kits. What is the reason behind this and why cannot the DOH administer this?

REP. QUIMBO. Actually po, Mr. Speaker, may responsibility ang parehong DOH at DILG under this provision. Ang sabi po natin, ang DOH ang siyang may responsibilidad na mag-issue po ng isang disease surveillance protocol at kasama po diyan ang minimum health standards, pati na rin po ang guidelines, halimbawa po, sa sampling po sa ating mass testing. Alam naman natin na kapag sinasabi natin na mass testing, hindi ibig sabihin niyan lahat ng Pilipino ay ite-test. Ang alam natin diyan is sampling lang po. So, iyan po ay manggagaling sa DOH.

Ngayon naman po, ang mismo pong pagpapalakad, halimbawa, ang monitoring, ang enforcing, ang paninigurado na ang isang area na high risk, ang mga tao doon ay nate-test, ang pagsisigurado po na ang minimum health standards ay complied with by companies, diyan naman po papasok ang local governments. So, sa ngayon po, iyan ang proposal.

REP. BROSAS. So, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, iyong dahilan ng pagpili, the reason behind kung bakit DILG ay dahil sila ang mangangasiwa o sila ang may kakayanan for now, o kulang ba tayo sa DOH personnel para ito ay magawa ng buong-buo, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, that is correct, dahil nababasa naman po natin sa news reports at sila na mismo ang nagsasabi, ang DOH, through the spokesperson, na sila po ay nakakaranas na po ng overcapacity, and the words that they use, na they say that their laboratories are choking. So, ibig sabihin, wala na o kulang na po ang kanilang kapasidad kaya kailangan na pong punuan. Sa tingin po namin, ang local government units po ang puwedeng pumuno dito sa gap na ito.

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mme. Sponsor. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Doon sa pagsagot kaugnay sa mass testing, napakalaking abante po nito sa kasalukuyang sitwasyon na mayroon tayo. Kung maipapatupad po talaga iyong tinatawag nating mass testing, dahil ito po iyong panawagan ng mga kababaihan at mamamayan natin sa ngayon, at alam po natin na dapat naka-premise sa pag-conduct ng mass testing iyong pag-provide ng mga economic activities natin, specifically po sa vulnerable sectors at mga high-incidence areas na mayroon tayo ng COVID-19, kaya po natutuwa

kami na mayroon ganitong measure na nakalagay iyong probisyon na ito na magkaroon ng mass testing, provided ito po ay magawa talaga.

Meanwhile, hinggil po sa job generation rate model kaugnay naman po ng trabaho at kabuhayan, we understand that the Bill strives to at least preserve employment levels by introducing labor retention conditionalities in the proposed government interventions. Alam nating marami ang na-displaced na manggagawa dahil sa ECQ at dapat na magkaroon ng interventions to stop the bleeding of the workforce. May estimate po ba tayo, Mme. Sponsor, ng magnitude ng job losses na naidulot ng dalawang buwan na Enhanced Community Quarantine, estimate po?

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, sa ngayon po, ang puwedeng basehan ng estimate ay ang survey ng NEDA mismo na tinakbo nila noong April 6 to April 8. At that point in time, 25.4 percent of their respondent firms said that they had already temporarily laid off workers, and around that time, ang Gallup International Association (GIA) with the Philippine Survey and Research Center (PSRC) also generated similar results at ang sa kanila naman, 34 percent of their respondents said that they had lost their jobs.

So, iyon po ang ini-expect po natin. Of course, doon sa survey result ng NEDA, inaasahan sana natin na kung mayroon tayong stimulus package in place, iyon pong temporarily na laid off ay hindi sana magiging permanent.

REP. BROSAS. Okay, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, we understand that this stimulus package merely seeks to provide relief to businesses to preserve jobs—iyong ma-maintain po iyong jobs nila, i-ensure iyong job generation, at saka mag-continue iyong economic activities amid the pandemic. But we would like to think of job generation in such a way that the government will be the main generator of employment. Halimbawa po, bakit hindi tayo maglaan din ng pondo para sa mass hiring ng DOH at DSWD personnel, halimbawa. Kasi magte-test tayo, magkakaroon tayo ng malawakang testing, mabilis dapat ang contact tracing, mabilis ang pamamahagi ng ayuda dahil health emergency ang mayroon tayo ngayon, and this is not a public order crisis at ang national government ang nasa best position to be a key job generator along the lines of boosting the public health system and the aid delivery of our agencies. Puwede po ba iyon? Kasama po ba iyon dito sa Stimulus Bill na ito, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, ang pilosopiya po dito sa ating panukalang batas is that we should first aspire to retain jobs. So, before we think about creating new jobs, dito muna tayo sa retaining the current jobs. Kaya iyan ang dahilan kung bakit mayroon po tayong

labor retention clauses para sa ating wage subsidies and interest-free loans as you had correctly pointed out. In addition to that, kasi alam naman po natin that because of social distancing protocols, marami pong maliliit na negosyo, halimbawa po, ang mga karinderya na because of social distancing protocols ay talaga pong mangangalahati po ang kanilang mga customers, in which case, baka mapilitan silang magbawas ng empleyado. So, nakikita po natin na kailangan pong may isang programa na sasalo po sa mga talagang mawawalan ng trabaho. Kaya iyan ang dahilan po kung bakit, in addition to the wage subsidies that we are proposing, we have also proposed to enhance the existing TUPAD Program or the Emergency Employment Program of the government.

So, ito po ay aligned sa sinasabi ninyo na, at this time, dapat malaki po ang role na ginagampanan ng ating gobyerno sa pag-generate ng jobs. So, itong Enhanced TUPAD, diyan po papasok ang job generation responsibility or role ng ating gobyerno. Ang puwede po nating idagdag diyan, kaya po “enhanced” is that we can create new jobs that are related to the control of the spread of COVID-19. So, puwede po tayong mag-hire, halimbawa, ng mga maramihang contact tracers para po ma-complement na rin po ang testing na i-e-expand po natin under the PESA.

REP. BROSAS. Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, iyong kaugnay naman po sa pampublikong transportasyon. The proposed measure also provides for assistance to critically-impacted businesses in the transportation industry, so may we know kung anu-ano po iyong sinasabi nating critically-impacted businesses sa industriya ng transportasyon?

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, ang ibig sabihin ng critically-impacted sectors would be those nonessential businesses, iyong mga businesses po na hindi pinayagan mag-operate during the lockdown. Of our economic sector, 84 percent po iyan, so, napakarami po, at nagkataon po na isa po sa top five sa critically-impacted nonessential sectors ay ang transportation and that is the reason why we have proposed a separate relief program para sa sector na iyan, which specifically, sa tingin ko po, halos lahat po, wala po akong maisip sa ngayon na ma-e-exclude sa land transportation sector po, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Correct me if I am wrong, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, ito ba mainly ay ang airlines, shipping at private land transport companies? Ito po ba iyon lahat?

REP. QUIMBO. Yes po, Mr. Speaker, but remember po, may definition po tayo ng critically-impacted. So, in addition to being a nonessential business, ibig

sabihin, discontinued operation during lockdown, dapat mayroon din pong evidence na sila po, as a result of the lockdown, ay hindi na po kayang mag-fulfill ng kanilang financial obligations. So, as long as those criteria are satisfied, sila po ay eligible for assistance dito po sa programa na ito.

REP. BROSAS. Kaso, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, paano po iyong utilization noong P70 billion assistance fund at saka may magbebenepisyo pa po ba dito na mga jeepney drivers, tricycle drivers, pedicab drivers na ngayon ay hindi pa rin makabiyahe at hirap na umangkop sa sinasabi nating new normal?

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, definitely po, kasama po ang mga tricycle drivers, jeepney drivers, bus drivers dahil nga po malawakan pong impacted ang transportation sector. So, ito po iyong kanina pong ini-explain na talagang ito po ay very inclusive. So, as long as you are critically impacted, sakop po kayo. Ang halimbawa po ng relief packages na available po sa kanila ay emergency credit lines, interest-free loans, at mayroon din po silang fuel subsidies, pati na rin po mga grants para pambayad po sa kanilang regulatory fees. Ang programming ng perang nakalaan po dito ay responsibility po ng DOTr, of course, in consultation with the various transportation sectors or groups, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor. Talaga pong kailangang-kailangan at humihingi ng saklolo ang ating mga tsuper na hanggang ngayon ay wala pa ring inuuwing kita sa kanilang pamilya. Dagdag pa rito, nag-aalala rin sila na baka gamitin iyong pandemya para ituloy iyong jeepney phaseout na tinatawag at ang pagpasok ng mga electric vehicles na umano ay sinasabi na requirement ng IATF. I do hope that we can also contemplate a concrete assistance to them in the form of cash grants at income subsidies which will be included sa final version po ninyo ng Stimulus Bill.

Mme. Sponsor, kaugnay na lang po sa mga panghuli ay iyong hinggil sa enhanced BBB. Ito po iyong napansin po namin sa latest version po ng Stimulus Bill. Kasama sa Enhanced Build, Build, Build ang construction, renovation and improvement of police and military facilities supposedly to ensure social distancing. Ano po ang rationale behind dito? Gusto po naming malinawan because we know there is an annual AFP Modernization Program which should supposedly accommodate the cost of constructing military facilities. Dinagdagan din ang pondo ng PNP ngayong taon para sa personnel at capital outlays kaya po mataas iyong kanilang budget. Why do we need to include these items in the Stimulus Package? Ano po ang kinalaman ng police at military facilities sa layuning pag-ayuda

sa mga negosyo at mamamayan, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, base na rin sa ating karanasan, nakita naman po natin na importanteng-importante po ang kapulisan at ang military, lalong-lalo na po sa border control. Ang border control po ay isang importanteng element sa ating pagkontrol po ng pandemya. So, iyan po ang dahilan kung bakit mayroon po tayong provision para masigurado po na protektado po ang ating kapulisan at military personnel, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, nais naming mag-forward siguro ng maaaring mga suporta pa na pupuwede, hindi lang ito dahil alam po namin na hindi naman lang public order and safety ang usapin dito, lalong-lalo na at pinag-uusapan natin ang Stimulus Package Bill. Nais po sana naming mag-forward na sana iyong contribution natin to long-term productivity, especially in terms of industrial sciences and technologies, iyon po iyong ating pagtuunan na contribution to environmental sustainability, especially in promoting environmentally friendly production processes. Iyon po iyong ating paglaanan, the contribution to long-term stability and self-reliance especially in terms of (*inaudible*) food supply. So, self-sufficiency and domestic industrial capacity, kaya po kami, sa lahat po ng ito ay siyempre nasa criteria din ng pagrespeto sa karapatan ng mga manggagawa o workers' rights.

So, iyon po iyong mga maganda pong pupuwedeng ikonsidera sa Stimulus Package Bill na ito, kaya po gusto namin na i-reiterate, again, iyong suporta sa agriculture dahil alam ninyo naman po kung ire-rehash din lang natin iyong mga nakaraan nating mga policies in agriculture like iyong pag-i-import ng bigas, ngayon po ay tinatamaan na iyong suplay ng bigas natin ngayon, matindi na iyong ating pangangailangan, natural lamang na magkakaroon talaga tayo ng protectionism at hindi tayo mag-i-import ng bigas mula sa ibang bansa at tayo ay bibili sa ating mga magsasaka ng kanilang produce. Kapag hindi po magbabago iyong mga ganoong policies, sa tingin po namin, halimbawa, for example, iyong Rice Liberalization Law, iyon po talaga ay tinututulan ng mga magsasaka at ayaw talaga ito ng mga magsasaka hanggang sa kasalukuyan dahil matindi iyong epekto sa kanila nito. Kaya kailangang-kailangan din nila ng direct assistance hindi lang po iyon—napansin ko po na ang inyong assistance ay halos lahat ay credit, ano po, at sa usapin ng mas marami iyong credit, sure aid sa assistance po ito—anyway, iyon po, mas credit po ito at hindi direct assistance sa ating mga magsasaka, plus the fact na hanggang ngayon po ay nangangailangan pa ng tulong ang ating mga magsasaka para sa kanilang produksiyon sa kasalukuyan.

So, iyon po, sa agriculture industry, maganda po na magkaroon din talaga o makapag-create ng trabaho sa agri-industry sa kasalukuyan.

Maraming salamat, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. QUIMBO. Salamat po, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Marami pong salamat sa Representante ng GABRIELA Party-List.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. NIETO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Lady from the Fourth District of Quezon, Hon. Angelina “Helen” D.L. Tan, MD for her interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The hardworking Chairperson of the Committee on Health, the charming Lady from Quezon Province is hereby recognized.

Please proceed.

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon. Just a short manifestation, Mr. Speaker.

First, I would like to thank the Defeat COVID-19 Committee on Economic Stimulus for providing a relief to our OFWs. I would like to thank them for their effort and initiative on that, specifically, on the problem on premium contributions, the increase in contributions, pending the convening of the Oversight Committee on the Universal Healthcare (UHC) Law next month. Second, of course, I fully support the effort of the House to ramp up the country’s COVID-19 testing capacity.

Consequently, I would like to inform this august Chamber that the Health Response Cluster of the DCC has deliberated and approved the Bill of our Sr. Deputy Minority Leader, Rep. Janette L. Garin, on the mandatory testing of PCR. This will help us stop the COVID-19 transmission. Aligned with this, I think there is an ongoing talk on the Project ARK wherein the two tests, I think the RDT and the PCR, will be combined. So, I hope that this Bill will be approved at the soonest possible time so that we will be able to address the missing gaps on testing.

Congratulations to the Sub-Committee on Economic Stimulus. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Thank you, Lady from Quezon.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. NIETO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Lady from KABATAAN Party-List, Hon. Sarah Jane I. Elago for her interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The very conscientious Lady from KABATAAN Party-List is hereby recognized.

REP. ELAGO. Maraming salamat, G. Ispiker. This Representation from KABATAAN Party-List has called for the inclusion of an education emergency relief fund to aid students, faculty, education support personnel and educational institutions which are in distress. Thus, I would like to seek a clarification on Section 9 pertaining to Educational Subsidy to Students. Will the honorable Sponsor be open to interpellation, Mr. Speaker?

REP. QUIMBO. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. G. Ispiker, ano po ang pagkakaiba ng letter (A) under Section 9, that is line 13 of page 11, to letter (B) on line 9 of page 12? Both are emergency subsidies to the COVID-19-impacted students in private higher education institutions and as mentioned earlier during the interpellation of Cong. France Castro, both will offer P7,500 assistance to students who are not listed in the listahanan of the DSWD. So, ano po ang magiging difference kung pareho namang pinapalawig lang nito ang coverage ng TES?

REP. QUIMBO. Tama po, Mr. Speaker. These two provisions seem to be the same but actually, may kaunting nuance po doon po sa Section 9, letter (A). Ang tinutukoy po natin dito ay ang mga TES eligible students na hindi po nakatanggap ng assistance dahil po sila ay hindi kasama sa listahanan. So, iyan po ang dahilan kung bakit hindi sila nasakop o nakatanggap ng TES subsidy. So, ang ginagawa po ng Section 9(A) is to include them.

Ang Section 9(B) naman would refer to those na hindi qualified sa TES in the first place. So again, ang gusto po natin is lumawak ang coverage ng subsidy na ito. So, ang napansin ninyo po, ang observation na bakit magkaiba ang number ay naipaliwanag na po kanina ni Congresswoman Garin (S.) na iyan po ay typo lamang at kailangan po pareho pong P7,500 ang matatanggap ng dalawang sets ng students na ito, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Ang pagkakaiba, G. Ispiker, ang una po ay para doon sa mga financially disadvantaged students who are currently eligible under the TES of the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Law and then the next section would cover those who are affected by the COVID-19 crisis whose parents or who themselves are affected by the loss of jobs or loss of livelihood.

REP. QUIMBO. Yes.

REP. ELAGO. Tama po ba?

REP. QUIMBO. Yes, Mr. Speaker. In other words, in Section 9(A) would be those who already needed help even before the COVID-19, whereas in Section 9(B), as a result of the COVID-19 and as a result of the loss in income of their parents kaya sila po ngayon ay nangangailangan na rin po ng tulong.

REP. ELAGO. G. Ispiker, nakalagay dito na maximum of P7,500, so what would be the minimum assistance that is needed and who will determine this? What will be the parameter in determining the assistance to students?

REP. QUIMBO. Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, ang magde-determine po ng final amount would be the CHED at ito pong P7,500 na naka-indicate po dito ay estimate lang po namin. Ang naging parameter po talaga natin dito is coverage. So, we chose the numbers such that useful naman iyong amount. Hindi naman pupuwedeng sobrang liit na hindi siya impactful but at the same time, we needed to balance that with the need to cover as many students as possible.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, we are allocating about P18 billion for this to cover a maximum of P7,500 subsidy per student for private higher educational institutions. Is that correct?

REP. QUIMBO. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. But, Mr. Speaker, the CHED record showed that as of August 8, 2019, we only have about 1.7 million students in private higher education institutions. Kung titingnan po natin, ang P18 billion po, maaari na siyang maka-cover ng 2.4 billion, na may sobra pong 700,000, na para sa 700,000 students at iyon po ay nakabatay pa sa maximum na P7,500 kada estudyante. So, bakit po sobra-sobra ito at mayroon po tayong unaccounted na 700,000 students?

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, magkaiba po ang datos na hawak natin. Pareho po tayo doon sa 1.7 million, but that is the estimate of those who are not currently covered by the TES, but we have an additional estimate of 1.3 million students that are currently covered by TES and these are the private school students, so, for a total of three million. Ito pong amounts na nakabanggit dito, which is P18 billion plus P9 billion, we want to be released immediately. In other words, appropriated na po iyan, and then the additional appropriation of P15 billion would refer po to this total of three million students.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, can the honorable

Sponsor share with us the breakdown of the number of students just for the SUCs, LUCs and private institutions?

REP. QUIMBO. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Kung mayroon po tayong tatlong milyon para sa private schools, ilan po ang total enrollment sa SUCs?

REP. QUIMBO. Sandali lang po. Kung tama ang aking naaalala, I think it is 3.2 million.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, maaari pong balikan ng ating Sponsor itong ating bilang dahil ang nakalagay po sa CHED website, but this is as of August 8, 2019 at maaaring hindi pa pumapasok iyong mga magbubukas na mga eskuwela sa August o iyong academic calendar ay nag-i-start by August. Ang nakalagay po kasi sa kanilang record batay po sa website, and I just accessed this today, for SUCs, we have a total of 1.33 million students. For local universities and colleges, about 211,000; for private schools, we have 1.693 million; and for other government-run institutions, we have about 5,236. So, ang concern ko lang dito, G. Ispiker, kung susumahin po natin, P18 billion and then, we also have P9 billion, so, that is P18 billion, dagdag pa doon sa TES na P9 billion na hindi pa nare-release, ang total po na puwede nitong mabigyan ng subsidy na mga estudyante ay nasa 3.6 million, na sobra-sobra na po sa bilang ng mga estudyante na nakalista sa website ng Commission on Higher Education. G. Ispiker, maaari ko po bang tanungin ang ating Sponsor kung bakit po mayroon pang P9 billion na hindi nailalabas na pondo para sa Tertiary Education Subsidy noong Fiscal Year 2019?

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, well, una sa lahat po, again we reiterate that we are committed to being data-driven, to the extent na mayroong discrepancies sa data po namin at sa data po ninyo ay, maganda na we exchange notes and of course, we are very open to adjusting if necessary, so that is the first.

Pangalawa, ang P9 billion po dito ay unreleased funds that were appropriated in 2019. So, maraming dahilan kung bakit iyan ay unreleased at ang isa pong dahilan diyan is iyong tinatawag na geographic prioritization. Ibig sabihin, iyong mga estudyante na gusto sanang mag-aral sa isang private school at sila ay TES-qualified pero hindi sila nakatanggap ng TES subsidy dahil lamang po na may SUC na present po sa kanilang lugar.

So, ito iyong mga dahilan kung bakit nagkaroon po ng mga unreleased funds. So, ang sinasabi po natin ay sana ay tanggalin natin muna ang geographic prioritization na iyan, i-suspend na muna natin iyan.

Ang pinakamabuti sa lahat is that we have to make sure that everyone is in school.

REP. ELAGO. G. Ispiker, sang-ayon po tayo na dapat nating bigyan ng ayuda, lahat na puwede nating ibigay na financial assistance sa ating mga estudyante, lalong-lalo na po ang apektado ng kawalan ng kabuhayan, ng trabaho o ng kita sa gitna ng isang krisis. Tayo lamang po ay nababahala sa P 9 billion na hindi po naibigay sa taong 2019 dahil, G. Ispiker, ang Tertiary Education Subsidy ay hindi lamang po iyan pambayad ng tuition and other school fees para sa private schools, para po sa mga mag-a-apply, kundi ang TES po na ipinasa rin po ng Kongresong ito ay maaari po iyang gamitin para sa pagbili ng laptop o sa pambili ng gadget na kinakailangan sa partikular na kurso.

Ang TES din po ay puwede rin na pambayad sa upa sa mga dormitories, sa pagkain, sa daily allowances at iba pa pong mga pangangailangan ng mga estudyante. Kaya iyang P9 billion na inilaan po ng Kongreso na ito upang maiabot doon sa pinaka-nangangailangan, lalong-lalo na po to those who are studying away from home na kailangang-kailangan po nila ng pandagdag na baon, o marami po diyan ay nakaasa lamang doon sa ibinibigay ng pamahalaan na financial assistance na P9 billion po, iyong hindi naibigay sa mga estudyante na layon sanang naabot na nito ng taong 2019.

G. Ispiker, hayaan ninyo po akong magpunta naman doon sa pangalawang seksyon ng subsidy para sa mga estudyante. Ito po iyong para sa mga wala sa listahanan ng DSWD at hindi rin po qualified na mga recipients ng Tertiary Education Subsidy sa ilalim po ng Republic Act No. 10931, iyong UAQTE. Kung babalikan nga po natin, ito rin ay magbibigay ng P7,500 sa kada estudyante.

Again, G. Ispiker, tayo naman po ay nagagalak sa ibinigay na commitment ng Sponsor na sila po ay handang mag-adjust batay sa bilang na sinasabi, sa bilang na nakuha po natin na mula sa CHED at gayon din sa datos na hawak nila, dahil kung hindi natin ito babaguhin ay sobra-sobra na nga po iyong nandoon sa unang package na for financial subsidy, mayroon pa pong other billions of pesos para po sa financial assistance. Kung mayroon naman po tayong handang mailaan na ganito kalaki na pondo, bakit hindi po natin doblehin ang P7,500? Bakit hindi po natin gawing P15,000, considering the average of tuition in private higher education institutions which amounts to about P20,000 to P25,000 per semester?

G. Ispiker, this will only cover the second semester of academic year 2019-2020, right?

REP. QUIMBO. Yes.

REP. ELAGO. Hindi po nito covered iyong susunod na semestre. Bakit hindi po natin, kung hindi man natin

doblehin—kung sa semestre na ito ay covered na, na wala pang closure ang maraming estudyante dahil hindi pa po tapos ang kanilang academic term, bakit hindi po natin isama na rin iyong susunod na term, iyong susunod na semestre para sa susunod na academic year 2020-2021?

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, una sa lahat, maganda iyong panukala na baka puwedeng isama ang mga TES-eligible na wala naman sa listahanan dahil nga po, sa ngayon po—sa totoo lang po, ang listahan na iyan ay talagang kailangan nang i-update dahil nga sa dumami po ang poor families natin dahil nga po sa kawalan ng kita in the last three months. Talagang kailangan na talagang i-update ang listahanan na iyan. So, ang maganda pong gawin is that the CHED and the DSWD would come together and would agree on a more inclusive list para po matulungan natin ang mga estudyante po natin na talaga pong nangangailangan.

Number two po, iyon po sanang pupuwede nating dagdagan ng P7,500—unfortunately po, again, tulad ng sinabi ng The Greatest Showman, “It is never enough,” iyon po ang problema dito. At the end of the day, kulang talaga ang ating resources. So, kung puwede sanang dagdagan iyan, why not? Kaya nga lang po, ang pag-program po natin ng lahat ng funds, iyong P583 billion na pino-propose po natin for 2020, ang naging challenge po diyan is how to apportion that across the various programs para sigurado po na we are able to help as many sectors as we can, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. G. Ispiker, tungkol po doon o para naman sa ating elementary, junior high school hanggang po sa senior high school, mayroon po tayong ilalaan na P4,000 subsidy. Bukod pa po ito doon sa mga covered na ng mga GASTPE, ESC, yes? Ilan po sa inyong tantiya, ang covered na mga estudyante na ito?

REP. QUIMBO. Okay, sandali lang po. Ang estimate ho natin diyan ay 15 billion, which number includes both tertiary and K to 12 students: 1.2 million for elementary, 343,000 for junior high school, and 53,000 for senior high school. Iyan po ang aming estimate.

REP. ELAGO. Again, G. Ispiker, kung mayroon po tayong kailangang baguhin doon sa computation natin pagdating sa tertiary, puwede rin natin na mailagay ito para doon sa grade school at senior high school para maka-cover pa ng mas maraming estudyante.

Ngayon, G. Ispiker, mayroon po tayong subsidy sa mga estudyante pero hindi naman po ito talaga mapupunta sa mga estudyante. Hindi nila babayaran ang eskuwelahan. Ito po ay direktso sa private education institutions. Tama po?

REP. QUIMBO. Ang pag-disburse po goes to the school. So, pagdating sa disbursement, it goes directly to the school pero to the account of every student. So ang beneficiary talaga is really the individual student except that it is directly disbursed to the school. Ito po iyong tinatawag na PEAC system at iyan din po ang gagamitin natin for this particular provision, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. G. Ispiker, have the authors considered including a provision here that education institutions must refund unutilized fees from their collection for academic year 2019-2020? Since tutulong na rin po ang gobyerno, mababawasan na po ng P7,500 ang amount ng kada estudyante, at mayroon din po silang mga hindi nagamit na mga fees already collected from students because, Mr. Speaker, online classes do not have the same value as residential learning. The students paid for on-campus learning. They paid for the experiential learning they get from collaborative discussions in their classroom, iyong fees for the facilities po, library at marami pang iba.

So, napag-usapan ninyo po ba ito? Isa po itong maaari pa nating maidagdag dito. Dagdag ito sa tulong po natin sa mga estudyante. Bakit hindi rin po natin gawin ito para mayroon ding dagdag na tulong doon sa mga pamilya nila na apektado po ng COVID-19 crisis?

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, maganda pong punto ang ni-raise ni Congresswoman Elago. Ayon na rin po sa consultation namin sa mga private schools, ang sabi po nila is they are already waiving itong other fees, dahil nga po alam naman po natin na kung mag-online classes tayo, definitely, ang overhead costs ng mga schools ay maiiba, 'di ba. So, ang sabi nila, to the extent na certain costs can now be avoided, ay willing naman po silang huwag na pong i-pass on iyong costs na iyon to the students.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, hindi ba natin dapat mailagay na iyon dito para po matiyak na lahat po ng mga eskuwelahan ay susundin ang ganoong patakaran, which is just fair, Mr. Speaker, kasi ang apektado po ng krisis hindi lang naman ang mga eskuwelahan kundi ang ating mga learners at ang kanilang mga magulang, ganoon din po ang mga teachers. Baka po mainam na makapag-dagdag tayo ng probisyon ng accountability din and transparency on the part of the educational institutions since iyong mga hindi po nila nagastos ay dapat po maibalik iyan sa mga estudyante. Naiintindihan po natin na they have to continue paying compensation to teachers, our education support personnel ngunit ang sinasabi po natin dito ay iyong mga hindi po talagang ginamit na nakolekta na mga fees. Halimbawa, Mr.

Speaker, iyong mga supplies sa mga laboratory o iyong mga equipment na hindi naman talaga nagamit, et cetera, puwede po tayo na maglagay ng probisyon para doon, Mr. Speaker. Tatal, ang makakatulong po sa estudyante, makakatulong din po sa eskuwelahan. Imbes na hindi po sila—hindi makabayad iyong estudyante, ito na po at pumapasok ang gobyerno, the government is intervening to ensure that they get to have that portion of their expected income for the academic year.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, maganda po ang recommendation pero baka po ang puwede na lang po nating gawin na mas effective pa would be to just implement this by way of giving guidelines to the PEAC. Iyan din po ay isang alternative way of achieving the same objective, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, can we get the commitment of the honorable Sponsors that they will follow through on this pledge on waiving unused fees, refunding unused fees from private educational institutions, and ensuring that there is transparency in terms of collection of tuition and other school fees.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, baka ang puwede pong gawin is puwede ninyo pong i-draft ang guidelines at iyan naman po ay ire-review naman po ng Committee, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, handa naman po na tumulong mag-draft ang pamunuan ng KABATAAN Party-List, ang pagda-draft ng guidelines dito pero ang magiging magandang balita rin po sa mga pamilya, sa mga learners natin ay iyong commitment ng Kongreso na ito na titiyakin po natin na iyong mga nakolekta sa kanila na hindi naman nagamit ay makakabalik rin sa kanila.

REP. QUIMBO. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Lastly, Mr. Speaker, kaugnay din po niyan, papayagan po ba natin na magtaas ng tuition and other school fees ang mga eskuwelahan para sa taong 2020 hanggang 2021? Kasi po nagpasa na po iyan ng mga application nitong February, aprubado na iyan sa mga regional offices na by April 15, sa oras po na ito or sa buwan na ito, nire-review na iyan ng national office ng Commission on Higher Education. Isasama po ba natin dito, bilang suporta sa mga quarantined families na nasa gitna ng krisis, na tiyakin na hindi po maipapasa naman sa mga pamilya iyong burden po ng tuition and other school fees?

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, mayroon po tayong isang provision dito which is not on Section 9, but it is in Section 28 where we have socioeconomic policy

measures, and there is a provision that says all sector regulators with a price and fee regulation mandate, shall review existing pricing and payment policies. So, lahat po ng regulators, regulators also of schools, would have to review tuition fees. Diyan po, we have covered that particular concern, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Maraming salamat, Mr. Speaker. Ang Representasyon po na ito ay titiyakin na magiging aktibo ang mga kabataan diyan sa regulasyon ng tuition and other school fees sa ating mga eskuwelahan dahil po, Mr. Speaker, apektado rin po iyong mga scholars dito na mga atleta at mga performers, iyong mga artista natin sa mga universities and colleges, dahil po sa mga kanselado na mga sporting events at mga talent competitions, iyong mga komperensiya na dapat kung saan po sila magko-compete overseas ay hindi na po matutuloy. Ito po ay nakaapekto o makakaapekto sa kanilang scholarships.

Kaya po, G. Ispiker, sa tama pong panahon, ang Representasyon na ito ay magpapanukala ng mga dagdag na probisyon para po sa proteksiyon ng mga scholars at para po matiyak na hindi maipapasa sa mga estudyante ang impact ng COVID-19 na nararanasan ngayon ng mga eskuwelahan.

Again, tayo po ay makikipagtulungan rin upang matiyak na iyong package para sa relief sa panahon ng isang public health emergency, na matutulungan iyong mga estudyante, mga guro at support personnel, gayon din po iyong mga apektadong mga eskuwelahan na may banta na rin ng pagsasara. Kailangan din po nating tingnan, at isa po ito sa mga proposal din po namin, na puwede po nating silipin iyong mga malalaking eskuwelahan na bilyun-bilyon po o nasa milyon ang mga kinikita, na kung maaari po tayong magbuo ng solidarity fund for education at matulungan po nila iyong mga mas maliliit na mga private schools na mag-survive sa krisis ng COVID-19.

Kaya, G. Ispiker, hangad po ng Representasyon na ito na matugunan natin ang mga issues at concerns na ito sa edukasyon. Dagdag ko lamang, sana po puwede rin nating i-consider iyong promotion sa current academic term para sa lahat ng mga estudyante. Ang sirkumstansiya po ng pandemiko ay dapat nakikita rin natin sa mga report card at sa grading ngunit sa kasalukuyan, marami pa pong dumadaing na magpasahanggang ngayon po ay may banta sa kanila, na walang kasiguraduhan ang kanilang graduation o ang pagpapatuloy nila ng pag-aaral dahil nagbago ang learning, ang policy, pero hindi pa po nagkakaroon ng adjustment sa grading ng mga estudyante.

Ang Representasyon po na ito ay nananawagan na ang edukasyon ay isang karapatan at dapat po natin itong maipagtanggol, G. Ispiker.

Maraming salamat po.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Maraming salamat din po sa inyo.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. NIETO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Gentleman from 1PACMAN Party-List, Hon. Enrico A. Pineda, for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The debonair Representative of 1PACMAN Party-List is hereby recognized. Please proceed.

REP. PINEDA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to make a short manifestation in support of the Philippine Economic Stimulus Act or the PESA Bill.

Mr. Speaker, my distinguished colleagues, good afternoon. I hope that everyone is in good health. We are in difficult times now. Social distancing, wearing masks and virtual meetings are the new norm.

I just concluded my second virtual Labor Committee hearing a while ago and we had a long discussion with the Secretary himself, Secretary Bello, and I asked him his prediction of in case of a worst case scenario, meaning to say, there will be no vaccine available by the end of 2021. He was very candid enough to tell the Committee that if that were the case, at least about 5 to 10 million of our workers will lose their jobs and as such, our workers will be the most critically hit by this pandemic.

Even under the general community quarantine, not all businesses are allowed to resume and because of the principle of no work, no pay, most employees have no income during these times. Most are also employed by MSMEs which are experiencing losses and may already be in danger of closing down permanently. Many may find themselves without any employment when all of this is over. That is why the government has to step in.

The Department of Labor and Employment or DOLE implemented programs like the CAMP and TUPAD to provide relief to our local workers, and AKAP to provide a one-time assistance to our OFWs which, according to the Secretary, by the end of this year, we may have about close to 700,000 or 800,000 workers repatriated or will lose their jobs completely. With the influx of our workers severely affected by the pandemic, the DOLE ran out of funds and not everyone who applied was given assistance. While the Department of Finance (DOF) is implementing the Small Business Wage Subsidy Program with P51 billion allotted to it, such program is unsustainable in the long term.

We need permanent sustainable solutions, Mr. Speaker. We need to jump-start the economy. Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, my dear colleagues, we need to provide job security. I believe that the economic relief

in the PESA Bill will help start our economy again, while providing employment security to our workers by incentivizing companies with wage subsidies for a specific time. It also provides wage subsidies to the self-employed and OFWs. Making easy and affordable loans guaranteed by the government to MSMEs will also contribute to job securities.

What the PESA Bill provides are good measures to help the economy. Everyone will be adjusting to the new normal soon; we should be concerned about our workers and do whatever we can for their welfare. Workers need to feel secure, not just with their health, but also with their employment and source of income. This, of course, includes keeping their employers' companies afloat, which is why we need an effective and well-studied economic stimulus policy. We need to provide aid to employers, including the freelancers. Thus, I believe that the PESA Bill is considerably our best solution for the country for now.

As the Chairman of the House Committee on Labor and Employment, I wholly support the PESA Bill, and hope for its passage at the soonest possible time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Thank you, Gentleman from 1PACMAN Party-List.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. NIETO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Gentleman from Party-List BAYAN MUNA, Hon. Ferdinand R. Gaite, for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The Gentleman from BAYAN MUNA is hereby recognized. Please proceed.

REP. GAITE. Maraming salamat po, Mr. Speaker. Maraming salamat sa ating Sponsor.

Isang magandang hapon. May nagsabi na tayo daw ay, "We are all in the same boat," pero may nabasa ako na nagsabi, "We disagree." Sabi niya, "We are not in the same boat." May iba nakasakay sa mas magagara, mas matitibay na mga barko at bangka, habang iyong iba naman ay nakasakay sa rim sea o mga raft na napakadaling lumubog. Pero sabi niya, "We are all facing the same storm."

Kung kaya dito sa unprecedented pandemic na COVID-19, tama lamang na tayo bilang mga taong gobyerno, ay gumawa ng kongkretong hakbang para matulungan iyong mga nakasakay sa mga balsa, iyong nakasakay sa mga maliliit na bangka na sa kaunting alon lamang ay lulubog na. Hindi katakataka na noong binuo iyong Bayanihan To Heal As One Act, evidently, majority ng mamamayang Pilipino ay nandito sa mga maliit na bangkang ito. Sabi nga sa datos, 18 million households or families out of the 20

to 21 million families sa buong Pilipinas, sila iyong kailangan bigyan ng ayuda sa panahon ng pandemic.

Kaya, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, pahihintulutan po ba ninyo akong mag-pose ng ilang questions hinggil sa pinapanukalang PESA Bill.

REP. QUIMBO. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Salamat, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker. Partikular doon sa mga lalong pinakabulnerable sa panahon ng delubyong ito, gusto ko sanang tanungin— buti na rin lang nauna iyong aming kapita-pitagang Chairperson ng Committee on Labor na ito ang talagang dapat bigyan ng pinakamalaking ayuda sa panahon ng COVID-19, partikular sa suporta sa ating mga manggagawa.

On Section 7, page 11, binabanggit dito iyong kapalit doon sa CAMP o iyong COVID Assistance Measures Program at ito iyong wage subsidies. Tama po ba iyon, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. QUIMBO. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Napansin ko lamang na doon sa pinapanukala, nakasaad po dito na "The wage subsidy shall cover the basic salary cost of the rank and file employees only and shall exclude the senior executive officers of the relevant business entities." Positibo naman na iyong mga nakakaahon na, iyong malalaki ang sahod, suweldo at benepisyo, ay hindi na kailangang bigyan ng subsidy, pero iyong mga nasa mga maliliit na bangka, iyong mga nasa maliliit na balsa, iyong mga manggagawa, sila lang ang pangunahing bibigyan ng ayuda.

Ang tanong ko, bakit regular rank and file employees lamang, habang napakalaking bilang ng ating manggagawa ngayon ay tinatawag na nasa precarious o iyong mga vulnerable o iyong mga tinatawag na kontraktwal, 5-5-5, casual, job order, contract of service, na bumibilang ng seven to 10 million Filipinos na tinuturing na contractual na manggagawa. Hindi ba sila saklaw nitong programa sa ilalim ng PESA, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, sila po ay saklaw ng ating proposed wage subsidy sa ilalim ng Section 7. Ang sinasabi po dito sa Section 7, it would be the rank and file employees who will be covered at hindi tayo gumawa ng distinction dito as to whether contractual or permanent. So, ibig sabihin po, whether permanent or contractual, ay kasama po sila, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Salamat sa clarification. Mme. Sponsor, iyan ang pinaka-bone of contention ng maraming usapin ngayon sa paggawa, iyong sinasabing kawalan ng kumbaga sa Facebook, not in a relationship,

no employee-employer relationship. Dito nilinaw, “rank and file employees,” may relationship, mayroong labor-management relationship. Dito, na-define na iyong rank and file employees lamang.

So, kinakabahan ang Kinatawag ito na we will exclude a large portion of those workers who are not considered employees. So, mayroon bang pagtatangi na rank and file employees lamang ang saklaw, o ang nais ba talaga natin ay mabigyan ng solusyon ang lahat ng ating mga manggagawa, lahat ng labor force, lahat ng working class sa Pilipinas, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. QUIMBO. Yes, Mr. Speaker, magandang pagkakataon na linawin po iyan. Ang intensiyon po natin ay saklawin po lahat as long as, ito nga po, the salary shall not exceed P15,000. Siguro po, baka ang kailangan pong gawin dito is linawin iyong word na “employee,” baka imbes na “employee” ay gamitin na lang natin “worker” para mas maliwanag po na kahit na iyon pong walang employer-employee relationship ay sakop po dito, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Maraming-maraming salamat sa clarification, Mme. Sponsor, sapagkat tulad ng nabanggit ng ating naunang nag-interpellate, ito iyong ilan sa marami nating isyu ng ating mga manggagawa.

Ikalawang katanungan, Mme. Sponsor, nabanggit ninyo ito kanina sa pagsagot sa ating isa pang interpellator. Tama po ba na ang layunin rin ng PESA ay para sa employment retention? Tama po ba iyon, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. QUIMBO. Tama po iyon, Mr. Speaker. Iyan ang primary purpose po natin, to protect the worker from the risk of layoffs po, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Salamat po. Kung gayon, nagtataka lang ang Kinatawag ito na sa same Section 7, ay may proviso, page 9, letter a, item v: “For the duration of the subsidy, a non-essential business entity must retain such number of employees or workers in proportion to the percentage of wage subsidy to basic salary cost as offered under this Section x x x.” However, nilagay ninyo po, “excluding those employees whose employment are terminated for just causes provided under the Labor Code of the Philippines, and those employees who voluntarily terminated their employment and taking into account the limitations on work arrangements prescribed under the COVID-19 health and social distancing standards.”

Hindi lingid sa ating kaalaman na ngayon pa lamang ay maraming manggagawa ay hindi na makabalik sa kanilang pagawaan, hindi na makabalik sa mga impresa, hindi na makabalik sa mga opisina dahil sa kawalan ng transportasyon, dahil sa kakulangan ng mga

paraan para makabalik sa trabaho, at mayroong ilan sa kanila ay napilitan nang either to forcibly mag-resign o matanggal, hindi dahil sa kagustuhan nila kundi dahil sa sirkumstansiya.

Kapag nilagay natin itong proviso na ito, hindi ho ba binubuksan natin iyong isang malaking loophole para magtanggap ng mga manggagawa na ginagamit ang COVID-19 as an excuse to reduce—not to retain but to reduce—employment currently affected by the COVID-19, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, salamat po sa observation ninyo on the possible way na ma-circumvent po ang mga provision dito. Iyan naman clearly ay hindi po natin intention. Ang dahilan po kung bakit po natin tinanggal dito o na-exclude, halimbawa, those voluntarily leaving their jobs or those that were terminated for cause is para naman po hindi rin naman po unfair doon po sa employer. Hindi ba nga po? Dahil kung kailangan po nila, halimbawa, to retain 75 percent of their workers dahil sila po ay tumanggap ng 75 percent wage subsidies ay unfair naman po kung isama pa rin doon base sa number of employees iyon pong those who voluntarily left. So, iyon ang naging intention po kung bakit naisama po iyan. Ang puwede po nating gawin is we can leave this as a specific guideline na ang DOLE na po ang magde-decide kung ano po ang magandang gawin po dito, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Hindi reassuring iyon, Mme. Sponsor, kasi kamakailan lamang, naglabas ang Department of Labor and Employment ng Order No. 17 na sa esensiya ay nire-reiterate iyong ganito ngang policy na maaaring magtanggap bunga na nga rin ng epekto ng COVID-19. Hindi lang iyan dahil doon sa same Order, sinasabi nung guidelines regarding paano i-adjust daw ang suweldo ng mga manggagawa. Obviously, not to increase the salaries, but because of the effect of various changes in work arrangements, lesser hours of work and others, ang direksiyon, hindi pa nga para palakihin ang suweldo na kailangan na kailangan lalo na sa panahon ng COVID-19 at kahit na noong nakaraan pa man, pero ngayon ito pa iyong isinusulong ngayon ng Department of Labor and Employment. Ang tutulungan, hindi iyong manggagawa. Ang tutulungan ay iyong mga kapitalista. Papaano natin maa-assure na hindi magkakaroon ng ganitong sitwasyon na maraming manggagawa ang matatanggal hindi dahil sa kagustuhan nila kung hindi bunga na nga rin ng epekto ng COVID-19?

Hindi ba puwedeng tanggalin na natin iyong probisyon na ito para maprotektahan iyong mga manggagawa? Mismo sa gobyerno nga, sa ating mga job order at contract of service ay mayroong inilabas ang Civil Service Commission na hindi necessarily dapat nasa frontline sila, kung hindi dapat nga i-retain pa rin sila lalo na sa panahon ng COVID-19 at

nangangailangan sila ng tulong. Hindi kaya hindi ito ang layunin ng PESA na job retention, na employment retention, kung hindi employment reduction, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. QUIMBO. Ang pangunahing layunin talaga ng PESA, at uulitin po namin, paulit-ulit, is really labor retention, which is why most of the interventions that are proposed here would really have that condition hindi lang po sa wage subsidies pero pati na rin po sa interest-free loans. Kung kayo po ay mayroong magandang suhestiyon kung paano po natin babalansehin ang dalawang pakay na iyan, on one hand, we, of course, definitely want employers to keep their employees, right? That is number one but number two po, sa dahilan po na mayroon po tayong, halimbawa, social distancing protocols na in many businesses, halimbawa po ay iyong example ko po kanina na karinderya, nang dahil sa social distancing protocols ay mangangalahati na po ang mga customer, in which case baka po kailangan magbawas ang isang employer.

So, may ganoong klaseng tension na on one hand, sa employee, and on the other hand, sa employer. Ito pong pino-propose po namin dito seeks to balance those two pero kung mayroon kayong mas magandang recommendation para makahanap po tayo ng isang middle ground that would be workable for both employers and employees, kami naman po ay bukas po at pakikilingan po namin ang inyong recommendation, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Salamat po, Mme. Sponsor, sa pagiging bukas sa maaaring pagbabago para matiyak na iyong layunin ng PESA na batas na gusto nating ipasa ay hindi sasalungat doon sa pangunahing layunin na itinatakda nito.

Partikular na rin sa ating mga manggagawa, nabanggit ninyo po iyong TUPAD. Mayroon pong enhanced TUPAD Program o Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers. Sa tingin ninyo ba, sapat iyong pondong inilalaan para dito na aabot ng P30 billion sa kalagayang, ayon sa mga tantiya at nabanggit kanina, sabi ng Chairperson ng Committee on Labor, na at least 10 to 11 million ang manggagawang apektado. Doon sa P30 billion na sinasabing halaga para sa dagdag sa TUPAD, kung P10,000 lang ang ibibigay sa ating mga informal workers, ay kakarampot lamang ang makikinabang, 1.5 million lamang out of 10 to 11 million workers who will be affected by the COVID-19 will benefit from such program. Hindi kaya sobrang liit nitong pinapanukalang programa o benepisyo para sa ating mga displaced at affected workers, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, dapat pong matingnan ang P30 billion proposed funding para sa enhanced

TUPAD, kasabay po nitong P110 billion po na nilalaan po natin para sa wage subsidies. Kasi po, siyempre, ulit at uulitin ko, ang pakay po natin is job retention. So, ang gagamitin po natin diyan is wage subsidies. Kaya nga lang po, ang talagang kaso po, na 100 percent ng workers is impossible to keep dahil na nga po mayroon tayong social distancing protocols and of course, mayroon din naman pong kaunting flexibility ang ating employers kaya po tayo naglagay din ng enhanced TUPAD na emergency employment program na siya pong sasalo sa mga empleyado po na, for one reason or another, despite the PESA interventions ay nawalan ng trabaho, at least mayroon pong programa na sasalo po sa kanila. So, ang maganda pong pag-appreciate dito sa ating proposal is to take the two—P110 billion kasabay po ng P30 billion, so P140 billion ang kabuuang intervention po natin para masigurado po na may trabaho po ang mga Pilipino, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Maraming salamat po sa paglilinaw, Mme. Sponsor, and Mr. Speaker. Ang Kinatawag ito ay naglalayon din na hindi simpleng job retention, sapagkat kung simpleng job retention lamang, kung ang uri ng trabaho ay hindi papasa sa standard na sinasabing nakakabuhay na antas na sahod, maayos na working conditions, kahit na may trabaho siya ay maaaring mas pagsasamantalahan siya at aapihin siya. Bagamat mayroon siyang sahod, ang sahod na hindi kayang buhayin ang kaniyang pamilya, cannot keep body and soul together, ay hindi yata iyon ang essence ng ating konsepto ng job retention. Kung kaya dapat hindi simpleng job retention lamang pero trabaho na nagbibigay ng sapat at nakabubuhay na sahod, siguradong trabaho at kumikilala sa mga batayang karapatan ng mga manggagawa.

Ang isa pang katanungan ay hinggil sa ating mga overseas Filipino workers at mayroon namang nilalaman ang PESA Bill na partikular sa mga ayuda na ibibigay sa ating mga OFWs. Tulad ng nabanggit, ano ho ba ang talagang direksiyon natin—job retention? Ang layunin ba natin ay iyong ating mga OFW ay makapagtrabaho dito locally o makapagtrabaho ulit sa ibang bansa, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. QUIMBO. Siyempre po sa ngayon po, talagang napakarami pong repatriated OFWs kaya po mayroon po tayong provision dito sa ating panukalang batas na sila po ay matulungan. So, just in case po na hindi po nila ma-renew ang kanilang employment contracts, sana naman po magkaroon sila ng pagkakataon na makapaghanap din ng trabaho dito sa atin. Kaya may provision po tayo na dalawang buwan na minimum wage ang matatanggap po nila and the purpose po for indicating two months is, sa tingin po natin ay iyan naman po ay sapat na panahon para makahanap na

po ng alternative employment opportunities ang ating repatriated OFWs.

Siyempre po, again, ang PESA Bill po, Mr. Speaker, just to remind everyone, is not our long-term economic development plan. Ito po ay solusyon lamang dahil nagkaroon tayo ng problema na dinala po ng pandemya. So, this is to get us through the next six months and then the next year hanggang dumating po ang bakuna. Ito po ang modest goal ng ating panukalang batas. So, pagdating po sa OFWs, of course, ideally in the long run ang gusto po natin ay sapat po ang dami ng trabaho dito sa ating ekonomiya such that wala na pong Pilipinong aalis, leaving their families behind. Napakalaking social problem po niyan.

So, ayaw po natin na ganyan ang situation in the long run but sa ngayon po, ang ating kailangang tugunan is ito pong short-term economic problem. So, for now, iyan ang ating proposal para sa repatriated OFWs. Bukod sa wage subsidies, tatandaan po natin na mayroon pang mas malawakang mga interventions in the form of credit stimulus. So, marami po tayong interest-free loans coming from different government financial institutions na mayroon ang small business corporations tulad ng LandBank pati na ang DBP at kasama po diyan ang pagsuporta ng Philippine Guarantee Corporation dahil kinikilala po natin na napakahirap pong kumuha ng utang kung wala pong kolateral kaya ang sagot po diyan ay loan guarantee. So, ganoon po. Medyo mas malawak po ang iniisip po natin na mga various interventions para po, again, to get over the hump.

REP. GAITE. Salamat po at ako po ay sang-ayon doon sa binanggit ng ating Mme. Sponsor na talagang dapat ang overseas employment ay hindi long-term solution. Tulad ngayon, nakita natin iyong drastic na pagbagsak ng bilang ng deployment bunga na nga rin na ang krisis ay tumatama sa buong daigdig at ang pangangailangan ng mga overseas Filipinos ay talagang bumagsak bunga na nga rin ng epekto ng pandemya.

Habang nandito rin tayo sa topic ng OFWs, may napansin ako dito sa Section 10, page 13, Economic Relief to Overseas Filipino Workers. Sa bahagi ng Section 4(z) o iyong implementation ng Republic Act No. 11469, partikular doon sa “OFWs shall be charged by the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PHIC) no more than three hundred pesos (P300.00) per month for premium contributions in 2020, x x x three hundred and seventy-five pesos (P375.00) x x x in 2021, and x x x four hundred fifty pesos (P450.00) in 2022.”

Matanong ko, gusto natin tulungan iyong ating mga manggagawa sa ibayong dagat. Bakit i-increase pa natin iyong kanilang premium—una, ginawang mandatory ang contribution sa PhilHealth at ikalawa, tinaasan pa, considering na karamihan ng ating mga OFW ay nag-

e-enjoy na ng mandatory insurance sa kanilang host countries. Ngayon, ginawa pang mandatory.

Bibigyan natin pero babawasan din natin. Babawiin din natin ng bahagya. Hindi ba incongruent itong desisyon na dadagdagan natin iyong contribution at sa halip dapat sana ay ginawa na lang nating voluntary ang membership ng mga OFWs dahil kalakhan nga sa kanila ay hindi napapakinabangan ito. Ikalawa, hindi na dapat nagkaroon pa ng increases dito at maaaring itakda na lang sa barest minimum for those who would like to voluntarily be covered under the PhilHealth system, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, una sa lahat po, kapag sinabi po nating “universal health care,” sakop po ang lahat ng Filipino kaya po mandatory po talaga ang contribution hindi lang po ng OFWs, kundi lahat po ng manggagawa po sa buong bansa. So, dahil doon ay hindi po natin puwedeng tanggalin ang pagbayad po ng isang OFW sa PhilHealth.

Pangalawa po, ang provision na ito, ang ginagawa po ng Section 10 ay binabawasan po ang kailangan bayaran ng isang OFW sa PhilHealth. Kung wala po ang provision na ito, Mr. Speaker, ang babayaran po ng isang OFW ay P9,900, pero dahil po sa provision na ito ay magiging one-third na lang po, magiging P3,600 na lang po ang kabuuang bayad ng OFWs. So, sa tingin po namin, malaking pagbaba na po and therefore, we called this section, “Economic Relief to Overseas Filipino Workers,” Mr. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Maraming salamat po, Mme. Sponsor, pero kahit anong bawas ay parang ganoon din ang epekto. Instead na palakol, ginawa na lang nating ice pick, pero the damage will still be the same.

Isang tanong na lang patungkol sa mga sectors. Sa purview ba ng ating authors, ng ating mga Sponsors, iyong isang malaking sector rin ng ating transport sector, iyong TNVS, ito ho rin ba ay included? Kasi hindi nababanggit tulad ng ating mga jeepney drivers, bus drivers at iba pa, mga tricycle drivers, so iyong TNVS na tulad ng marami ay tulad ng nabanggit, wala ring employee-employer relationship din sila. Sila ba ay saklaw sa subsidyo para sa ating transport sector, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, yes, transportation is, again, a critically-impacted business, so sila po ay kasama at wala po tayong any provision that excludes a particular subsector of the transportation sector, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Maraming salamat po. Siguro, bilang panghuli po, sa panahon ngayon, talagang dapat pag-isipan muli iyong socioeconomic model na nakita na natin. Responsible ito sa malawakang kahirapan at

matinding inequality na ating dinaranas. Nabanggit ko na kahit sa datos mismo ng gobyerno, 18 million ang targeted beneficiaries na na-classify na no income hanggang sa pinakamahirap na sangay ng ating lipunan kung kaya't nakita na natin ang matagalang neglect ng mga nakaraang administrasyon hanggang sa kasalukuyan—neglect sa universal social protection, health and other public services. Ang pinakamagandang tugon sa ngayon ay tugunan ang injustices na nagaganap na ito, lalo na sa panahon na dapat ang bawat Pilipino ay hindi i-deprive ng kaniyang karapatang mabuhay.

Four points lang: 1. If we hope to contain the spread of the virus in the long term until such time that no vaccine or treatment is available, the public health system must be expanded and strengthened to handle not just the current pandemic but also future pandemics;

2. Any economic stimulus package must serve to protect Filipinos struggling financially amidst the lockdown. Social safety nets must be improved towards achieving universal social protection, including timely and ample financial assistance for the working poor, the informal sector and displaced OFWs;

3. Support for domestic industries and agriculture must be prioritized as it is the only long-term solution to the ensuing economic crisis. Likewise, trade policies cannot go “business as usual,” and certain protectionist measures must be put in place to protect local industries and incentivize domestic manufacturers;

4. Lastly, financing these measures can be achieved by rechanneling less productive items to prioritized projects which can also be reconsidered. We must also consider debt cancellation to free a public-debt burden. Financing from the outside sources must be provided without conditionality, and those loans must be scrutinized to prioritize low-interest ODA.

Also, a progressive tax system is needed, one that is geared towards taxing the rich, ang mga nasa barko at bangka, iyong mga malalaking hindi kayang matinag ng bagyo, and calling for emergency solidarity in bonds and reducing the tax burden on the poor, iyong mga nakasakay lang sa maliliit na bangka at mga balsa.

Iyan lang po, Mme. Sponsor. Salamat po, Mr. Speaker.

REP. QUIMBO. Salamat po, Mr. Speaker. We duly note all your observations.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Thank you, Representative from the BAYAN MUNA Party-List.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. NIETO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Lady from the Party-List BH, Hon. Bernadette “BH” Herrera-Dy for her interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The Representative from the BH Party-List is hereby recognized. Please proceed.

REP. NIETO. Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my earlier motion. Instead, I move that we recognize Hon. Christopher V.P. De Venecia from the Fourth District of Pangasinan for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The Gentleman from the Fourth District of Pangasinan is hereby recognized.

REP. DE VENECIA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the distinguished Sponsor yield to some comments and clarificatory questions?

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DE VENECIA. First off, I would like to thank our Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano for recognizing, in his message to the House yesterday, that entertainment and live events are among the most heavily-impacted by this COVID-19 pandemic and that Congress is committed to tackling measures to help them get back on track. So, on behalf of the 400,000 workers of live events, 460,000 workers in the audiovisual sector which include TV and film, and the 400,000 cultural workers, as mentioned by the NCCA in their report, I thank you.

Second, I would like to congratulate my mentors, the principal authors of the PESA Bill and the Committee, for crafting such a groundbreaking and game-changing measure, and for their sterling and unparalleled efforts in hearing out the concerns of all members and all sectors in making sure that no one is left behind during these crucial times, including those, like myself who is not only a millennial legislator but a freelancer to some extent, freelancers who are very much a part of the understated, yet rapidly growing freelance or gig economy. Just this year, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, I was slated to direct a production of *Rogers and Hammerstein's Carousel* which got cancelled because of the enhanced community quarantine, alongside hundreds of thousands of live events for the rest of 2020.

The live events sector is said to be one of the heaviest-hit industries, according to studies released by private sector entities such as the Creative Economy Council of the Philippines, ilostmygig.ph, and the National Live Events Coalition PH. Even the government's very own NEDA and the Department of Finance's survey of MSMEs, showed that the arts, entertainment and recreation is the number one hardest-hit sector in terms of revenue loss, with 82.3 percent average loss in terms of sales; and the sixth hardest-hit sector in terms of job losses at 39,446. This is, of course,

subject to limitations by the rollout of the said survey during the quarantine.

There are 400,000 job workers in the live events sector, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, now displaced, 80 percent of which are freelance jobs; 468,000 jobs in the audiovisual or the film and television sector, 85 to 90 percent of which are freelance; and additional 400,000 freelancers across various sectors as per the NCCA. Between those figures alone, that is already 1.11 million Filipino freelancers. This number is said to be even higher. For argument's sake, let us say it is about 1.2 to 1.5 million freelancers for lack of material data to justify an even higher number.

Would the distinguished Sponsor agree that freelancers are a significant part of our country's workforce?

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DE VENECIA. And would the distinguished Sponsor agree that one of the intentions behind the freelancers' inclusion in Section 7 of the PESA Bill, specifically on wage subsidies, is to not only provide them with the dignity that comes with the State's recognition of their invaluable contributions to society but also to provide them with welfare and support during this critical moment of the quarantine and especially in the new normal?

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, Mr. Speaker, definitely.

REP. DE VENECIA. I know that one of the distinguished Sponsors, a fellow author of the Gig Economy or Freelance Protection Bill, Cong. Joey Salceda, is a champion of the sector. I also know that one of our distinguished Sponsors is an avid collector of visual art, she and her husband; and another one of our distinguished Sponsors is a fan of *KDrama*, so I (*inaudible*) the distinguished Sponsor for her recognition of the contributions of freelancers to nation-building and to our economy by including them in the wage subsidies provision in Section 7. But would the distinguished author agree that there might be wisdom in increasing this proposed wage subsidy to freelancers from 75 percent of minimum wage to a maximum of two months to maybe 100 percent of minimum wage for two months?

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, there is a rationale for increasing the wage subsidy not only for freelancers but also the rest of the industries, actually, Mr. Speaker. However, we have to consider the limitations, well, the budget constraints, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DE VENECIA. I understand that, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. You know, the COVID-

19 pandemic has only confirmed what we have long known and suspected about this sector—that freelancers are very much vulnerable to shocks and economic downturns before the ECQ and especially in this new normal; that freelancers are in this weird policy limbo because they are neither formal workers who enjoy all the benefits of the SSS, PhilHealth, Pag-IBIG, paid leaves, 13th month pay, and all of that and thus, were disqualified from receiving CAMP assistance from the DOLE, nor are they considered a priority sector in the DSWD's Social Amelioration Program. Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, they live from paycheck-to-paycheck and have managed to survive all these years until COVID-19 and until the new normal where their livelihood, especially freelancers who worked in live events that entail mass gatherings, is pretty much decimated. That being said, would the Sponsor be open to reconsidering her position on this matter?

REP. GARIN (S.). We will seriously consider, Mr. Speaker, but we have to refer it to the Committee to make further calculations, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DE VENECIA. Yes, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. As the baseline for this proposal, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts was able to realign some of its funds to assist 14,520 freelance cultural workers in the form of a one-time cash assistance of P5,000. The Film Development Council of the Philippines, which is another government agency, was able to realign some of its funds to provide assistance to 2,000 audiovisual workers in the form of a one-time cash assistance of P8,000. Collectively, that is about 16,520 freelancers who were assisted by the State during the quarantine. Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, 16,520 freelancers, compared to the 1.1 million freelancers, as accounted for by the Film Development Council, the National Live and Events Coalition, and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, that is a mere two percent of the sector for two months of no work.

Again, for the sake of argumentation, since there are so many other freelancers out there in other sectors of the creative economy, we estimate this number to be about 1.2 to 1.5 million freelancers, which then translates to only 0.8 percent of the sector having received any kind of financial assistance. Of course, this does not account for whether or not they received food assistance packages from their respective local government units. I pray that these freelancers did because if they did not, I cannot imagine what they are going through right this moment. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, only a mere 0.8 to two percent of the sector was extended financial assistance during the quarantine. So, with the PESA Bill, in order to make up for the absence of support

for this kind or type of workers in the Bayanihan Law, what is another 25 percent of the minimum wage to the freelancer to help them upgrade and most importantly, survive in the new normal especially kung wala po silang magiging kabuhayan, lalong-lalo na po iyong mga workers and freelancers sa live events sector?

At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Estrella relinquished the Chair to Representative Wilter "Sharky" Wee Palma II.

In fact, in a recent consultation that we had with them, the wedding sector said that weddings might not even return until June of next year. So, that is not just six months of no work, but one year of no work. So, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, I think there is definitely wisdom behind this proposal and I hope that they would consider this.

Final appeal, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, for freelancers. They are highly skilled workers who, like myself, spend a lifetime perfecting their craft and delivering their output to their clients with utmost dedication, professionalism and excellence. I have been a director for the stage for more than 12 years even before I got into government, and I am still learning and striving to be better. Mr. Speaker, we cannot allow these highly skilled and creative workers to be displaced from their professions, adding to the 14.8-percent underemployment rate in the country pre-COVID-19 or worse, adding to what Congress, as confirmed by the DOLE and the Senate through Senator Ralph Recto, has identified to be 10 million unemployed Filipinos in the new normal.

Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, the purpose of providing wage subsidies is to retain a proportion of workers with the same level of subsidies. For example, 75-percent wage subsidy to keep 75 percent of the labor. In the case of our highly skilled freelancers, should it not be 100 percent of minimum wage so they can retain 100 percent of themselves? Meaning to say, should we not give them the best chance to succeed in the new normal in the absence of foreseeable livelihood? If the freelancer is based in Metro Manila, that would be about P15,000 a month for two months if our proposal is accepted. If you are one of the 320,000 freelancers in the live events sector with no foreseeable income in the next six months, the P30,000 or the two months' worth of minimum wage as propelled by the additional 25 percent will go a long way. It can be budgeted by the freelancer to about P5,000 a month for six months of possibly no work and more than makes up for the lack of financial assistance that they received during the quarantine. I repeat, only 0.8 to two percent of freelancers got any kind of financial assistance during the quarantine from the government.

Malaking tulong na po ito sa freelancers tulad nina ER Soriano, isang freelance musician mula sa Dagupan City, or sa 170 members ng Samahang Banda ng Pangasinan, o ang 3,000 members ng Pangasinan Events and Wedding Suppliers na mawawalan ng kabuhayan. It will also afford them some kind of budgetary support as they figure out how to survive in the new normal.

Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, an additional 25 percent to the proposed 75 percent would be around P3,750 per freelancer. Based on the tally from the data of the FDCP, NLEC PH and NCCA, that is roughly about P4.5 to P5.6 billion additional funds to the proposed wage subsidy to freelancers. That is assuming all freelancers will avail of it.

Mr. Speaker, before that—sorry, I did my homework because that is probably what my mentors Cong. Joey, Sharon and Stella, would ask of me. So, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, it may seem a lot to ask right now, but to quote a very wise person, "It is never about the budget. A cost-benefit analysis informs a budget decision but the budget itself is never a parameter in a cost-benefit analysis." That, my dear colleagues, are the words of one of the Sponsors herself, the amazing Teacher Stella Quimbo. *(Laughter)*

Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, if the spirit of the inclusion of freelancers in Section 7 on wage subsidies is to honor their contributions to society, to provide them with dignity, I believe, as per the wisdom of the authors, this also incentivizes freelancers to come out of the woodwork and also to join our formal economy. This will also help broaden our tax base to help them become fiscally responsible and to provide them with the protection of the State that has long escaped them. It is with great humility that I ask, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, for this adjustment in that section.

At this juncture, the Presiding Officer relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Conrado M. Estrella III.

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, we have provisions that the freelancers can avail of, the ones mentioned by Congressman De Venecia, the wage subsidy and also the interest-free loans that we can provide and the assistance from the Department of Tourism where majority of the freelancers or the live events sector can avail of assistance, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, I am happy that the Sponsor made that transition because actually, that would be my next point.

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, however, the six-months request is practically an amelioration in the point of view of the Committee. This Bill is not an amelioration or a Bayanihan Bill.

REP. DE VENECIA. Yes.

REP. GARIN (S.). We are protecting jobs, but at the same time, we do not want to give amelioration without effort on the part of the recipient.

REP. DE VENECIA. Yes.

REP. GARIN (S.). It is called sweat investment, Mr. Speaker. They have to work for the money that they receive, and ...

REP. DE VENECIA. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (S.). ... the six months is, in our view, excessive in terms of—they have two months to think about what their options are, considering the limitations of the market now. So, we will consider and recompute and see how long we can adjust the wage subsidy, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mr. Speaker, I would just like to clarify that it is not six months, but it is sticking within the parameter set by the Committee of two months wage subsidy. What I am saying po is kung ma-adjust iyong 75 percent to 100 percent of minimum wage for two months, that would be, in Metro Manila for a freelancer, P30,000. So, mapapagkasiya po niya iyon in six months insofar as maybe P5,000 per month, pero hindi po six months iyong wage subsidy na hinihingi natin because, with all due respect, we did our computation and the adjustment itself from 75 percent to 100 percent already yields a significant amount. So, we recognize that naman po. So I just wanted to make that clarification.

On to my next point, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, the live events sector, which this Representation has already discussed in detail today as well as in my privilege speech last week, generates about P200 billion pesos in annual gross revenue across 27,000 MSMEs as per the data shared by the National Live Events Coalition, and employs about 400,000 workers, 80 percent of which are freelancers. The live events sector is a segment of what is known as the creative economy. What I have always known about this sector, in continuing to work in the performing arts myself, is that it has a multiplier effect in our economy. A night out to your favorite concert or cultural event yields additional revenue to retail, to restaurants, to transportation and many other sectors. What I gleaned recently from the weddings and social events as well as agencies and activation subsectors within live events is that they are very much a part of the value chain of one of the most heavily impacted industries by this pandemic aka tourism.

May I know, Mr. Speaker, if the distinguished Sponsor has ever attended a destination wedding?

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DE VENECIA. Or the reception of any wedding in general? For sure, yes.

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DE VENECIA. This is the subsector of live events that generates about 500,000 weddings per year as per the National Live Events Coalition PH's Robert Blancaflor. In 2020 alone, most if not all weddings have been postponed due to the quarantine. He even mentioned that wedding receptions might not even return to full swing, like I said earlier, until June of next year. To quote a recent article on top wedding supplier, Margarita Forés of the *Cibo* restaurant chain, her catering business, *Cibo di Marghi*, was supposed to work on 11 weddings all scheduled in March but were all cancelled. Forés said: "Our other prospective wedding clients for the future months are still in limbo, depending on how the situation unfolds in the coming months."

It has come to my attention, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, that weddings, socials, activations and other forms of live events comprise a huge chunk of revenues generated by stakeholders in the tourism sector, particularly in hotels and resorts. In fact, live events pretty much make up the core of what is one of 10 tourism products being pushed by the Department of Tourism that is the MICE: Meetings, Incentives, Conventions—sorry, Meetings, I forgot what the "I" means, Conventions, and Exhibitions. MICE Tourism is a huge driver of our domestic tourism revenues and on occasion, even international tourism as in the case of the recently concluded SEA Games that which our Speaker successfully spearheaded. Our delegates and athletes were treated to the most spectacular world-class opening ceremony of the 30th Southeast Asian Games, of course, organized and made possible by freelancers and workers in the live events sector.

Lastly, I forgot—cultural tourism to which the performing arts sector as well as our cultural workers belong, but we will need more data on that. They are also very much a part of the tourism mix with many, for example, flying to Manila to catch a jukebox musical like *Ang Huling El Bimbo* or *Rak of Aegis* and of course, cultural performances as being part of the experiential offerings to tourists in the country's top tourist destinations.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, would she agree that the 27,000 MSMEs of live events should be considered and accommodated as among the stakeholders who should be provided assistance in Section 20 of the PESA Bill or the Assistance to the Tourism Industry?

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, Mr. Speaker. We do see the value of the industry and how we wish that PESA or even the Department of Tourism can assist more but the limitations are there, and hopefully this will propel the industry itself to organize and help themselves, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DE VENECIA. So, just to clarify, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, the Committee is open to the stakeholders, the MSMEs in the live events sector to be extended and provided assistance in Section 20?

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, Mr. Speaker. The Committee is willing and already talking to the Department of Tourism for them to be included in the DOT interventions, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DE VENECIA. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just for the information of the distinguished Sponsor, both Chairperson Sol Aragon and myself were in touch with Secretary Puyat last night and yes, she provided some kind of a nod or agreement to the MSMEs being accommodated. But then she did raise the issue of artists as maybe being beyond the scope, and what I told and reassured her is that I believe artists will be provided for in another section of the PESA Bill which is the Assistance to Freelancers. So, perhaps that can be an enlightening input from the Secretary for the Committee.

At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Estrella relinquished the Chair to Rep. Wilter "Sharky" Wee Palma II.

REP. GARIN (S.). Thank you. It is duly noted, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DE VENECIA. At the proper time, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, I will propound the necessary revisions in Section 3(m) insofar as the definition of tourism enterprises is concerned, as well as in Section 20 which is the Assistance to the Tourism Industry.

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, should the good interpellator have anymore suggestions for amendments, the Committee will seriously consider them, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DE VENECIA. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. Now, I would like to call the attention of the Committee towards the growing sector in our creative economy which has been at the forefront of representing the best of Filipino creativity, that is the audiovisual sector, to which film, television and the animation sector belong.

The cinema sector alone, according to the Film Development Council of the Philippines, generated approximately P11.5 billion in gross box office revenues in 2018. This is a sector that has about 460,000 workers across 11,000 MSMEs. From March to June of 2020, a projection of P4.5 billion worth of box office revenues would have been realized if not for the closures of cinemas nationwide due to the quarantine. Many more revenues from other allied arts and industries of the audiovisual sector were severely affected. There are silver linings, however. Just yesterday or two days ago, it was announced that the streaming platform Netflix acquired another five Filipino titles in addition to its already impressive roster of 50 Filipino films that can be streamed here and around the world. You will also remember many years back the teleseryes like *Pangako Sa Iyo* and *Please Be Careful With My Heart* became master hits on the Malaysian Network TV 3 which, according to Selangor Tourism, makes Manila closer to Kuala Lumpur. Aside from the world-class creative outputs generated by the audiovisual sector contributing to revenues to our export economy, it is also a part and parcel of our country's soft power and cultural diplomacy.

Mr. Speaker, may I ask if the distinguished Sponsor is familiar with the Korean drama, *Crash Landing on You*?

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, we do appreciate the value of the industry. Should the good Sponsor submit to us any suggestions, we would be willing to consider them for the Committee amendments, Mr. Speaker. Yes, Mr. Speaker, that is it, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DE VENECIA. Alright. Yes, kasi kinabaliwan po ito ng lahat, and I am sure most of us devoured our fair share of Korean dramas to help tide us over during this critical time. So, it is no wonder that South Korea's audiovisual output and services sector are among the country's top exports.

So, siguro just to get to the point, Mr. Speaker...

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, please, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DE VENECIA. ...I would just basically like to propose that the Committee consider in Section 22 of the PESA Bill or the Assistance to Industry and Service Sectors, that the audiovisual sector be extended assistance as well.

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, Mr. Speaker, we will seriously consider and we will consult Congressman Gatchalian as well for the inclusion thereof, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DE VENECIA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My

final proposal, and I will just go straight to the point because I know there are a lot of people who will still interpellate. Mr. Speaker, I am very elated that in Section 26 of the Enhanced Build, Build, Build Program, there is a provision on the construction, improvement and renovation of infrastructure supportive of creative industries. I am very thankful to the authors for considering the power and potential of this industry.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to make a clarification to the authors as to who will be the one to advise or decide on the policy, or oversee the implementation of the infrastructure supportive of creative industries within the current set-up or structure of the economic stimulus board?

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, considering that it is an infrastructure project, there would be the DPWH, but since it is a creative industry, then I think DOT will likely be consulted as well as the other industries that are involved in the creative industry, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DE VENECIA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. Actually, we wanted to propose that the Committee consider the inclusion of the FDCP as well as the NCCA in the composition of the Economic Stimulus Board because both cultural agencies, government agencies, are currently managing infrastructure that is related to the creative industry.

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker.

REP. DE VENECIA. So, it is for the consideration of the Committee but at the very least, if they are not able to accommodate, then if we could just get a commitment from them, from the Sponsors, to make the proper representation with the Department of Trade and Industry, as well as to with the Department of Tourism. I know that the DTI works closely with creative industries insofar as the Design Center of the Philippines is concerned. So, if they could get a commitment that priority will be given to these sectors of our creative economy.

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, Mr. Speaker, considering it is specified under letter “(c)” in the Enhanced Build, Build, Build Program listing, I think it is a sign already that we gave priority. For the rest, we will make due consultation and we will get back to the good interpellator, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DE VENECIA. Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. I would also just like to put on record that position papers from the Film Development Council of the Philippines, and the National Live Events Coalition of the Philippines were submitted to the Committee, and they provided a list of what these

existing venues and infrastructures are for creative industries that can benefit from the stimulus in the Enhanced Build, Build, Build Program.

That being said, thank you so much, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. And again, congrats in advance to my amazing mentors and the principal authors of the PESA Bill.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (S.). Thank you.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Rep. Palma). Thank you very much to the Honorable De Venecia.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. NIETO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Lady from Party-List BAYAN MUNA, Hon. Eufemia “Ka Femia” C. Cullamat, for her interpellation.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Rep. Palma). The Lady from the Party-List BAYAN MUNA, Rep. Eufemia “Ka Femia” C. Cullamat is now recognized.

REP. CULLAMAT. Maraming salamat, G. Ispiker.

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Rep. Palma). Yes, the Sponsor is recognized.

REP. GARIN (S.). I would like to request that Rep. Wilfrido Mark M. Enverga, Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture, be the one to answer the good interpellator, Mr. Speaker.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Rep. Palma). Hon. Mark Enverga is now recognized to answer the questions of Honorable Cullamat.

REP. ENVERGA. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Rep. Palma). Mme. Cullamat, you have the floor.

REP. CULLAMAT. G. Ispiker, napakahalaga po ang pinansiyal sa ating pag-unlad kaya maaari po bang magtanong ang Kinatawang ito? Maaari po ba o pahihintulutan ba ng Sponsor na makapagtanong ang Kinatawang ito?

REP. ENVERGA. Opo, maraming salamat po.

REP. CULLAMAT. Ang una ko pong tanong ay hinggil po doon sa kung ano ba ang mga basehan ng

mga ipinapanukalang badyet para sa aspeto ng Stimulus Bill? Halimbawa, iyong sinabing P650 billion para sa Enhanced Build, Build, Build Program at iyong P44 billion para sa import and export industry, paano ba ito na-compute?

REP. ENVERGA. Nabanggit din po ng atin pong mga pangunahin na mga authors na kalakip po doon sa P650 billion ay mga imprastraktura na kung saan ay may nakalakip din po na bahagi na nasasama rin po sa agrikultura. Iyong sunod pong katanungan ay doon sa—pakiulit naman po, Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleague, iyong P400 billion?

REP. CULLAMAT. Opo, iyong para sa import and export industries—P44 billion po.

REP. ENVERGA. Ito po ay bahagi ng assistance to manufacturers, importers and exporters. Tama po ba? Iyong P44 billion po ang inyong inaalang po rito? Ang bahagi po ng agrikultura po ay kasama sa P650 billion, at kasama na rin po rito iyong mga programa na sinama ng Department of Agriculture.

REP. CULLAMAT. G. Ispiker, kagalang-galang na Sponsor, ang pangalawa ko pong tanong ay nasa Section 12, itong regulatory relief para sa mga negosyo. Kasama ba dito ang pag-waive ng mga regulatory penalties para sa paglabag ng mga standards na ipinapatupad ng gobyerno?

REP. ENVERGA. Mr. Speaker, puwede po bang pakiulit lang po iyong tanong? Puwede pong mahingi po, Mr. Speaker, muli ang katanungan?

REP. CULLAMAT. Sa Section 12, nandoon ang regulatory relief para sa mga negosyo. Kasama ba dito ang pag-waive ng mga regulatory penalties para sa paglabag ng mga standards na ipinapatupad ng gobyerno?

REP. ENVERGA. Hindi po, Mr. Speaker, kasama iyon. Hindi po iyon kasama, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CULLAMAT. Okay. Sa ganitong, ano, may panganib na hindi sundin ng mga kumpanya ang mga standards na ipinapataw ng gobyerno kung tanggalin ang mga penalties dito, paano natin masisiguro na hindi ito maaabuso?

REP. ENVERGA. Mr. Speaker, hindi po siya talaga kasama sa panukala po na ito. Ito po ay para lamang po sa BIR at saka po sa other charges and fees po, Mr. Speaker.

At this juncture, the Presiding Officer relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Conrado M. Estrella III.

REP. CULLAMAT. Maraming salamat, distinguished Sponsor. Ang dagdag ko pong tanong, G. Ispiker, distinguished Sponsor, ay hinggil po doon sa una pong tanong sa P600 billion para sa agriculture sector. Magkano po rito ang mapupunta sa pautang, at magkano naman ang direktang suporta para sa mga magsasaka?

REP. ENVERGA. Mr. Speaker, iyong programa po ng pautang po rito ay napapasama sa SURE Aid, Expanded SURE Aid Program po ang tawag po dito. Ito po ay nagkakahalaga ng dalawang bilyong piso, at tulad po ng atin pong inilulunsad na Expanded SURE Aid Program sa kasalukuyan, ang mechanics po nito ay pagbibigay pa rin po ng pautang na P25,000 para sa marginalized small farmers and fisherfolk. Kasama rin po rito, Mr. Speaker, iyong mga MSMEs na kung saan ay up to P10 million ang puwedeng utangin po para po sa karagdagang tulong po sa atin pong mga magsasaka at mangingisda at mga nagnenegosyo sa larangan ng agrikultura, na inaasahan natin na dadagsa pa ang pangangailangan ng atin pong mga kababayan po rito.

REP. CULLAMAT. Maraming salamat, distinguished Sponsor. Mr. Speaker, ang pangalawa ko pong tanong ay hinggil doon sa digital agriculture. Magkano po ba ang mapupunta sa digital agriculture program?

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. ENVERGA. I move for a one-minute suspension of the session, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The session is suspended for one-minute.

It was 6:27 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 6:27 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The session is resumed.

Honorable Enverga is recognized.

REP. ENVERGA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, doon po sa katanungan po niya, bahagi po ang digital agriculture sa programa ng food logistics na kung saan ay pinalalakas nga po natin na iyong pagsasama at pagkilala ng mga bawat mga magsasaka sa atin pong bansa. Siguro po ay mabanggit ko lang po dito, “This is to enable the Department of Agriculture and its stakeholders to communicate and to monitor

the implementation of social distancing protocols, compliance of guidelines to community quarantine, to augment support for frontline workers, particularly, in reporting, monitoring supply and demand and planning.”

Kalakip din po nito, Mr. Speaker, iyong atin pong inisyatibo na paigtingin pa ang price monitoring po natin. Ang programa pong ito ay nagkakahalaga ng P10 million po para po doon sa first phase. Doon sa augmentation for frontline workers ay P20 million, at mayroon din pong karagdagan na P15 million din po para po rito.

REP. CULLAMAT. Maraming salamat. Mr. Speaker, sa digital na ito, ano ang mga target na maaabot ng digital agriculture program na ito?

REP. ENVERGA. Mr. Speaker, puwede po bang ma-request pong maulit iyong katanungan?

REP. CULLAMAT. Ano ang mga target na maaabot sa digital agricultural program na ito?

REP. ENVERGA. Ito nga po, Mr. Speaker, tulad po nang nabanggit ko po dito, kasama po ito sa mas malakihang programa ng logistics. So, napakahalaga po nito na, bukod din po sa mga pagbibigay po sa mga frontliners ng mga impormasyon, ay gusto po natin mapalawig iyong impormasyon din po ng mga programa ng Kagawaran ng Pagsasaka at Pangangisda. Dahil po rito, mahalaga po na mayroong information dissemination din po na tayong inilulunsad para lalo nating mapagbigyan iyong ating mga magsasaka na malaman iyong mga linking ng mga proposals po ng Department of Agriculture, na kalakip nga po ito doon sa mas malakihan na programa ng logistics ng pagdadala ng pagkain sa mas malalaking merkado, halintulad nga po ng Metro Manila.

REP. CULLAMAT. Okay. Maraming salamat, G. Ispisador. G. Ispiker, ang pangatlo ko pong tanong ay sa mga programang urban agriculture at urban aquaponic. Ano ang kapasidad ng urban area para sa mga urban agriculture na proyekto? At ano ang tinatayang maaabot mula dito kumpara sa kung ang pondo ay mapunta sa mga sakahan sa kanayunan?

REP. ENVERGA. Well, Mr. Speaker, iyong programa pong ito ay bahagi po ng sigurong nakita po natin na naging malaking problema noong tayo po ay pumasok sa enhanced community quarantine na nag-lockdown tayo halos. Na-disrupt po ang supply chain ng pagkain kaya po nagkaroon ng ganitong inisyatibo ang Departamento ng Agrikultura at bukod po rito ay nakita rin po iyong potensiyal na magkaroon tayo ng isang programa ng urban agriculture.

At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Estrella relinquished the Chair to Representative Wilter “Sharky” Wee Palma II.

Maganda naman po ang pinupunto po ng atin pong kasama na si Rep. Femia Cullamat na kung saan ay medyo malaking halaga rin po ang kakailanganin. Subalit iyong P500 million budget po na nakalaan po rito ay para naman po sa malalaking siyudad sa buong Pilipinas. Hangad po natin dito ay mabigyan natin ng linaw at maturuan po natin iyong ating mga kababayan na ang food supply—marami tayong kababayan din po rito sa Metro Manila, sa Metro Cebu, nagreklamo rin po sila sapagkat noong sila ay bumibili po tulad ng kalamansi ay napakamahal na, samantalang ito po ay napakamura naman po at napakadaling itanim at ito po ay mas malaking pabor para po sa ating mga kababayan, lalo’t higit dito sa nasa siyudad.

Doon sa urban agriculture, maaari naman po o hindi rin naman ibig sabihin ay basta nasa bakuran lang po. Mayroon din pong mga inisyatibo sa urban agriculture program na kung saan mayroon pong nahahanap na mga mas malalaking lupain na pupuwede po na humingi ng pahintulot, o baka po ito ay pribado na pupuwede naman pagbigyan na mataniman ng mga iba’t ibang mga gulayan para ito po ay maging community-based ang pagtanim at pag-aani na makakatulong naman po sa mga komunidad po rito.

Tama po iyon na dapat naman po ay mas magandang nasa kanayunan din naman iyong ating pagbibigay ng mga gulay, kaya po mayroon din pong karagdagang programa rin po rito na nakasama po natin sa Stimulus Bill po natin na ito, na kung saan ay iyong tinatawag na Revitalized Gulayan Project na P1 billion po ang halaga ng kanilang programa na ito po at naglalayon na madala po sa kanayunan, lalo’t higit sa mga paaralan at sa iba’t iba pang mga lugar sa atin pong mga lalawigan.

REP. CULLAMAT. Maraming salamat, distinguished Sponsor. Mr. Speaker, ang huli ko pong tanong ay sa social assistance, na sinasabing ito ay para sa mga rehistradong mga magsasaka at mga mangangisda. Paano po ang mga unregistered farmers?

REP. ENVERGA. Mr. Speaker, tama po ba na ang tinatanong po natin ay iyong Social Amelioration Program ng ating farmers and fisherfolk?

REP. CULLAMAT. Mr. Speaker, sinasabi natin na napakahalagang bagay ang pinansyal para sa ating pag-unlad sa ating ekonomiya at kung anuman, at sinasabi din natin na, kung hindi ako magkakamali, ang utang natin sa buong bansa ay mahigit nang P7 trilyon, na sa kalaki-laki ng utang na ito ay napakarami din ng ating mamamayan na naghihirap. Kaya sa punto ng batas na

ito, sana po iyong mga pondo natin ay malagay natin doon ang mga batayang nangangailangan ng mga tulong para din sa kanilang pag-unlad ng kanilang mga ekonomiya, lalo na ang ating mga maliliit na magsasaka. Kasi bago pa man itong COVID-19 pandemic, sila po ay naghihirap na at nangangailangan din ng tulong ng pamahalaan, kaya sana po ay mayroon talagang mailaan para sa ating mga mahihirap na mga magsasaka. Iyon lamang po.

Maraming salamat, distinguished Sponsor, at maraming salamat, G. Ispiker.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Rep. Palma). Maraming salamat.

REP. ENVERGA. Maraming salamat po, Mr. Speaker.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Rep. Palma). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. NIETO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Gentleman from Party-List ANAKALUSUGAN, Hon. Michael T. Defensor, for his interpellation.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Rep. Palma). Hon. Mike Defensor is hereby recognized. You may now proceed.

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May the distinguished Lady accede to some questions?

REP. QUIMBO. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I would like to congratulate our distinguished Sponsors led by Hon. Joey Sarte Salceda, one of the great minds of this country, of course, from Bicol; Hon. Sharon S. Garin from Iloilo; and from Marikina, Hon. Stella Luz A. Quimbo.

Mr. Speaker, before I begin, let me just say that I would like to raise a point of order because the Sponsors are right here beside me to harass me with my questions. Now, Mr. Speaker, let me just go through this very slowly. As a matter of concept, Mr. Speaker, I looked into the PESA Bill and I noticed that you have divided the Bill into several sections, particularly the transitional interventions, financial interventions, sectoral interventions, structural interventions, and socioeconomic policy measures.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to ask, what would be the total budget for this Bill, Mr. Speaker?

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, it would be P583

billion for 2020 and P730 billion for 2021 up to 2023, Mr. Speaker.

At this juncture, the Presiding Officer relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Conrado M. Estrella III.

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). Now, Mr. Speaker, as to the character of the funding, what would be subsidy, what would be loans, and what would be for infrastructure as allocated by the Bill?

REP. QUIMBO. For infrastructure, it would be P650 billion. For subsidies, it would be P110 billion plus—I am sorry, for subsidies, it would be a P155 billion plus P253 billion, so that would be P408 billion.

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). Mr. Speaker, I raised that point because ...

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, I would like to request Chairman Joey Salceda to take over.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The Gentleman from Albay is hereby recognized.

REP. SALCEDA. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes, to my good friend.

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). Yes, Mr. Speaker. Again, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to know the character of the funds from which the subsidies will be given, the loans will be provided, and what would be for infrastructure, which I think are the three basic components of the Bill embodied in the programs for economic stimulus program.

REP. SALCEDA. For 2020, which is the critical period, we are providing for P130 billion for infrastructure; P583 billion of, basically, interventions, mostly subsidies, direct interventions by government; and also of the P583 billion, P70 billion will be equity in government financial institutions, basically PGC, Philippine Guarantee Corporation. In other words, 580 minus 70, but that will trigger P551 billion in credit stimulus.

So, all told, for this year we would have P583 minus P70 so that would be 5-1-3, plus 5-5-1 which is the credit stimulus, triggered by the 70, plus of course, the P130 billion in infrastructure which we are trying to frontload.

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I just would like to clarify on the financial side, this would be P70 billion of the P550 billion?

REP. SALCEDA. P583 billion.

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). P583 billion. So, the 70 is just for...

REP. SALCEDA. It is an equity in the PGC.

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). Equity.

REP. SALCEDA. Because PGC can guarantee, they can lift up to seven percent. Ang CAR niya is seven percent, so theoretically, they can guarantee up to 200—they can trigger an additional P240 billion and the equity in the LandBank as well as—nag SBC ba kayo?

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). DBP po.

REP. SALCEDA. And SBC can trigger through relending. Ang mangyayari doon, iyong mga pinapautang ng SBC will be bought by LandBank; in other words, it will be rediscounted. All told, mga P551 billion ang mati-trigger nitong credit stimulus na siya po ang magiging bridge. Ang ibig sabihin ngayon, kumbaga, naka-intubate iyong MSMEs natin, ang ginagawa po nito ay dini-dextrose natin sa pamamagitan ng subsidies, through wage subsidies and other interventions through training, market access, all sorts of nonconventional tips. I could say na some of them are very innovative government interventions among our departments. So, 583 minus 70 that is 5-1-3, plus 5-5-1, plus 130. That is the 2020 economic stimulus.

It is not just fiscal, it is called economic stimulus kasi marami pong policy initiatives which are nonfiscal. For example, iyong P59 billion na pang-lift ng 1.2 million hectares na mga nakasangla sa atin na ngayon ay puwede nang gamitin ng farmers, halos around one million farmers, puwede i-collateralize kasi ngayon hindi rin naman sila nababayaran. Parang zombie properties ito. In other words, you are actually liquifying the rural property market and that actually has a more substantial, a very big tip pero wala tayong ginamit na pera. Economic policy stimulus package ito. If we add up lahat ito, napakalaki po talaga ng epekto. This is a breakthrough legislation. It goes far beyond the traditional typology of a stimulus that even modern economists understand. Halimbawa, iyong pagbawas po natin ng mga kailangang bayaran ng mga OFW na imbes na 99, ibinaba po natin sa 36. There are a lot of relief, not just direct relief, but even regulatory relief and the regularization of our underground economies, kasi kung hindi, hindi po sila makaka-benefit sa P551 billion credit stimulus.

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, of the total budget that you mentioned, how much would this be in relation to the GDP? If I am not mistaken, this is about eight percent of GDP?

REP. SALCEDA. Mas magaling ka pala sa akin.

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). No, Mr. Speaker, I was just reading the 2019 GDP.

REP. SALCEDA. Iyong fiscal stimulus po three percent; additional three percent from the credit stimulus; and roughly 0.6 percent from infra stimulus. Kasi iyong infra, tinitingnan namin kasi may existing naman, it is difficult to roll it up at this planning cycle, kasi mas maganda ang infra mabadyetan next year.

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). Yes.

REP. SALCEDA. In fact, I am so tempted to speak na this may not be the last stimulus.

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). Yes.

REP. SALCEDA. In the US, there is already stimulus 1, 2, 3, 4. This is actually the second stimulus. Actually, the first stimulus na ginamit natin is through the Bayanihan Act. Essentially, parang intubation ito para huwag po mamatay ang pasyente.

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). Yes.

REP. SALCEDA. Gusto natin mabuhay iyong pasyente at hindi lang po mabigyan ng dextrose, kung hindi makabalik sa bahay para uminom na ng vitamins.

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). Yes, Mr. Speaker, you mentioned about 6.6 from the total GDP that we have.

REP. SALCEDA. Yes.

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). I just want to say, for the record, and I agree with the honorable Sponsor and the other Sponsors that in Germany, the stimulus package that they have approved is 60 percent of the total GDP; in Italy it is 44 percent; Spain, 12 percent; and US, which you mentioned, is 14 percent. We are only looking at 6.6 percent of our total GDP.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, I just wanted to clarify with you, because you started to discuss about infrastructure, then let me just segue to that for my other questions.

You know, if we are going to work on infrastructure, I noticed that you have listed down several programs in agriculture and so on and so forth, Mr. Speaker, but would the Sponsor agree that given this opportunity, for example, that we have a chance to really put down the budget for infrastructure, why do we not set up a program, for example, for a railroad in Mindanao, a

railroad in the Visayas; for dams that we need for Angat because there is a lack of water in Metro Manila; the south rail and the north rail; the Balik Probinsiya, if you want to decongest Manila—then why not put the funds in these following programs instead of listing down a menu of different programs of which we do not know the total effect? In these major infrastructure programs, then, it is very clear where the direction is in terms of the economic stimulus, like helping the agricultural sector in Mindanao, in the Visayas, by putting up the railroad system, Mr. Speaker.

REP. SALCEDA. This Representation, Mr. Speaker, will be more than willing. What we are trying to take care of here is really the dextrose, but you are talking about the vitamins. So, in short, I am, at the expense of my friends at the DOF, you know the executives ...

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). Yes.

REP. SALCEDA. ...I think we will need that stimulus no. 3. So this stimulus does not preclude any further discussion of what is good because as far as I have read the Constitution, the chief policy making Body in this country is Congress.

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). Yes. Mr. Speaker, maybe at the proper time, these particular programs can be listed down as the priority infrastructure which the President, the administration, can undertake. I can imagine, Mr. Speaker, for example, in the case of, you know, the traffic in Metro Manila, if we have the south rail connecting to the port of Manila, to the MICT in the port of Manila, and if this would be the money that we would be spending for the economic stimulus, then we do not comply with all our relevant—in the case of infrastructure, we are able to decongest traffic by providing cargo railroad tracks instead of the existing tracks that we have for Metro Manila, Mr. Speaker.

REP. SALCEDA. The genesis or should I say, the seeds for the stimulus stage is already in CURES—a very good, I would say, legislative effort by our Deputy Speaker. At the same time, Your Honor, it can be upscaled, Your Honor, into multiyear. During our first year here as Congressmen in 1988, if you remember, there was actually a multiyear infrastructure program wherein all the Congressmen were asked to convert into a multiyear.

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). Yes.

REP. SALCEDA. So, in short, Your Honor, this is not the first, it has historical precedent by way of policymaking by this Congress in order to make a very substantive effort in terms of what you can call

“constituency-led effort” in order to address the real needs of the people, as well as to optimize the real prospect opportunities that are actually or that resides not only in our constituency, but of course, as well as in our country.

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). Thank you for that, Mr. Speaker. It has always been an honor to listen to the great Congressman Salceda.

REP. SALCEDA. Isusumbong na kita kay GMA.

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). May I ask, Mr. Speaker, as an economist, what would be the comparative advantage of the Philippines in terms of the economy in natural resources?

REP. SALCEDA. Unang-una, actually, Your Honor, our median age is only 23.6 for human resources.

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). Human resources.

REP. SALCEDA. Our socio-cultural ability to adopt, our resiliency essentially. Third, even our archipelagic geography is actually a natural defense against pandemics. Fourth is basically, I would say, our long-running conservatism in the way we handle our finances.

So, we have the lowest 23 percent foreign debt to GDP ratio. We have only 44 percent; after all the deficits from January to April, we are still at 44 percent debt to GDP. We came a long way before from it all—106 percent in 2003—on our ability to systematically and orderly dispose and resolve our issues through democratic means, like iyong long-pestering na mga utang noon through DBP—from the 1970s, we resolved it through CB-BOL, now CB-BOL is nowhere. We already paid fully for it. Iyong atin pong mga IPPAs na umabot po ng 26 percent of total GDP, ngayon po as your Committee looked into it through PSALM, we have resolved it. In short, this country is not wanting that economic—I would say, ang ating animo spirit as a people. We are driven in that we can also unify around a certain concept or idea called a prosperous Philippines for everyone, so, then you can easily work back on what is needed by way of policy legislation.

REP. SALCEDA. Sa tingin ko, Your Honor, we have what it takes, and after all this COVIDness falls by the wayside, this country will get a credit upgrade. I came from that market. Ngayon po siguro kapag nababasa mo, halos masasabi mo na there is exaggerated pessimism. I have seen all that. But you know, once you get to the fundamentals of this country, especially our policy, makikita po ninyo na iyong mga policy na ipinasa dito sa Kongreso, the way we were able to

deliver on major structural reforms, through my good friend Sharon, the PSA, the FIA, the RTLA and almost all other fiscal policy reforms that had been passed, I think we will certainly create a new impetus. Nakikita ko naman kasi na kung kinaya ni GMA ang 8.1, next year po kakayanin ng Pilipinas ang 8.1.

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I asked that question because as you well know, I was in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources before. Two of the major resources of the country--the logging industry and the mining industry--have been put to a halt. These are the two major sectors that I think could contribute to the economic stimulus of the country. We have seen this in Chile, and I know that you know this case, Mr. Speaker, that they were able to develop because of the program they have in mining. Until now Indonesia's economy is resilient and 25 percent of their GDP is coming from the mining sector.

So, Mr. Speaker, I asked that question in relation to the economic stimulus program. During the time of the Great Depression, they were looking for gold. Now here, we have, in fact, those resources. We have, in fact, the existing mines but these were never expanded because of the policy limitations that we have imposed on the sector, Mr. Speaker.

REP. SALCEDA. Mr. Speaker, you go through a certain ranking or classification in terms of how highly contentious a certain policy direction is. I would say that once we get over all these COVIDness, the Committee on Ways and Means would have already finished with the fiscal regime for the mining industry, and it has been pending with the Committee on Rules. I guess that question is better asked of the Majority Leader than this Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). Mr. Speaker, before the COVID-19 happened, I would say that many of my friends, many of those associated with me, were doing their respective businesses. Now, in this Bill, you have stated here that there will be no payment of the principal for one year. I think this would be a very good assistance to those who have businesses or those who have availed of loans in order for them to set up their businesses. So, are you saying, Mr. Speaker, that for one year, all the banks may not be paid for a year of the supposed principal payments for the mortgage loans?

REP. SALCEDA. Well, the answer is yes, and I guess it is not unique because you would rather prefer an orderly and systematic framework for everyone to understand each other. We could have—how do you call it—a buffet, but what we would rather have is like, okay give everybody, pira-piraso, where everybody gets. Now, with respect to the banks, the interest will

roll except that, of course, they will not go after certain enterprises simply because you will not make certain enterprises collapse because you ask for the principal, its payment.

I have seen programs such as these in other countries wherein it is understandable given the—alam ninyo po, ngayong second quarter, baka bumagsak tayo ng nine percent sa GDP. Siguro naman ang mga bangkero, naiintindihan nila, na kung gusto nilang mabayaran sila at may magandang kliyente pa sila, huwag muna nilang singilin. Nandito naman po iyong gobyerno, puwede naman pong magbigay tayo under the PGC, “hoy, huwag mo muna pakialaman si Sharon Garin kasi bibigyan namin siya”—kaya lang kapag hindi iyan nakabayad, ang kalahati po, ang mananagot ay gobyerno.

So, we have all these schemes and the appropriate structures in order to ensure that banks will not lose money, they will not lose their shares but at the same time, we will provide or lay down the appropriate groundwork so that everybody can start anew, have a fresh capital so to speak.

Mr. Speaker, I think former President GMA is already waiting for you outside. *(Laughter)*

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to congratulate the Sponsors because I think that would really be a great support for the economy, and if you are saying that the banks will also be supported, then that would be good in terms of, let us say, the reserved requirement, that it will not be a part of the monetary policy, they will not be forced to have that. In relation to that, would the members of Pag-IBIG, SSS, GSIS and other institutions, the individuals who have loans, would they also be part of this program in that they will be allowed not to pay the principal for a year, Mr. Speaker?

REP. SALCEDA. Yes, Mr. Speaker, for consumer loans—“A thousand needles on myself before a single one on my neighbor.” In short, the government will have to set the example.

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). Yes.

REP. SALCEDA. These are government-owned and controlled corporations, and therefore they are ...

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). Mr. Speaker, if you check the provisions of the Bill, I do not see this—it was only when you mentioned the banks, and you were discussing the nonpayment of the principal. But, you know, at any given time, since you agreed already, Mr. Speaker, if it is not in the provisions of the Bill, then in the period of amendments, it can be included—Pag-IBIG, GSIS, SSS—where all individuals who have loans, especially

government financial institutions will not be or will be exempted from paying the principal for one year, Mr. Speaker.

REP. SALCEDA. Well, the word here right now is “encourage” and if the House is so minded, then a stronger word can be accommodated.

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). Yes. The reason I mentioned that, Mr. Speaker, about ...

REP. SALCEDA. Huwag mo nang pilitin iyan. (*Laughter*)

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). The reason I mentioned that, Mr. Speaker, about the banks and financial institutions, was because, you know, you were talking about MSMEs, Mr. Speaker, and just a matter of concept, if I were an OFW and I would put up a business, and you would give me a loan without collateral, without interest, what business could I enter into given this situation, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, if I may reiterate my question (*laughter*) with the indulgence of the Majority Leader. If I were an OFW and I was sent back to the country, for example, I would put up a business with no collateral, no interest, only the principal, but I do not even know the COVID-19 situation, so, I do not even know what business to enter into, and you know that 80 to 90 percent of start-ups fail. So, the reason I am saying that is, I feel that this would be a problem, but the existing loans of those who have borrowed from the GSIS, SSS, Pag-IBIG and the banks, if they are given a reprieve from paying the principal, including the interest, then that would be a good support and assistance to them.

REP. SALCEDA. Marami naman po na ganyan—kahit noong Governor po ako, binigyan po ako ng six years bago po ako magbayad ng principal. So, taontaon, binabayaran ko lang ng interest. So, hindi po imposible para po sa mga financial institutions iyong ganoong klase pong usapan. Pero para po masabi lang na kung mayroon pong puso ito pong Bill na ito, ito ay patungkol po sa mga workers ng MSMEs. MSMEs account for only 13 percent of total GDP but they account for 60 percent of total employment. Parehas din po sa agriculture. Agriculture accounts for only nine percent of the nominal GDP, but the entire agricultural farm sector, in terms of employment, including agro-processing, accounts for 33 percent of total workforce. Of course, there are a lot of overlaps there. All I am saying is ito pong Bill na ito was specifically designed to immediately provide employment support towards our 60 percent which is the MSME and our agricultural sector. Iyon po talaga ang puso ng PESA. Siguro dapat iyon ang pangalan ng Bill na ito, ...

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). Puso.

REP. SALCEDA. ... Puso ng PESA.

REP. DEFENSOR (M.). Mr. Speaker, I already see the Majority Leader carrying my bag. I think he is about to carry it outside of the session hall, so let me thank Honorable Salceda. It is always a pleasure hearing from him on his insights on the economy and of course, Hon. Stella Alabastro, who is only a first-termer now but has proven to be better than her husband, Congressman and Deputy Speaker Quimbo (*laughter*) and, Mr. Speaker, our economist lawyer, accountant lawyer, Deputy Speaker Sharon Garin.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Majority Leader.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Thank you, Gentleman from ANAKALUSUGAN. We thank you for ceasing your wonderful interpellation because I think my telephone is so busy now because GMA has been calling so that you will stop already. (*Laughter*)

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. NIETO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Gentleman from BAYAN MUNA Party-List, Hon. Carlos Isagani T. Zarate, for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The Gentleman from BAYAN MUNA Party-List is hereby recognized. Please proceed.

REP. ZARATE. Maraming salamat, G. Ispiker. Magandang gabi po sa ating lahat. Puwede ho bang mag-propound tayo ng ilang mga clarificatory questions sa ating mga kagalang-galang na Sponsors, Mr. Speaker?

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, Mr. Speaker. Maayong gab-i, Kaloi.

REP. ZARATE. Maayong gab-i, Deputy Speaker Sharon. Maraming salamat.

Una, siyempre gusto nating magkaroon talaga ng isang panukalang batas na makakatulong sa ating mga kababayan para makabangon sila sa nangyaring krisis ngayon, itong pandemya ng COVID-19, at kailangan na ang stimulus na ito, ang economic stimulus na ito ay talagang makarating sa ating mga kababayan. Iyon ang ating gustong mangyari dahil milyon-milyon sa ating mga kababayan ang talagang tinamaan ngayon, lalong-lalo na ang mga mahihirap.

Having said that, noong panahon ng sponsorship, sinabi ng ating kagalang-galang na Deputy Speaker Sharon Garin and in fact, she borrowed the words of Carl von Clausewitz, sinabi niya, “Everything in war

is very simple, but the simplest thing is difficult.” I certainly agree na ang dami talagang mga simpleng bagay na nakakaligtaan natin. Pero dito, gusto nating matiyak na pinapahirapan natin ang ating sarili sa mga simpleng bagay dahil sinabi na rin ni Carl von Clausewitz, and I will also borrow his words, “War is not an independent phenomenon, but the continuation of politics by different means.”

So, ito bang mga pinag-uusapan natin ay baka ito ay mga bagay-bagay na nagtutuloy-tuloy lang na may pinagmulan sa nakaraan. So, ano ba ang purpose ng ating economic stimulus na itinutulak ngayon? Siguro iyon ang unang tanong ko. Sa tingin ng ating mga Sponsors, G. Ispiker, saan ba nagmumula itong krisis ngayon na gusto nating matugunan nitong PESA Bill na ating tinatalakay, G. Ispiker, Mr. Speaker?

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, the Bill actually addresses—we have assessed what is the effect of COVID as well as the ECQ. Ang main problem po na nangyari, because of COVID is that nalulugi iyong mga negosyo and the effect of this is, if businesses will close or scale down, marami pong mga empleyado will be affected. So, we are trying to protect 30 million workers and by trying to protect them, we also try to protect the businesses because this is a more sustainable measure rather than just give amelioration to each and every employee, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker. So, ang ibig sabihin ang krisis na ito ay itinulak nitong pandemya ng COVID-19 na nagdulot nga ng pagkawala ng trabaho ng marami nating mga manggagawa and dislocation noong ating mga magsasaka, for example, at iyong mga kababayan natin, halimbawa, na nasa informal sector naman. So, iyon ba o tama po ba ang pagkakuha ko na ang krisis na ito, sa tingin ng mga Sponsors, kailangang matugunan dahil dala ito ng pandemya ng COVID-19, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Well, again, kaya gusto kong ilinaw iyan dahil gaya ng nabanggit ko kanina, ang Kinatawang ito at ang aking mga kasamahan sa Makabayan bloc ay nag-a-agree rin dito. Ang krisis na ito, sa tingin namin, is not an independent phenomenon just like what Carl von Clausewitz said that war is not an independent phenomenon. Itong krisis na ito, hindi ito nangyari dahil lang sa pandemya ng COVID-19 dahil, G. Ispiker, Mme. Speaker, kung ganoon ho ang pagtingin natin sa nangyayaring problema ngayon, ang atin hong magiging katugunan ay, sa tingin namin, magiging kapos dahil sa katotohanan, bago pa man tumama ang pandemya ng COVID-19 sa ating bayan at nagpahirap pang lalo

sa ating mga kababayan ay nagkakaroon na ng krisis sa ating bansa. In fact, ang krisis na ito ay nagresulta sa malawakang disempleyo, marami ang nawalan na ng trabaho.

Sa katunayan, nagkakaroon na ng krisis sa buong mundo bago pa man ang pandemya ng COVID-19. Nag-uuwian na ang ating mga overseas Filipino workers. Lumala pa ang krisis lalong-lalo na sa Pilipinas na ang ating GDP in the past years, na umabot na ng eight ay pabagsak ng pabagsak siya nitong nakaraang tatlo o apat na taon dahil na rin sa mga itinutulak natin na mga patakaran at mga existing na patakaran. Halimbawa, noong mga nakaraang taon, pilit na ipinasa ng Kongresong ito at sinang-ayunan ng Ehekutibo ang pagpasa ng TRAIN na nagkaroon ng malaking epekto doon sa ating mga kababayan, lalo na mahihirap na kababayan, dahil sa sumirit iyong pagtaas, halimbawa, ng presyo ng mga krudo at iba pang oil products.

This past year, ano ang ginawa natin? Ipinagpilitan natin na ipasa ang Rice Import Liberalization Law na dahan-dahan namang pumapatay sa ating mga magsasaka. So, nag-apon-apon iyan noong mga nakaraang panahon hanggang lumala sa pagdating nitong panahon na mayroon na tayong pandemya ng COVID-19. So, iyon po ang tingin natin sa pagkakataong ito kaya doon natin dapat suriin kung ano ba ang dapat na gagawin nating economic stimulus. Dahil sa pagtingin natin ngayon, dito sa panukalang batas na ito ng PESA, while we laud the good objectives of the Sponsors, may magagandang aspeto rito na puwedeng-puwede pa siyang palakasin. Halimbawa, ang usapin ng mass testing, dahil lahat tayo we agree at ang hindi na lang yata nag-a-agree ay ang nasa Executive, na kailangan ito, na ang isang key dito ay ang massive testing talaga. We cannot say that we have flattened the curve, we cannot say that we are winning the war if there is no true massive testing na gagawin ng ating pamahalaan, lalo at sinasabing magbubukas na ang ating eskuwelahan, magbubukas na ang ating ekonomiya at marami pang iba.

Pangalawa, iyong pagbibigay ng ayuda sa ating mga manggagawa. Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, maliban sa mga probisyon na ito, ang nakikita po natin dito sa panukalang batas na ito ay isang economic stimulus that will only tide our people over in the next months to come but, in reality, it is not an economic stimulus that will eventually solve the problems that caused this crisis. So, parang babalik lang tayo sa dati, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, Mr. Speaker, I totally agree with the good interpellator. The COVID-19 actually has exacerbated what we have already, and now we know that because we do not have good Internet, we do not have a good protection of our labor force, we have low productivity, we have so many unregistered entities

and individuals as well, so that is a lesson we have and we are trying to address. True enough, this is a stopgap measure, but we need it in order for us to survive the next six months or one year, and eventually the proposed measure, actually has a provision in which we will formulate an economic plan for economic resilience.

I agree that the problems we had before have become bigger because of COVID-19, but yes, we do agree, and as my good co-Sponsor mentioned, this is not the only stimulus plan that we should have. We should have, in the future, a review or we need to review our policies, review the direction of each agency, and take care of those industries that will make us more economically resilient, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (S.). Naputol yata iyong connection niya.

REP. ZARATE. But I am still around. May I continue, Mr. Speaker?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Yes, proceed, please.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker. So, kung magkaganoon po, itong economic stimulus package na ito ay parang ina-assume natin na after three months, six months, we can already transition back into the old normal before na iniwanan natin before the lockdown? I agree sa sinabi mo na kailangan magbalangkas tayo ng mga bagong framework. Unfortunately, what I heard from the Sponsors, ang framework na gusto nating balikan after this economic stimulus program ay walang pagkakaiba doon sa framework na pinagmulan ng marami pang krisis, at hindi lang itong dala ng pandemya ng COVID-19. For example, and I hope the good Sponsor will not mind, nabanggit kanina ng the venerable Representative Salceda na isa sa magandang ipinasa noong nakaraan ay iyong mga amyenda sa Public Service Act that will eventually liberalize the public utility sector of our country, that will give foreigners control of our public utility. Alam naman natin itong napakalakas na kontrol ng mga dayuhan sa ating ekonomiya ay nagbunsod rin nitong krisis na ito, and you are saying that we are going back to that regime.

Second, I cannot understand, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, na nasa gitna tayo ng pandemya, ng COVID-19, ng isang krisis, at gusto nating mangalap ng pondo. In fact, almost \$5 billion na ang inutang ng pamahalaan para lang dito sa COVID-19 problem na ito but here, we are repackaging old policies that will even exacerbate

our crisis, and I am referring sa pagtutulak ngayon sa CREATE. So, first, ang tawag dito TRABAHO Bill, tapos tinawag na CITIRA, ngayon CREATE. Under CREATE, iyong dating CITIRA na ibababa ang corporate income tax, two percent every year, ngayon ay drastic, from 30 gagawin nang 20 kaagad. Inamin na rin ng Department of Finance na in doing so, P259 billion ang mawawala sa kaban ng bayan at ang P259 billion na iyan ibibigay natin sa mga mayayaman nasa malalaking mga korporasyon at sila ang makikinabang sa krisis na ito. Samantalang ang ating milyon-milyon na mga kababayan ay hanggang ngayon, nagdedebate pa tayo kung i-extend ba natin ang Social Amelioration Program. Mayroon pa bang second tranche? Kung may second tranche, ang bibigyan ba ay lahat o iyong nasa ECQ lang? Bibigyan ba natin sila at ang nasa GCQ ay hindi na natin bibigyan? So, how can we reconcile this disconnect, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, na gusto nating ibalik ang ating ekonomiya but nagtatapon tayo. Iyong pondo na dapat nating kinakailangan, andiyan na sa ating mga kamay, ay gusto nating itapon pa, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, the amelioration is to address the needs in the Bayanihan Act. We do agree that we need to reform so many things in the policies or in the implementation of the projects of the Executive, but we also need to face the fact that should we not intervene right now, right after or immediately after ECQ. Many of the industries will die and consequently, many of the employees will lose their jobs and the only resort would be to give amelioration for an extended time, which also the government cannot afford. So, this buys us time and hopefully it will also wake us up as public servants as to which direction we should take this economy, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker. Iyon po talaga ang tingin kong mensahe nitong dala ng pandemya ng COVID-19. The old normal ay hindi na natin puwedeng balikan, dapat iyon. Dapat magkaroon na talaga ng bagong framework, or a better normal if I may say so, for our country. Incidentally, Mme. Sponsor, my next question is, nabanggit na ito kanina, kung gaano kalaki ang pondong ito. For the first year, I think you mentioned it is P583 billion. All in all, for three years ay aabot ito sa P1.3 trillion. Gusto ko lang linawin uli dahil noong binasa natin ang panukalang batas ay hindi malinaw ito. Saan ba talaga kukunin ang pondong ito na P1.3 trillion or itong P583 billion na ito? In yesterday's interpellation by Congressman Lagman, he mentioned that there is no certification yet from the National Treasurer of the availability of these funds, so, saan natin kukunin ito? Sa utang ba uli? Ano ang tingin ng economic managers dito, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, the issue at hand is already in—we have been working on it since the interpellation of Congressman Lagman.

As to the source, based on the Bill, on the proposal, we have a list of options which the Executive can tap, the programs and projects that are not infra but could be unnecessary or the least priority for now. Also, we have listed options such as loans, bonds, even converting some projects into PPPs, Mr. Speaker. So, we have listed these in the Bill, Mr. Speaker. As to availability, yes, we have limited foresight on this for now because of the uncertainty as to how long the amelioration will last, as well as what will be the collections for the government revenue, Mr. Speaker, but, yes, we have covered it by listing down the options and authorizing the DOF and the economic managers in certain options that they can take in order for us to finance the proposal, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker. Ang next ko pong katanungan, ang ating bansa, ang Pilipinas, ay isa pa ring, largely, an agricultural country. I hope you will not dispute that.

REP. GARIN (S.). No, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. So, kaya gusto kong i-hammer iyong point na dito sa ating economic stimulus package, mukhang napakalaki na pondo na binibigay natin sa ibang sektor, pero doon sa ating sektor ng agrikultura—na una dapat dahil sila ang sasalba, dahil sila ang magiging salalayan o pundasyon ng pagbangon ng ating ekonomiya—parang hindi ganoon ang pagbigay natin ng importansya. In fact, kung mayroon man tayo na inilalaan na pondo, mga pautang pa ito. Alam naman nating nahihirapan na ang ating mga magsasaka, ang ating mga farmworkers pero ang binibigay nating atensyon sa kanila to help them and to stimulate our economy, is even in the form of loans. So, again, why this disconnect, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, the Department of Agriculture, as well as the Committee on Agriculture, has listed down the programs. Should the good interpellator wish, we can send him the list of the programs that they have suggested, and should the good interpellator wish to increase the budget, then we would seriously consider that, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, because that will lead me to my next point. There is no question na kailangan ma-stimulate ang ating economy at kailangan tulungan natin ang ating mga kababayan. Now, dito sa pag-stimulate ng ating economy, gusto natin iyong pinaka the least of our kababayan ang makikinabang pero ang nakikita ko rito,

Mme. Sponsor, and I hope you will clarify this for the record and on the floor—halimbawa, doon sa usapin ng pagtulong doon sa mga enterprises, package to support large enterprises, sa Chapter 1, Section 3(a), even the definition of business entity, sinabi ninyo rito na, these entities can avail of this economic package. Nabanggit dito, halimbawa, a business entity may also include a branch of a foreign corporation. Doon naman sa usapin ng critically impacted businesses, these include air transport industry, tourism industry, export-import industry. Doon naman sa tinatawag na nonessential businesses, andiyan pa rin iyong tourism industry, transportation, hotel resource, et cetera. So, ang gusto lang nating masiguro ay dito sa ating sinasabing economic stimulus package, ang makikinabang nito ay ang talagang mga nangangailangan at hindi ito economic stimulus package that will, in fact, sasalba doon sa malalaking mga negosyo na ngayon nga ay nakikinabang din naman sila dahil nga sa nangyayaring krisis na ito, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, the Bill is for the protection of workers basically and in the interventions, priority is given to the MSMEs. In almost all the sections we provided, there is preference, whether it is for loans or for agencies' specific interventions, for the MSMEs and even the informal sector is prioritized. However, Mr. Speaker, 40 percent of the employment of the country is also generated from large companies. We cannot discount that. They have less priority, but they cannot be neglected either, Mr. Speaker. But rest assured that the intention of the authors of this proposal is to protect the workers. Basically, the first line of defense that we have is to protect the MSMEs—the micro, small and...

REP. ZARATE. Medium.

REP. GARIN (S.). ... the medium enterprises, as well as the informal sector, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Maraming salamat, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker na on the record ay nabanggit natin iyan dahil otherwise, ang mga nakalagay na pondo rito na gusto nating makarating sa ating mga MSMEs ay baka makuha lang ng mga malalaking mga korporasyon. Napakarami pa naman nito. There are these interest-free loans worth P50 billion, doon sa Chapter IV, Section 17. Sa loans, iyong guarantee corporation, mayroon tayong nilagay diyan, that is P60 billion, and several others. So, gusto nating matiyak na ito nga talaga ay makakatulong doon sa nagbibigay ng 60 percent employment sa ating bansa at napakalaki ng ambag noon sa ating ekonomiya.

Now, on to my other point. Mme. Sponsor, kasama sa economic stimulus package na ito ay iyong

pagbibigay ng wage subsidies at iyong pagtuloy-tuloy noong TUPAD. We call this “enhanced TUPAD.” Well, sa tingin ko naman maganda pero ang aking tanong, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, hindi ba na-consider ng mga Sponsors na, halimbawa, kung itinuloy natin iyong concept ng Social Amelioration Program na mabibigyan iyong 18—kasi kung ang ating titingnan lang dito ay mabigyan ng wage subsidies iyong mga manggagawa, that will probably cover 3.7 million workers at doon naman sa TUPAD, it will cover iyong mga nasa informal sector or an additional 1.5 million. So, mga halos limang milyon lang ang makikinabang. Kung talagang gusto natin na economic stimulus that will stimulate our economy, bakit hindi pagtuunan ng pansin iyong 18 million na dati nang na-identify natin sa Bayanihan to Heal As One Act, na sila ang makinabang, na sila rin ang makikinabang dito sa economic stimulus na ito, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, the budget set here, we will give it to the recipients as long as they work for it, Mr. Speaker. This is not an amelioration package. There has to be some investment on the part of the recipient so that it is sustainable. We have to consider that the amelioration that we are doing now cannot continue as is. This is not sustainable for the government nor is it good for our culture, Mr. Speaker. We do have wage subsidies at P110 billion, and the DOLE’s Cash for Work Program—you also have to work for it—at P30 billion, Mr. Speaker, in case there are displaced workers as well, and also for the OFWs and freelancers and all that, Mr. Speaker. We are trying to cover it as much as we could with the very limited budget that we have.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker. Again, noong tiningnan nga natin iyong panukala ninyo kung paano itong mapopondohan at ang budget, isang nakita rin natin, isang malaking component nito iyong tinatawag ninyo “EBBB” or Enhanced Build, Build, Build. Again, this framework is, if the good Sponsor will enlighten us, ito rin iyong framework before—Build, Build, Build—supposedly to spur our economy but hindi naman nangyari. Ngayon, ito pa rin iyong gusto nating itulak na framework o program para buhayin ang ating ekonomiya—Build, Build, Build—in the long term. Dinatnan na nga tayo ng pandemya ng COVID-19, at napakalaki ng leksiyon na dinala sa atin nitong pandemya ng COVID-19. So, bakit ganitong klaseng programa pa rin ang ating itinutulak, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, based on studies and how it is in reality, infrastructure projects are the biggest drivers of our economy, and for every peso that we invest in infrastructure, the return to the government

is 3.44. So, it is something that is so essential for the creation of jobs, as well as to jump-start our economy. It is “enhanced” in the sense that there is a specific list that we have set forth in the Bill for the BBB to be applied, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Yes, thank you, Mme. Sponsor. I know that iyon talaga iyong framework na gusto ninyong itulak. But then, again, ang tanong natin diyan, iyon ang traditional, panandalian, infra. Kaya kahit gusto kong idugtong ito: dito sa PESA, mayroong infra; doon uli sa CURES, infra rin iyon; so, ito na iyong dating kalakaran. Naka-focus tayo sa infrastructure but up to now, going back to my previous point, ang ating ekonomiya, ang dapat alalayan niya, ang dapat sandigan niya ay iyong ating agrikultura at ang agrikultura ay hindi lang usapin ng imprastraktura iyan.

We have to modernize our agriculture sector, but one key or a major problem of our agricultural sector now is related pa rin doon sa usapin ng lupa. We have been driving this point na we cannot expect our country to industrialize if we cannot solve our problem sa usapin ng lupa. That is why hanggang ngayon, tinutulak namin iyong free land distribution or Genuine Agrarian Reform Program because the billions and billions na ginugol natin sa past and present agrarian reform programs ay ang reyalidad, eight, if not nine, of our farmers are still not the owners of the land that they till. Wala pa rin sa kontrol ng ating mga magsasaka iyong lupang kanilang sinasaka. So, iyon ay isang malaking problema dahil kahit saan man ang ating tingnan sa ating mga kapitbahay, hindi sila naging isang industriyalisadong bansa nang hindi sila nagkaroon ng isang makatotohanang repormang agraryo na dapat ginagawa natin.

So, ang tanong ko ngayon, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, dito sa ating sinusulong na mga economic stimulus, saan ang papel dito noong usapin ng lupa, na sa tingin namin ito ang magtutulak para ang ating ekonomiya ay maging masigla? Dahil hanggang ngayon, talagang taling-tali ang malalawak na kalupaan natin sa kontrol lamang ng iilan. We cannot expect na magiging industriyalisado tayo, na iyong ating mga MSMEs ay talagang sisigla iyong kanilang industriya kung ang napakalawak na parte ng ating bayan ay nasa kontrol lamang ng iilan, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (S.). I agree with the good Interpellator, Mr. Speaker, that is why in the Stimulus Bill, we have the condonation of loans of agrarian reform beneficiaries to start with. And then, we are hoping that there would be reforms in the system which will better address this in the agency, as well as in the policies or the legislations that we already have. That is not in the measure because the Bill is a stimulus package, Mr. Speaker. So, we focused on the first step, first step

muna, and then we can reform the policies as a more long-term option for us.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, Congressman Zarate, when we assessed the industries, agriculture was not actually one of the highly impacted sectors but since the authors and the Members of Congress were concerned about the industry despite it not being critically-impacted because it was still operational during the ECQ, we included a substantial budget for agriculture because there is a need to make sure that we have food security in the country, Mr. Speaker,

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker. Incidentally, sa sinabi ninyong there is a risk factor, na kasama sa package iyong condonation. Ang ibig ba sabihin nito, just a clarificatory matter on that, iyong amortization noong mga agrarian reform beneficiaries, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. GARIN (S.). I-condone na lang iyong utang nila, Mr. Speaker, because, in fact, they are not paying, it is tied up with the bank. The proposal here is just to condone interests, payments, surcharges and penalties with the LANDBANK of the Philippines, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. So, only the interests and surcharges but not the amortization na dapat bayaran nila sa LANDBANK para iyong lupa na na-award sa kanila ay magiging kanila na? Hindi kasama iyon sa package, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. GARIN (S.). I will just check—Mr. Speaker, the condonation is under Section 24?

REP. ZARATE. Yes.

REP. GARIN (S.). The principal is included, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Okay. If that is so, kung kasama iyong amortization—dahil hindi ba, kapag na-award sa kanila, babayaran ng pamahalaan iyong may-ari pero iyong lupa, iyong na-award sa magsasaka ay i-amortize ng magsasaka iyon for 25 years. So, gusto ko lang linawin para ma-clear natin iyong expectation. Iyong amortization na ito ba ang ibig sabihin na i-condone dito sa ating economic stimulus package?

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Ibig bang sabihin nito, kapag na-approve na ang batas na ito, na-condone na iyong amortization, ay puwede nang i-award kaagad? Bibigyan lang ng titulo ang ating mga magsasaka dahil wala na siyang babayaran, na-condone na ito ng pamahalaan?

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes.

REP. ZARATE. Tama po ba ang pagkaintindi ko, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. So, kapag naipasa ang batas na ito, walang babayaran ang ating mga magsasaka doon sa lupa na ibinigay sa kanila? Ang titulo ay ibinigay sa kanila, hindi lang CLOA kung hindi titulo na para sila na ang tunay na magmamay-ari doon sa lupa na na-award sa kanila. Ganoon ba ang mangyayari, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you for that. Now, I will go to the last point sa aking interpellation. Doon sa usapin ng financing, nabanggit kanina ng ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor na they still have to thresh this out, actually, with the economic managers, kung mayroon silang iniisip na puwedeng pagkukunan noong realignment, et cetera. Of course, kahit na doon sa ibinigay nating batas, sa Bayanihan Act ay binigyan natin ng karapatan ang Presidente na mag-realign ng budget. In fact, dito sa panukalang batas ng PESA ay mayroon ding provision giving the President authority to realign items dito sa taunang budget.

Now, I will no longer go into that aspect dahil naipaliwanag na iyan. Ang tanong ko na lang sa ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor, gusto nating mapondohan itong PESA, hindi ba na-realize ng ating mga kagalang-galang na Sponsors na isang puwedeng pagkukunan ng budget diyan, halimbawa, kung realignment ang pag-uusapan, iyong napakalaking public infrastructure program natin ay puwede nating i-realign na muna, unahin dito para matustusan itong (*inaudible*) halimbawa, iyong mga subsidy sa ating mga manggagawa, iyong TUPAD at iba pa, iyong mga loans sa ating mga magsasaka, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, we, the authors of the Bill and the Committee, believe that we cannot sacrifice the other infra that we should not choose between the infra and the other interventions. They should go together, in fact, infra is phase one of the biggest multipliers and also in job generation, but at the same time we also need direct interventions for our constituents.

So, this Bill has been well-thought of, Mr. Speaker. The intention is to address the different aspects of the effects of the COVID-19 in the short term right after ECQ up to the substantial generation of jobs, should many lose jobs, Mr. Speaker. That is why the Bill is proposing different ways for the government to generate

the funds in order to implement this proposal, Mr. Speaker. But the Committee is of the belief that we should have all these interventions in order for us to jump-start the economy and arrive at a certain decent level of the GDP, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker. So, are you also considering passing new tax measures to finance this PESA or other stimulus bills, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, as the good interpellator knows, we are continuously passing bills for tax revenue generation but that is not in the Bill. What we have specified are certain options and tax measures, even, in fact, tax incentives or tax condonation is not considered in the Bill, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker. I raised that in relation to my previous statement earlier na sana maisip ng ating mga economic people, our Members of Congress, na ang isinusulong ay ang mga economic measures, na this is not the time na mas pahihirapan pa natin ang ating mahihirap na mga kababayan, na dahil nga dito sa pandemya ng COVID-19. If at all, dapat nga, at nabanggit ko kanina, hindi na muna itinutulak iyong CREATE na iyan, ano. Bakit natin bibitawan iyong more than P260 billion para lang madagdagan iyong kinikita ng malalaking korporasyon at mga mayayaman? Bakit kailangang isulong pa iyan?

Additionally, hindi ba naisip—if the good Sponsor can consider this, mayroong isang pag-aaral na inilabas ang IBON Foundation at iminumungkahi nila na baka puwedeng pag-isipan pa natin iyong mga progresibong pamamaraan ng taxation. Sinasabi ng ating Saligang Batas na we have to evolve a progressive system of taxation and, ibig sabihin niyan, you have to tax those who earn more. So isang panukala nila, halimbawa, instead of lowering the income tax noong mga malalaking korporasyon natin, bakit hindi natin i-raise from the current 30 to 35 percent? Napansin ko, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, bawat yugto na mayroong krisis ang ating bansa, ang una kaagad na ibinababa ay iyong corporate income tax, na used to be nasa range ng 38, 35 at naging 30 percent dahil sa mga sunod-sunod na mga crisis.

To illustrate, ang sabi noong isang pag-aaral, a – two percentage point increase in the annual income of the country’s richest 182,000 families can already raise P84 billion. So this is equivalent to 20 percent of their annual income based on 2015, not 2018, 2019, 2020. So, can you imagine that amount na puwede nating makolekta? Ang tawag nila rito ay “wealth tax.” Additionally, sinabi rin sa pag-aaral na ito, from applying a one percent tax, mind you, only one percent tax on wealth above P1

billion, a two percent tax on wealth above P2 billion and a three percent tax on a wealth above P3 billion to P4 billion, can already generate or yield P237 billion for our coffers. So, I hope ang mga panukalang ito or this concept will be considered by our good Sponsors in the coming days lalo at naghahanap tayo ng ipopondo dito sa mga economic stimulus na ito na gusto nating makinabang ang ating mga kababayan.

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes.

REP. ZARATE. Ang Kinatawang ito ay naniniwala, again, we can no longer go back to the time pre-March 17 na ang nagiging sandigan na natin para tumakbo ang ating ekonomiya ay utang ng utang, pagtutulak ng mga neo-liberal na mga patakaran at pagbubukas sa ating ekonomiya.

Siguro, Mme. Sponsor, Mr Speaker, bilang pagbubuo, ang leksiyon talaga na ipinakita sa atin ng pandemya ng COVID-19, itong napakatinding krisis hindi lang ng Pilipinas kundi maging sa ibang bansa, na ang sistemang umiiral ngayon is a failure. It is a total failure and this system should not continue dahil ang sinasagasaan nito, as in the past, noong magkaroon ng mga ganitong grabeng krisis at pandemya sa ating bansa, sa buong mundo, ay ang mga mahihirap.

So if it is a failure, panahon na siguro na talagang mag-isip tayo. Nabanggit kanina ni Rep. Joey Salceda na ang chief policymaking body sa ating bansa ay ang Kongreso, sabi niya. So, iyan ang hamon sa atin bilang mga Mambabatas, sa tingin ko, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor. Hindi lang tayo andito pasa lang ng pasa ng batas just to, you know, tide us down for the coming two, three, six months. Dapat tingnan na natin ngayon, ano ba ang magiging hinaharap ng ating bansa?

I do not think this pandemic will be the first and the last. Probably, more will be coming and what we are experiencing now ay talagang baka lalala pa ito. But again, kung nakikita natin iyong mensaheng dinala ng pandemya ng COVID-19 na ito, what it is trying to tell us, ang sabi nga ng iba kung lalabas ka ngayon, tingnan mo ang ating kalikasan, mukhang nakahinga ang ating kalikasan. Iyong dati na hindi na green, naging green uli ngayon, and that is a message to us. Plundering our natural resources cannot just go on. Too much greed by those in power, too much greed by big corporations cannot go on. Hindi sa habang panahon na walo sa bawat 10 magsasaka ay natatali pa rin sa lupang kanilang sinasaka at hindi sa habang panahon na ang mga manggagawa ay nabubusabos pa rin—pambubusabus pa rin ang tinatanggap nilang mga sahod or ng kanilang sitwasyon sa mga pagawaan.

So, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, salamat sa pagkakataon na makapag-interpellate. Muli, sana ang mga simpleng bagay na ito, gaya ng nasabi ng ating kagalang-galang Sponsor, ay pakinggan na natin ang

simpleng mensahe ng mga simpleng bagay na matagal nang itinuturo sa atin ng kasaysayan, kung ano ang magiging solusyon, at hindi kailangang pahirapan natin ang ating sarili. Iwanan na natin ang bulok na sistemang ito na siyang dahilan bakit nagkaroon tayo ng matinding krisis sa kasalukuyan na pinalala pa ng pandemya ng COVID-19.

Maraming salamat, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker. Magandang gabi po sa ating lahat at sa ating mga kasamahan diyen sa Plenaryo.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Maraming salamat din po sa inyo.

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, just one comment.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Please proceed.

REP. GARIN (S.). This stimulus package is just part of many packages that we have now. We have this direct intervention economic stimulus but that will not be enough, Mr. Speaker. There are also taxes or fiscal packages that we have but then also, if you only have taxes and no economic stimulus, then you do not have anybody to tax. Also, we have monetary packages through the banks, but 70 percent of the Filipinos are unbanked. So, all three packages, Mr. Speaker, have to work together, so, that is why, to address the concerns of Congressman Zarate, we are trying to formulate a good package in order for us to survive the next year or two years, and I agree that we have to review our policies because we realize now, we have learned that, maybe, prior to COVID-19 or during COVID-19, but we have to review many of our policies.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Thank you, Mme. Sponsor.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you.

REP. NIETO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Lady from Party-List BH, Hon. Bernadette “BH” Herrera-Dy, for her manifestation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The Lady from BH Party-List is hereby recognized.

REP. HERRERA-DY. Maraming salamat, Mr. Speaker, at magandang gabi po sa inyong lahat, and of course, to our authors, Cong. Sharon S. Garin, Cong. Joey Sarte Salceda and Cong. Stella Luz A. Quimbo, thank you po for accepting all my calls at sa mga kakulitan ko.

Anyway, briefly lang po, sa manifestation on my proposed amendments. Number one, alam naman natin, katulad noong nabanggit kanina, 62 percent are employed by MSMEs at mula pa noon, sa Bayanihan Act pa lang, ito na iyong isa nating isinusulong na proteksyon para sa ating mga MSMEs na talagang isa sa mga tumutulong sa ating ekonomiya. Kaya isa po sa nakikita nating magandang tulong sa kanila ay dapat i-expand natin iyong definition noong MSMEs natin po ngayon dahil marami po ang hindi makaka-avail ng tulong at makikinabang doon sa economic stimulus package kung hindi po natin papalitan iyong definition ng MSMEs in terms of its categorization. And I proposed already to Congresswoman Quimbo the categorization wherein we want to adjust this micro, to state that it is up to and/or P99,000, and then the small, up to P99 million, and then the medium, up to at least a billion or 1.4 para sigurado na marami po ang makapag-avail na tinamaan talaga sa ating ekonomiya, na tinamaan na mga negosyo dahil po sa COVID-19 na ito.

So, may I know if these amendments will be acceptable to our authors during the appropriate time?

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. HERRERA-DY. Thank you. Number two, katulad po noong na-bring up ko rin po sa mga authors po natin ay hindi ko po kasi napansin sa educational assistance ang technical-vocational industry. Badly hit din po ang 4,000 schools na nagbibigay ng technical-vocational training sa ating bansa at alam naman po natin sa pagbabalik ng OFWs dito, retooling ang isa sa mga kailangan nila, especially iyong mga online trainings natin. So, naniniwala po ako na dapat isama natin ang mga technical-vocational institutions as part of educational assistance na ibibigay po natin. Sana po during sa period of amendments, maisama po natin ang mga technical-vocational institutions.

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, Mr. Speaker, we have considered the proposal of Congresswoman Herrera and we are seriously considering and do the amendment when the time comes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. HERRERA-DY. Maraming-maraming salamat po. Last na lang po, alam ko ayaw ito ni Cong. Sharon Garin, pero I would just like to manifest this because I heard Cong. Joey Salceda a while ago say na baka dapat there is a stronger word. I am just really concerned with the word “encouraged”, “the banks are encouraged,” kaya nag-iisip po ako ng paraan kung paano po sila, hindi naman i-compel dahil ayaw natin sila i-compel, pero at least for them to really seriously consider and discuss all possible options para siguradong kausapin nila ang kanilang kliyente at magkaroon sila ng

magandang agreement as to how they can restructure the loans or how they could go about this.

So, babasahin ko lang po iyong proposed amendments ko, just in case lang po na magbago po ang isip ng ating mga authors. I would like to read that paragraph as follows: “Banks, other non-bank financial institutions (NBFIs), under the supervision of BSP, and lending and financing companies under the supervision of the SEC, “SHALL PROMPTLY ENDEAVOR TO EXAMINE AND IMPLEMENT ALL OPTIONS, AND COME UP WITH A VIABLE AND FEASIBLE PLAN ACCEPTABLE AND FOR THE MUTUAL BENEFIT OF BOTH PARTIES” to extend the term or agree to the restructuring, etcetera. Parang pinapalitan ko lang po iyong term na “encouraged” to the phrase “promptly endeavor to examine and implement all options” para lang talagang sabihan natin iyong mga banks natin and financial institutions will explore all means necessary to aid our consumers with their loans sa kanila po, so parang ganoon po. Alam ko napag-aralan na rin po ito ng Committee pero I am just bringing this up in case it would be considered, Mme. Sponsor.

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, Mr. Speaker, we will consult with the involved agencies as well as the stakeholders, and I would just like to say that the Bangko Sentral has been very proactive in addressing the problems of COVID-19 and we will give due respect to their opinion on the proposal of Congresswoman Herrera, Mr. Speaker.

REP. HERRERA-DY. Maraming salamat po. Mayroon lang po akong isang tanong. Posible pa po ba iyong interest—I know that we are extending the term of the loan to one year, but is there a possibility that at least a one month or two-months grace period on the interest can be extended to the companies who have existing loans in the financial institutions?

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, we will consult with the stakeholders as well as the Committee as well as the Bangko Sentral if they can consider such proposal, Mr. Speaker, and then we can do the amendment at the proper time, Mr. Speaker.

REP. HERRERA-DY. Maraming salamat po. Ang last point ko na lang po, Mr. Speaker and Mme. Sponsor, I hope that we also could include during the period of amendments iyong mga utilities natin na, okay, katulad noong nangyayari sa ating problema sa Meralco, nangyayari sa MWSS at sa iba nating bayarin na mga utilities, I hope we could also specify that in the Bill na mayroon din tayong dapat itakda na grace period dahil hindi naman kayang bayaran kaagad at sana magkaroon ng mga installment para naman po sa ating mga consumers because babalik pa lang po sila sa

pagtatrabaho at hindi kayang bayaran ito kaagad. Sana ma-specify lang po natin sa batas na pati mga utility companies natin ay kasama sa nag-e-extend ng grace period and extended payments para sa mga bayarin sa kanilang mga kumpanya.

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, if the good interpellator has any suggestion, then we can seriously consider and address it at a proper time, Mr. Speaker, during the period of amendments.

REP. HERRERA-DY. Maraming-maraming salamat po and thank you and I congratulate all the authors. Maraming salamat po sa pagtanggap sa mga kakulitan ko sa proposed amendments ko, but thank you very much and I hope we could pass this Bill as soon as possible.

REP. GARIN (S.). Thank you.

REP. HERRERA-DY. Maraming salamat and congratulations!

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Thank you, Lady from BH Party-List, and thank you also, distinguished Sponsor.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. NIETO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Gentleman from the First District of Northern Samar, Hon. Paul Ruiz Daza, for his manifestation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The Gentleman from Samar is hereby recognized.

REP. DAZA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a manifestation in support of the Bill and just a few clarifications, Mr. Speaker.

From the title alone, we can surmise that the Bill is to stimulate the economy, help the poor, help business and basically get the country going again. I would like to ask the authors because we are working very hard and very fast, as there were some revisions made in the Committee Report, a certain language that was changed a little bit in Section 33 that was sent to me by Cong. Sharon Garin. I just wanted to put on the record certain changes in the wording of Section 33, paragraphs 1, 2 and 3.

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the good interpellator for his concern on the prospects of our country and he has been very focused on making sure that we pass a very sound bill, and his proposals have been seriously considered and we have been working on the amendments regarding his own comments and proposals, Mr. Speaker. But, yes, we

are considering his proposals and we will present them at the proper time, during the period of amendments, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DAZA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Also, I would like to point out to the authors and to my colleagues in the House that we all worked hard, very hard. About six or seven months ago, in passing the 2020 General Appropriations Act, embedded in this GAA and consistent with the spirit of this Bill that we are discussing tonight, we have many, many infrastructure projects nationwide especially in the provinces, in the barangays, like in Region VIII. We have barangay health centers, school buildings, evacuation centers, access roads and bridges—line items that were appropriated for this year. Most of these projects have undergone procurement and are awaiting award and implementation already. I would like to ask if the authors considered that many of these infrastructure projects that rightfully, the authors are advocating for in the BBB, the language and infra language of the Bill, are they aware that many of these projects are ready to go and just needed the releases from the DBM?

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, Mr. Speaker, we have seriously considered the impact of such a situation. True enough, the authors of the Bill, as well as the Committee, are of the belief that infrastructure has to be not only maintained, but also increased. That is why we are proposing an additional P650 billion. We are also, at the proper time, introducing the amendments to the proposed Bill in order to make sure that all the infrastructure projects that had been stipulated under the GAA will be implemented at the soonest possible, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DAZA. Yes, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Sponsor for her assurance.

In wrapping up because I know it is getting late and I want to remind the authors and my colleagues that the Executive Branch just launched the Balik Probinsya Program. In my area, I think in the latest statistics, Region VIII, Samar and Leyte, is number two in the applicants for Balik Probinsya.

I think and I agree with the authors that the best way to create or stimulate the economy through the multiplier effect is through infra-related projects. Many of those projects, as I had pointed out, have already been bid out and have gone through procurements and basically, we do not even have to think of projects anymore because they just need to be funded this year. This will be consistent with the Balik Probinsya Program which will happen, I assume, now and especially next week. I would just like to get a reaction from the authors and again I would like to thank them for their good work on this Bill.

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, other than the infrastructure that we are advocating to be maintained and increased, in fact, we have also provided in many of the interventions that other than just being MSMEs, but if the recipients are willing to participate in the Balik Probinsya Bill or Executive Order No. 114, then they will also be given preference. We wanted the Economic Stimulus Program to be inclusive, hence, we have adopted the policies and concepts under the Balik Probinsya Program, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DAZA. To clarify, Mr. Speaker, the immediate implementation of the granted projects in the 2020 GAA would be consistent with providing employment and opportunities for people who want to avail of the Balik Probinsya Program and that is something that the authors would support in terms of, maybe, certain amendments to the language of the Bill.

REP. GARIN (S.). Yes, Mr. Speaker, actually you can find “Balik Probinsya” in the Bill so many times because we are advocating such movement, Mr. Speaker. But, yes, all of these have to go hand in hand, Mr. Speaker, together with infra as well as any interventions that we will do, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DAZA. Okay, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my distinguished colleague, our Sponsor.

REP. GARIN (S.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Thank you, Gentleman from Northern Samar and La Salle Greenhills, and thank you, Mme. Sponsor.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we close the period of sponsorship and debate.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection to the motion? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The period of sponsorship and debate is hereby closed.

REP. PALMA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (S.). Thank you.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 6815

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we suspend the consideration of House Bill No. 6815.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The consideration of House Bill No. 6815 is hereby suspended.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The Chair declares a one-minute suspension of the session.

It was 8:06 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 8:09 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The session is resumed.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we proceed to the Additional Reference of Business.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Secretary General will please read the Additional Reference of Business.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

Upon direction of the Chair, the Secretary General read the following House Bills and Resolutions on First Reading, and Committee Reports which were referred to the appropriate Committees hereunder indicated.

BILLS ON FIRST READING

House Bill No. 6778, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE DOMESTIC REPATRIATION OF MIGRANT WORKERS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8042, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ‘MIGRANT WORKERS AND OVERSEAS FILIPINOS ACT OF 1995’, AS AMENDED, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representatives Gonzalez (Sandro) and Lusotan

TO THE COMMITTEE ON OVERSEAS WORKERS AFFAIRS

House Bill No. 6779, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR MANDATORY

IMMUNIZATION SERVICES FOR OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS, PENALIZING CERTAIN PROHIBITED ACTS, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representatives Gonzalez (Sandro) and Lusotan

TO THE COMMITTEE ON OVERSEAS WORKERS AFFAIRS

House Bill No. 6780, entitled:

“AN ACT RECOGNIZING SEAFARERS AS KEY WORKERS IN TIMES OF EPIDEMIC OR STATE OF PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY, PROVIDING EXEMPTION FROM MOVEMENT OR TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS TO SEAFARERS, MANDATING THE ISSUANCE OF ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representatives Gonzalez (Sandro) and Lusotan

TO THE DEFEAT COVID-19 AD HOC COMMITTEE

House Bill No. 6781, entitled:

“AN ACT CREATING A NATIONAL ANTI-ILLEGAL DRUG CAMPAIGN AND RESEARCH PROGRAM, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Tutor

TO THE COMMITTEE ON DANGEROUS DRUGS

House Bill No. 6782, entitled:

“AN ACT AMENDING CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11036, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE MENTAL HEALTH ACT”

By Representative Tutor

TO THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

House Bill No. 6783, entitled:

“AN ACT REQUIRING ALL NATIONAL, REGIONAL, AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS TO ESTABLISH, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN A DIALYSIS WARD OR UNIT IN THEIR RESPECTIVE HOSPITAL AND PROVIDING FREE DIALYSIS TREATMENT TO INDIGENT PATIENTS”

By Representative Tutor

TO THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

House Bill No. 6784, entitled:

“AN ACT TO ENHANCE THE USE OF NATIONAL

WEALTH FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT BY AMENDING CERTAIN PROVISIONS IN BOOK II OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7160, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE 'LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE OF 1991'”

By Representative Tutor
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

House Bill No. 6785, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR BENEFITS TO MILITARY DEPENDENTS, CREATING THE MILITARY DEPENDENTS WELFARE OFFICE, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Tutor
TO THE COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL DEFENSE AND SECURITY

House Bill No. 6786, entitled:

“AN ACT SUPPORTING THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF DIGITAL CAREERS IN THE PHILIPPINES”

By Representative Tutor
TO THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

House Bill No. 6787, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A NATIONAL DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION POLICY AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Tutor
TO THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

House Bill No. 6788, entitled:

“AN ACT AMENDING SECTIONS 3 AND 4 OF PRESIDENTIAL DECREE NO. 1631, SERIES OF 1979 OR THE ACT CREATING THE LUNGSOD NG KABATAAN AS AMENDED BY EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 893, SERIES OF 1983”

By Representative Tutor
TO THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

House Bill No. 6789, entitled:

“AN ACT INCREASING THE BED CAPACITY OF THE PHILIPPINE GENERAL HOSPITAL FROM ONE THOUSAND AND FIVE HUNDRED BEDS (1,500) TO TWO THOUSAND AND TWO HUNDRED BEDS (2,200) AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Tutor
TO THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

House Bill No. 6790, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDG) AND AMBISYON NATIN 2040 FUND”

By Representative Tutor
TO THE COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

House Bill No. 6791, entitled:

“AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING SUPPORT MECHANISMS AND PROTECTION FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS AND PERSONNEL IN MATTERS OF STUDENT DISCIPLINE FOR CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT”

By Representative Tutor
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 6792, entitled:

“AN ACT STANDARDIZING TOURISM SIGNS AND SYMBOLS ALL OVER THE COUNTRY, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Tutor
TO THE COMMITTEE ON TOURISM

House Bill No. 6793, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE PHILIPPINE VIROLOGY SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Salceda
TO THE DEFEAT COVID-19 AD HOC COMMITTEE

House Bill No. 6794, entitled:

“AN ACT DECLARING JULY 5 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF BAMBANG, PROVINCE OF NUEVA VIZCAYA IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS FOUNDING ANNIVERSARY TO BE KNOWN AS 'BAMBANG DAY'”

By Representative Cuaresma
TO THE COMMITTEE ON REVISION OF LAWS

House Bill No. 6795, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS UNIFIED INITIATIVES TO DISTRESSED ENTERPRISES FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY (GUIDE)”

By Representative Cua
TO THE DEFEAT COVID-19 AD HOC COMMITTEE

House Bill No. 6796, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING HAZARD PAY TO ALL FRONTLINERS IN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS AND OTHER ESSENTIAL WORKERS DURING PANDEMICS, EPIDEMICS, OUTBREAKS, NATURAL OR MAN-MADE DISASTERS AND OTHER PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES”

By Representative Aumentado
TO THE DEFEAT COVID-19 AD HOC COMMITTEE

House Bill No. 6797, entitled:

“AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION TO DEFER THE START OF THE SCHOOL YEAR IN CASE OF A DECLARATION OF A STATE OF EMERGENCY, STATE OF CALAMITY OR ANY SIMILAR OCCURRENCE, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7797, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS ‘AN ACT TO LENGTHEN THE SCHOOL CALENDAR FROM TWO HUNDRED DAYS TO NOT MORE THAN TWO HUNDRED TWENTY CLASS DAYS’ ”

By Representative Cabochan
TO THE DEFEAT COVID-19 AD HOC COMMITTEE

House Bill No. 6798, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE FRAMEWORK FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION OF VIROLOGY LABORATORIES IN THE PHILIPPINES, CREATING FOR THE PURPOSE THE VIROLOGY SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE OF THE PHILIPPINES (VIP), APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Deloso-Montalla
TO THE DEFEAT COVID-19 AD HOC COMMITTEE

House Bill No. 6799, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING PROTECTED BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN LANES AND OTHER RELATED INFRASTRUCTURES IN METRO MANILA, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Reyes
TO THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

House Bill No. 6800, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE UNIVERSITY

OF EASTERN PHILIPPINES SATELLITE CAMPUSES IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF ALLEN, SAN ISIDRO, AND LAVEZARES IN NORTHERN SAMAR, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Daza
TO THE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

RESOLUTIONS

House Resolution No. 897, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY AND INVESTIGATION, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE SPIKE OF ELECTRICITY RATES AND THE ADDITIONAL CHARGES OF MANILA ELECTRIC COMPANY (MERALCO) DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ENHANCED COMMUNITY QUARANTINE”

By Representative Crisologo
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 898, entitled:

“RESOLUTION STRONGLY URGING THE INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCE ON EMERGING INFECTIOUS DISEASES (IATF) TO MODIFY ITS RESTRICTIONS ON THE CONDUCT OF RELIGIOUS GATHERINGS UNDER THE MODIFIED ENHANCED COMMUNITY QUARANTINE (MECQ) AND GENERAL COMMUNITY QUARANTINE (GCQ)”

By Representative Agabas
TO THE DEFEAT COVID-19 AD HOC COMMITTEE

House Resolution No. 899, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION URGING THE INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCE ON EMERGING INFECTIOUS DISEASES (IATF-EID) TO ALLOW PEOPLE FROM THE SAME HOUSEHOLD TO BACKRIDE ON MOTORCYCLES IN AREAS UNDER GENERAL COMMUNITY QUARANTINE (GCQ)”

By Representative Ty (Diego)
TO THE DEFEAT COVID-19 AD HOC COMMITTEE

House Resolution No. 900, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO CONSIDER AND PRIORITIZE THE ACCREDITATION OF REGION 02 TRAUMA AND MEDICAL

CENTER IN THE PROVINCE OF NUEVA VIZCAYA AS A LICENSED TESTING CENTER FOR CORONA VIRUS DISEASE AND BE AUTHORIZED TO ADMINISTER COVID 19 TESTING”

By Representative Cuaresma
TO THE DEFEAT COVID-19 AD HOC COMMITTEE

House Resolution No. 901, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY TO INSTITUTE MEASURES THAT WILL MAKE DIGITAL EDUCATION AVAILABLE AND ACCESSIBLE TO ALL STUDENTS AMID THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19) PANDEMIC IN THE PHILIPPINES”

By Representative Castelo
TO THE DEFEAT COVID-19 AD HOC COMMITTEE

House Resolution No. 902, entitled:

“RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE POSSIBLE DEFERMENT OF THE OPENING OF SCHOOL YEAR 2020-2021 IN ALL PUBLIC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS OFFERING BASIC EDUCATION IN THE COUNTRY, WITH THE END IN VIEW OF REPEALING SECTION 3 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7797 DUE TO THE IMPACT OF THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 PANDEMIC IN THE PHILIPPINES”

By Representative Cabochan
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Report of the Committee on Health and the Committee on Appropriations (Committee Report No. 311), re H.B. No. 6803, entitled:

“AN ACT MANDATING THE PROVISION OF COMPREHENSIVE RENAL REPLACEMENT THERAPY (RRT) TO PATIENTS WITH END STAGE RENAL DISEASE IN NATIONAL, REGIONAL, AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS, INCREASING FOR THE PURPOSE THE PHILHEALTH

PACKAGE RATE FOR MEMBERS AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bills Numbered 163, 169, 197, 218, 251, 391, 436, 532, 862, 1190, 1339, 1392, 1563, 2120, 2200, 2682, 3818 and 3972

Sponsors: Representatives Tan (Angelina), Yap (Eric), Belmonte and Suansing (Estrellita)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report of the Committee on Higher and Technical Education and the Committee on Appropriations (Committee Report No. 315), re H.B. No. 6824, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (TESDA)-ADMINISTERED POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF ROSALES, PROVINCE OF PANGASINAN, TO BE KNOWN AS THE EASTERN PANGASINAN POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 6110

Sponsors: Representatives Go (Mark), Yap (Eric) and Estrella

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

Upon direction of the Chair, the Secretary General read the following Committee Reports which were referred to the appropriate Committees hereunder indicated.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Report of the Committee on Higher and Technical Education and the Committee on Appropriations (Committee Report No. 316), re H.B. No. 6827, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (TESDA) TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT CENTER IN THE CITY OF TANAUAN, PROVINCE OF BATANGAS, TO BE KNOWN AS THE TANAUAN CITY TESDA TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT CENTER, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 776

Sponsors: Representatives Go (Mark), Yap (Eric) and Collantes

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report of the Committee on Legislative Franchises (Committee Report No. 317), re H.B. No. 6834, entitled:

“AN ACT GRANTING KAISSAR BROADCASTING NETWORK, INC. (KBNI) A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, OPERATE, AND MAINTAIN RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS THROUGHOUT THE PHILIPPINES”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 6124

Sponsors: Representatives Alvarez (Franz) and Enverga

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report of the Committee on Legislative Franchises (Committee Report No. 318), re H.B. No. 6835, entitled:

“AN ACT RENEWING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO METRO MANILA TURF CLUB, INC. UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7978, ENTITLED ‘AN ACT GRANTING THE METRO MANILA TURF CLUB, INC. A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN A RACE TRACK FOR HORSE RACING IN THE CITY OF KALOOKAN’, AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8298”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bills Numbered 6407 and 6408

Sponsors: Representatives Alvarez (Franz), Macapagal Arroyo, Romualdo and Collantes

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report of the Committee on Legislative Franchises (Committee Report No. 319), re H.B. No. 6836, entitled:

“AN ACT EXTENDING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO THE DAVAO LIGHT AND POWER COMPANY, INC., UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8960, ENTITLED ‘AN ACT FURTHER EXTENDING THE TERM OF THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO DAVAO LIGHT AND POWER COMPANY, INC. TO CONSTRUCT, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN AN ELECTRIC LIGHT, HEAT AND POWER SYSTEM IN DAVAO CITY AND THE MUNICIPALITIES OF CARMEN, PANABO, DUJALI, AND SANTO TOMAS, PROVINCE OF DAVAO DEL NORTE, FOR A PERIOD OF TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES’ ”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 6769

Sponsors: Representatives Alvarez (Franz), Duterte, Ungab, Garcia (Vincent) and Gonzalez (Sandro)

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The Majority Leader is recognized.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 6817 ON SECOND READING

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we resume the consideration of House Bill No. 6817 under Committee Report No. 314, and that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Secretary General is hereby directed to read only the title of the measure.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 6817, entitled: AN ACT PROHIBITING THE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PERSONS WHO ARE DECLARED CONFIRMED, SUSPECT, PROBABLE, AND RECOVERED CASES OF COVID-19, REPATRIATED FILIPINOS, HEALTHCARE WORKERS, RESPONDERS, AND SERVICE WORKERS AND PROVIDING PENALTIES FOR VIOLATION THEREOF.

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary status of this Bill is that we are in the period of sponsorship and debate and with that, I move that we recognize the honorable Chairman, one of the Chairmen of the Defeat COVID-19 Ad Hoc Committee, Hon. Narciso R. Bravo Jr.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection to the motion? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Chairman, in the person of Representative Bravo, is hereby recognized.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF REP. BRAVO

REP. BRAVO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, magandang gabi po.

COVID-19 is a dreaded disease that has severely strained the world's health system which drastically affected the economy and changed our way of life. More significantly, it has eroded our capacity as human beings to accord dignity and act with compassion towards one another. This pandemic has provoked a series of discriminatory acts across continents with different groups as targets.

In the Philippines, our frontliners, returning overseas Filipino workers, and the people who have had a brush with the deadly disease are not spared from these discriminatory actions in the past, whether verbal, physical or psychological. Our health workers are putting their lives and those of their families at stake and this is how they are being repaid. The media have reported that an increasing number of health workers are being subjected to discrimination, harassment and violence mainly due to unfounded COVID-19 fears instead of being accorded the hero's treatment they deserve.

A recent article on the discrimination of medical personnel in the Philippines narrated that a resident in Quezon shot an ambulance driver for parking his vehicle in a residential area after transporting a medical worker. The perpetrator accused the ambulance driver of carrying COVID-19 patients and endangering the lives of the people in the community. In another incident, a nurse who contracted COVID-19 was afraid of going back to his residence after his neighbors have petitioned against his return. The Philippine National Police has recorded 123 incidents of discriminatory acts or attacks for the period covering March 17 to May 22, 2020. In one incident, the victim, a barangay health worker, was slapped and almost stoned by the suspect while performing her duties. In another incident, a group of men threw chemical bleach at a hospital aide while he was on his way home, causing injury to his eyes. Mr. Speaker, even though several LGUs in the country have issued ordinances prohibiting COVID-19-related discrimination, enacting a law that could penalize the violator would greatly defer bigoted people from committing such reprehensible acts.

As Co-Chairperson of the Peace and Order Cluster on the Defeat COVID-19 Committee, it is my honor and privilege to sponsor the committee report on House Bill No. 6817, in substitution to House Bill No. 6676 or the COVID-19-Related Anti-Discriminatory Act. This particular Bill was principally authored by Deputy Minority Leader Christopher Y. Belmonte.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill seeks to grant full and inviolable protection to those who have already suffered and recovered from the COVID-19, as well as those who carry the brunt of providing medical care, logistical and service support in our efforts against this pandemic. Mr. Speaker, this measure

would give our COVID-19 heroes and survivors the much-needed protection and would help relieve them of the unnecessary mental anguish and emotional burden brought about by the prejudices of some of our countrymen. As it is, the COVID-19 has already caused so much disruption, grief and uncertainties to everyone, but it has burdened our health personnel, barangay workers and other frontliners even way past their limits. Let us not subject them to more.

Mr. Speaker, my esteemed colleagues, in the spirit of our battle cry "to heal as one," this Representation is urging for the immediate approval of House Bill No. 6817.

Maraming salamat po, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Thank you, Mr. Chairman, distinguished Sponsor.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, there being no Member who wishes to interpellate the good Sponsor on or speak against the measure, I move that we terminate the period of sponsorship and debate.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection to the motion? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we open the period of amendments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection to the motion? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, there being no Member who wishes to introduce any Committee or individual amendments, I move that we close the period of amendments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection to the motion? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is hereby approved.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we approve on Second Reading House Bill No. 6817, under Committee Report No. 314.

VIVA VOCE VOTING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). There is a motion for the approval of House Bill No. 6817 on Second Reading.

As many as are in favor, please say *aye*.

SEVERAL MEMBERS. *Aye*.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). As many as are against, please say *nay*. (*Silence*)

APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 6817
ON SECOND READING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The *ayes* have it; the motion is approved.

House Bill No. 6817 is hereby approved on Second Reading.

Congratulations to the author.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 6595
ON SECOND READING

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we consider House Bill No. 6595, contained in Committee Report No. 295, as reported out by the Committee on Higher and Technical Education.

May I ask that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Secretary General is directed to read only the title of the measure.*

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 6595, entitled: AN ACT MANDATING THE INCLUSION OF A FOREIGN LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH, AS AN ELECTIVE COURSE IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The Majority Leader is recognized.

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we open the period of sponsorship and debate.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the period of sponsorship is opened.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Chairman of the Committee on Higher and Technical Education, Hon. Mark Go, to sponsor the measure.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection to the motion? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The distinguished Chairman, Cong. Mark O. Go, is hereby recognized. Please proceed.

REP. GO (M.). Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to move that the Explanatory Note of House Bill No. 6595 be adopted as the sponsorship speech on the measure.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. We join the author, Mr. Speaker, in his motion that the Explanatory Note be made as the sponsorship speech on House Bill No. 6595.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection to the motion? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is hereby approved.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, there being no Member who wishes to interpellate the good Sponsor on or speak against the measure, I move that we close the period of sponsorship and debate.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we open the period of amendments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection to the motion? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is hereby approved.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, there being no Member who wishes to introduce any Committee or individual amendments, I move that we close the period of amendments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection to the motion? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we suspend the session.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The session is suspended.

It was 8:27 p.m.

* Copies of the bill were distributed to the members earlier. Section 53, Rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives provides that “[a] bill or joint resolution on Second Reading shall be read in full unless copies thereof have been distributed to the Members.”

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 8:28 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The session is resumed.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we approve on Second Reading House Bill No. 6595, under Committee Report No. 295.

VIVA VOCE VOTING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). There is a motion for the approval of House Bill No. 6595 on Second Reading.

As many as are in favor, please say *aye*.

SEVERAL MEMBERS. *Aye*.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). As many as are against, please say *nay*.

FEW MEMBERS. *Nay*.

APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 6955
ON SECOND READING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The *ayes* have it; the motion is approved.

House Bill No. 6595 is hereby approved on Second Reading.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 6756
ON SECOND READING

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we consider House Bill No. 6756, contained in Committee Report No. 309, as reported out by the Committee on Higher and Technical Education, and Appropriations.

May I ask that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Secretary General is directed to read only the title of the measure.*

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 6756, entitled: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A MEDICAL SCHOLARSHIP AND RETURN SERVICE

PROGRAM FOR DESERVING STUDENTS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The Majority Leader is recognized.

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we open the period of sponsorship and debate.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the period of sponsorship is opened.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Chairman of the Committee on Higher and Technical Education, Hon. Mark O. Go, for his sponsorship speech.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The distinguished Chairman, Cong. Mark Go, is hereby recognized.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF REP. GO (M.).

REP. GO (M.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the honor to sponsor House Bill No. 6756 under Committee Report No. 309, which is a consolidation of 19 measures in all. This is authored by Committee on Health Chairperson, Rep. Angelina “Helen” D.L. Tan, MD, with more than 60 House Members as authors and coauthors.

Mr. Speaker, now that we are in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is not just obvious but is in fact very, very clear that we need to pass this Medical Scholarship and Return Service Bill so as to bolster the population of our doctors in the country. With the ongoing pandemic and the battle against this terrible affliction, Mr. Speaker, this Bill is definitely one of the most important measures that we can tackle and hopefully enact into law. That is one of the measures which directly responds to the needs not only of the health sector, but of all the Filipino people in these very trying times.

Mr. Speaker, even before this pandemic occurred, we all know about our grim health statistics as far as the number of doctors are concerned. The World Health Organization prescribes a 1:1,000 ratio for doctors and the population. However, in the Philippines, the ratio is one doctor for every 33,000 persons. In comparison, Mr. Speaker, Cuba has one doctor for every 1,175 patients and the majority of these doctors are primary care physicians.

* Copies of the bill were distributed to the members earlier. Section 53, Rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives provides that “[a] bill or joint resolution on Second Reading shall be read in full unless copies thereof have been distributed to the Members.”

The Philippine Medical Association notes that there are 130,000 licensed physicians in the Philippines. However, only 70,000 of them are active in the profession and sadly, a good number of our doctors are working abroad, or have turned to nursing and have work as nurses abroad. As of May 2020, Mr. Speaker, the Philippines has an estimated population of 110 million. Imagine, Mr. Speaker, only about 70,000 active physicians are serving approximately 110 million Filipinos. There are even municipalities and islands in the country without doctors or even a single doctor for the thousands of residents. This means, Mr. Speaker, that many residents in far-flung municipalities and islands in our country have died without even seeing or consulting a doctor. This depressing situation, Mr. Speaker, beckons us to act now and as fast as possible.

Indeed, this proposed law is long overdue. The measure was already approved by the House in the last Congress but remained pending in the Senate. Article XIII, Section 12 of the 1987 Constitution provides that the State shall establish and maintain an effective food and drug regulatory system and undertake appropriate health, manpower development and research, responsive to the country's health needs and problems. This measure, Mr. Speaker, is a response to this constitutional mandate. A pronouncement of the Department of Health, a few years ago, Mr. Speaker, stated that the Philippines has a shortage of about 15,000 doctors to be able to adequately meet the health needs of the country each year. According to the DOH, the country is producing only 2,600 which results in a very low doctor to patient ratio. The country is facing an alarming shortage of medical doctors and other medical professionals.

Also, the Philippines has a problem with doctors refusing to go to the rural areas. As an example, the Doctors to the Barrios Program of the DOH has around 900 slots, but only around 212 doctors are serving in the program as they are being deployed anywhere from Batanes to Tawi-Tawi. Several years ago, a newspaper report stated that some 100 private hospitals across the archipelago were forced to close shop for lack of health professionals, particularly physicians. This is the sad situation, especially in the rural areas in the Visayas and Mindanao. Even prestigious medical institutions have difficulty attracting fresh graduates to fill up slots for doctors.

This Bill, Mr. Speaker, seeks to address this problem by providing access to medical education to students aspiring to become doctors, especially those who are financially disadvantaged, and to instill in them the importance of medical service to the country, especially in the underserved areas.

Mr. Speaker, the measure establishes a Medical Scholarship and Return Service Program for deserving students in state universities and colleges, or in private

higher educational institutions in regions where there are no SUCs offering a medical course. The scholarship program shall accept at least one scholar from each municipality of the country. If there is no qualified applicant from a certain municipality, another qualified applicant shall be considered irrespective of the domicile. The applicant must pass the admission and other qualifying requirements of the SUCs and the Philippine higher educational institutions. Mr. Speaker, the total number of scholars per province or municipality shall depend on the number of government physicians needed for each province or municipality, as determined by the Department of Health.

While there is an existing tuition subsidy for medical students enrolled in SUCs offering a course in medicine amounting to about P167 million under the 2020 General Appropriations Act, this is not permanent in every budget year. The continuance of the subsidy is being threatened, thereby putting the education and medical student-beneficiaries who are already in their second, third or last year of education in peril. With the proposed Medical Scholarship Law, we can be assured of continuous funding for the education of these students plus the benefits of a return service. Moreover, the existing medical subsidy for medical students covers only tuition. What about the other necessary expenses like the costly medical books, supplies, uniforms and transportation, among others?

This Bill provides a medical student financial assistance that shall include free tuition and other school fees, allowance for prescribed books, supplies and equipment, clothing or uniform allowance, allowance for dormitory or boarding house accommodations, transportation allowance, internship fees including financial assistance during post-graduate internship, medical board review, annual medical insurance and other education-related miscellaneous subsistence or living allowance.

Mr. Speaker, the recipients of this program shall be required to render service for a limited time in a government public health office or government hospital in the scholar's hometown or in the absence of a need thereat, in any municipality within the scholar's home province or in any underserved municipality closest to the scholar's hometown in any province. Hence, the government and the Filipino people can benefit from the taxpayers money used for their education. The doctors need not worry about zero income once they serve in towns or municipalities because they will not be working for free. Under the Bill, a physician under the program shall receive appropriate salaries and other benefits for services rendered under the mandatory integration into the public health and medical service.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that this measure will be an important part of the solution to our shortage of doctors. We need to prepare now. As I have said earlier, this

pandemic, I am afraid, might not be the last thing to happen. We must now enact this measure so as to entice more of our youth to enlist in the medical profession. They will be our future frontliners. The medical profession is a noble one, in fact one of the noblest in human history. The chance to join this profession should not be denied to anyone and definitely, not to our poor students who wish to pursue their dreams despite the cost and challenges of medical education. No doubt, this measure is as timely as it can possibly be.

For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues in this august Chamber to join me in appealing for the immediate passage of this measure to honor our frontliners. Let us honor them for their services and pay it forward by providing scholarships to the next generation of medical doctors, our future frontliners and heroes.

Again, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and my colleagues in this House. Thank you at magandang hapon o magandang gabi sa inyong lahat.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Thank you, distinguished Sponsor and Chairman.
The Majority Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 6756

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we suspend the consideration of House Bill No. 6756.
I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection to the motion? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is hereby approved.

The consideration of House Bill No. 6756 is hereby suspended.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 6654 ON SECOND READING

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we consider House Bill No. 6654, contained in Committee Report No. 302, as reported out by the Committee on Economic Affairs.

May I ask that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Secretary General is directed to read only the title of the measure.*

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 6654, entitled: AN ACT REORGANIZING AND CONVERTING THE INSURANCE COMMISSION INTO A COLLEGIAL BODY, AMENDING SECTIONS 437, 438 AND 439 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10607, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "THE INSURANCE CODE", AS AMENDED.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The Majority Leader is recognized.

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. PALMA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we open the period of sponsorship and debate.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the period of sponsorship and debate is opened.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Chairwoman of the Economic Affairs Committee, Hon. Sharon S. Garin, for her sponsorship speech.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The distinguished Sponsor is hereby recognized.

REP. GARIN (S.). Mr. Speaker, I would like to request that the Explanatory Note of the Bill shall be the sponsorship speech on the measure and also, Mr. Speaker, I would like to request that Deputy Speaker Luis Raymund "Lray" F. Villafuerte Jr. be included as one of the main or principal authors, considering that he has filed House Bill No. 6453 on the same topic, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, there being no Member who wishes to interpellate the good Sponsor or speak against the measure, I move that we terminate the period of sponsorship and debate.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we open the period of amendments.

* Copies of the bill were distributed to the members earlier. Section 53, Rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives provides that "[a] bill or joint resolution on Second Reading shall be read in full unless copies thereof have been distributed to the Members."

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, there being no Member who wishes to introduce Committee or individual amendments, I move that we close the period of amendments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we approve House Bill No. 6654 on Second Reading.

VIVA VOCE VOTING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). There is a motion for the approval of House Bill No. 6654 on Second Reading.

As many as are in favor, please say *Aye*.

SEVERAL MEMBERS. *Aye*.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). As many as are against, please say *Nay*. (*Silence*)

APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 6654 ON SECOND READING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The *ayes* have it; the motion is approved.

House Bill No. 6654 is approved on Second Reading.

Congratulations to the distinguished authors.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 6596 ON SECOND READING

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we consider House Bill No. 6596, contained in Committee Report No. 296, as reported out by the Committee on Higher and Technical Education.

May I ask that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Secretary General is directed to read only the title of the measure.*

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 6596, entitled: AN ACT RENAMING THE COMPOSTELA VALLEY STATE COLLEGE IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF COMPOSTELA, PROVINCE OF COMPOSTELA VALLEY TO THE DAVAO DE ORO STATE COLLEGE.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The Majority Leader is recognized.

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary status of this measure is that we are in the period of sponsorship and debate, and this is a local bill. I move that the Explanatory Note of the Bill be made as the sponsorship speech on the said measure.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, there being no Member who wishes to interpellate on or speak against the said measure, I move that we close the period of sponsorship and debate on House Bill No. 6596.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we open the period of amendments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, there being no Committee amendments, I move that we proceed to consider individual amendments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

Rep. Wilter Palma is recognized.

INDIVIDUAL AMENDMENTS

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, I move to propose amendments to House Bill No. 6596, under Committee Report No. 296.

* Copies of the bill were distributed to the members earlier. Section 53, Rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives provides that "[a] bill or joint resolution on Second Reading shall be read in full unless copies thereof have been distributed to the Members."

On Section 1, between the words “Province of” and “Compostela Valley,” to delete the words “Compostela Valley” and insert the words DAVAO DE ORO.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection to the proposed amendment? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the amendment is approved.

The Secretary General will take note of the amendment.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, on the title of House Bill No. 6596, between the words “PROVINCE OF” and “COMPOSTELA VALLEY,” to delete the words “COMPOSTELA VALLEY” and insert the words DAVAO DE ORO.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection to the amendment? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the amendment is hereby approved.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, there being no other individual amendments, I move that we close the period of amendments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we approve House Bill No. 6596, as amended, on Second Reading.

VIVA VOCE VOTING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). There is a motion for the approval of House Bill No. 6596, as amended, on Second Reading.

As many as are in favor, please say *Aye*.

SEVERAL MEMBERS. *Aye*.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). As many as are against, please say *Nay*. (*Silence*)

APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 6596, AS AMENDED, ON SECOND READING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The *ayes* have it; the motion is approved.

House Bill No. 6596, as amended, is approved on Second Reading.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REFERRAL OF HOUSE RESOLUTIONS ON INQUIRIES IN AID OF LEGISLATION

REP. NIETO. Mr. Speaker, in accordance with our Rules Governing Inquiries in Aid of Legislation, I move that we refer the following House Resolutions to the appropriate Committees:

1. House Resolution No. 710, to the Committee on Labor and Employment;
2. House Resolution No. 714, to the Committee on Health;
3. House Resolution No. 717, to the Committee on Justice;
4. House Resolution No. 719, to the Committees on Civil Service and Professional Regulation, and Foreign Affairs;
5. House Resolution No. 722, to the Committees on Basic Education and Culture, and Higher and Technical Education;
6. House Resolution No. 725, to the Committee on Basic Education and Culture;
7. House Resolution No. 726, to the Committee on Mindanao Affairs;
8. House Resolution No. 727, to the Committee on Mindanao Affairs;
9. House Resolution No. 728, to the Committee on Mindanao Affairs;
10. House Resolution No. 729, to the Committees on Poverty Alleviation, and Local Government;
11. House Resolution No. 762, to the Committee on Health;
12. House Resolution No. 763, to the Committee on National Defense and Security;
13. House Resolution No. 765, to the Committee on Overseas Workers Affairs;
14. House Resolution No. 767, to the Committee on Ways and Means;
15. House Resolution No. 768, to the Committee on Information and Communications Technology;
16. House Resolution No. 769, to the Committee on Public Order and Safety;
17. House Resolution No. 770; to the Committee on Transportation;
18. House Resolution No. 772, to the Committee on Transportation;
19. House Resolution No. 773, to the Committees on Public Order and Safety, and National Defense and Security;
20. House Resolution No. 774, to the Defeat COVID-19 Ad Hoc Committee;
21. House Resolution No. 777, to the Committee on Local Government;
22. House Resolution No. 778, to the Committees on National Defense and Security, and Public Order and Safety;

23. House Resolution No. 779, to the Committee on Banks and Financial Intermediaries;

24. House Resolution No. 781, to the Committee on Cooperatives Development;

25. House Resolution No. 782, to the Committee on Banks and Financial Intermediaries;

26. House Resolution No. 810, to the Defeat COVID-19 Ad Hoc Committee;

27. House Resolution No. 811, to the Defeat COVID-19 Ad Hoc Committee;

28. House Resolution No. 813, to the Committees on National Defense and Security, and Public Order and Safety;

29. House Resolution No. 814, to the Committees on National Defense and Security, and Public Order and Safety;

30. House Resolution No. 815, to the Committees on National Defense and Security, and Public Order and Safety;

31. House Resolution No. 816, to the Committees on National Defense and Security, and Public Order and Safety;

32. House Resolution No. 817, to the Committee on Health;

33. House Resolution No. 820, to the Defeat COVID-19 Ad Hoc Committee;

34. House Resolution No. 823, to the Defeat COVID-19 Ad Hoc Committee;

35. House Resolution No. 824, to the Committee on Agriculture and Food;

36. House Resolution No. 826, to the Defeat COVID-19 Ad Hoc Committee;

37. House Resolution No. 827, to the Committees on Health, and Good Government and Public Accountability;

38. House Resolution No. 832, to the Defeat COVID-19 Ad Hoc Committee;

39. House Resolution No. 833, to the Committee on Public Order and Safety;

40. House Resolution No. 834, to the Committee on Population and Family Relations;

41. House Resolution No. 835, to the Committee on National Defense and Security;

42. House Resolution No. 840, to the Defeat COVID-19 Ad Hoc Committee;

43. House Resolution No. 841, to the Defeat COVID-19 Ad Hoc Committee;

44. House Resolution No. 842, to the Defeat COVID-19 Ad Hoc Committee;

45. House Resolution No. 844, to the Defeat COVID-19 Ad Hoc Committee;

46. House Resolution No. 845, to the Committee on Public Order and Safety;

47. House Resolution No. 847, to the Committee on Health;

48. House Resolution No. 848, to the defeat COVID-19 Ad Hoc Committee;

49. House Resolution No. 850, to the Defeat COVID-19 Ad Hoc Committee;

50. House Resolution No. 852, to the Defeat COVID-19 Ad Hoc Committee;

51. House Resolution No. 860, to the Defeat COVID-19 Ad Hoc Committee;

52. House Resolution No. 863, to the Committees on Legislative Franchises, and Good Government and Public Accountability;

53. House Resolution No. 866, to the Defeat COVID-19 Ad Hoc Committee;

54. House Resolution No. 870, to the Defeat COVID-19 Ad Hoc Committee;

55. House Resolution No. 871, to the Committees on Public Order and Safety, and National Defense and Security;

56. House Resolution No. 875, to the Defeat COVID-19 Ad Hoc Committee;

57. House Resolution No. 879, to the Committee on Good Government and Public Accountability;

58. House Resolution No. 882, to the Committee on Good Government and Public Accountability; and

59. House Resolution No. 885, to the Defeat COVID-19 Ad Hoc Committee.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

CHANGE OF REFERRAL OF CERTAIN MEASURES

REP. NIETO. Mr. Speaker, I move for the change of referral of the following measures:

1. House Bill No. 6674, from the Committee on Housing and Urban Development;
2. House Bill No. 6703, from the Committee on Agriculture and Food;
3. House Bills Nos. 84379 and 4137, from the Committees on Civil Service and Professional Regulation, Higher and Technical Education and Civil Service and Professional Regulation; and
4. House Bills Nos. 510, 1099 and 3340, from the Committees on Civil Service and Professional Regulation, Higher and Technical Education and Civil Service and Professional Regulation.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. NIETO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we include additional coauthors of House Bills Nos. 6554, 6555, 6570, 6589, 6590, 6591, 6593, 6595, 6599, 6610, 6654, 6756, 6768, 6815, 6816, 6817, 4786, 6586, 6585, 6596, 6597, 6598, 6727, 6728, 6729, 6730, 6731, 6753 and House Resolutions Nos. 783, 784 and 789, as contained in the list to be submitted by the Committee on Rules.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Thank you. Mr. Speaker, let me remind the Members of the House that tomorrow,

Thursday, we have a session. I would like to request the Members of the House to join us in our session tomorrow as we will tackle several bills.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. PALMA. So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I move that we suspend the session until May 28, that will be tomorrow, Thursday, at three o'clock in the afternoon.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The session is hereby suspended until 3:00 p.m., tomorrow, Thursday, May 28.

It was 8:56 p.m.