

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION No. 875



Introduced by

BAYAN MUNA Representatives FERDINAND R. GAITE,
CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE and EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT

RESOLUTION

**URGING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES THROUGH THE DEFEAT
COVID-19 AD HOC COMMITTEE AND COMMITTEE ON OVERSEAS WORKERS
AFFAIRS TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE
PLIGHT OF HEALTH WORKERS AFFECTED BY THE DEPLOYMENT BAN IN
RELATION TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

WHEREAS, on May 14, 2020, Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque announced that deployment ban for health workers continue even as land-based and sea-based overseas Filipino workers are allowed to be deployed abroad “upon the execution of a Declaration signifying their knowledge and understanding of the risks involved”, as per the Inter Agency Task Force (IATF) Resolution No. 36 signed on May 13, 2020;

WHEREAS, the deployment of health workers was “strictly regulated” through the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) Memorandum Circular No. 07-A issued on March 20, 2020. Through POEA Governing Board Resolution No. 09 signed on April 2, 2020, the deployment of health care workers including medical doctors, nurses, medical technologists, pharmacists was “temporarily suspended until the national state of emergency is lifted and until COVID-19-related restrictions are lifted at the destination countries;”

WHEREAS, in response to the mounting calls to lift the ban, the IATF eased the ban through Resolution No. 23 approved on April 13, 2020. Medical and allied healthcare professionals with perfected and signed overseas employment contracts as of March 8, 2020, were allowed as an exception to the application of the Philippine POEA Governing Board Resolution No. 09, provided that health workers execute a declaration signifying their knowledge and understanding of the risks involved. POEA Advisory No 47 issued on April 20, 2020 clarified that those allowed to be deployed are health workers with Overseas Employment Certificates (OEC), Exemption certificates, new hire health workers through private recruitment agencies and under government-to-government hiring programs with signed contracts and issued OEC on or before March 8, 2020;

WHEREAS, the deployment ban affects thousands of health workers especially nurses. According to the Filipino Nurses United (FNU), many have started completion of travel documents prior to the ban, some have perfected travel documents prior to March 8, 2020 but lack OECs, others have perfected documents prior to March 8 but their flights were hampered by the lockdown travel restrictions;

WHEREAS, the POEA said that “it is of paramount national interest to ensure that the country

1 shall continue to have, sustain the supply, and prepare sufficient health personnel.” POEA
2 claimed that there was a shortage of about 290,000 health workers in the country, aggravated
3 by the annual migration of 13,000 health care professionals. Yet, the nurses assert that there
4 are approximately 200,000 registered nurses in the country who are jobless because the
5 government have yet to realize their need to a secure, well-compensated and safe employment;

6 **WHEREAS**, nurses pointed out that the government had neglected the health workers
7 including the nurses for quite a time. Nurses were never appreciated even way before the
8 pandemic as most have been underpaid and overworked. While health workers are called
9 “heroes” in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, many of them remain highly at risk with
10 continuing lack of personal protective equipment (PPEs), long duty hours, lack of
11 accomodation and transportation support, lack of standard protocol and guidelines making
12 them further vulnerable to infection;

13 **WHEREAS**, based on the accounts of nurses, each stranded worker would lose approximately
14 P60,000-100,000 and 1-2 years they spent in processing their application due to the deployment
15 ban. This would mean more hardships as most of them are in debt, notwithstanding being the
16 breadwinners and the only hope of their families;

17 **WHEREAS**, FNU believes that the deployment ban is not the appropriate and logical solution.
18 There is no need to prevent health care workers from working in other countries. There is a
19 source of work pool of some 200,000 unemployed nurses (DOH, 2010) for the mass hiring
20 needed for COVID 19 response. The ban on deployment order does not even provide
21 alternative measures for health care workers other than the government’s standing offer of
22 temporary work or exploitative position as “volunteers” in COVID-19 referral hospitals;

23 **WHEREAS**, health workers call for the immediate lifting of the deployment ban. Since they
24 have almost completed their application requirements and various medical and tests which have
25 expiry dates and having spent so much money, time and effort, these nurses should be allowed
26 to go. Moreover, the OECs regardless of date issuance should be honored, since its issuance
27 was affected by the lockdown, so most of them have fulfilled all requirements except the OEC;


28 **WHEREAS**, the deployment ban and the continuing dismal conditions of health workers and
29 nurses do not encourage them to stay but further increase their resolve to seek better pay abroad
30 amidst the risks of the pandemic. Instead of restricting them, health workers must be provided
31 with adequate support and protection, regular jobs, just compensation, adequate benefits and
32 humane work conditions. These will not only save the lives of those who have chosen to stay,
33 but will also encourage more to remain and serve our fellow Filipinos in the country;

34 **WHEREAS**, there is an urgent need for Congress to investigate the condition of nurses and
35 health workers affected by the travel ban. Congress must look into the issues confronting the
36 nurses and health workers and recommend measures that would help in addressing the human
37 resource concerns amidst the COVID-19 pandemic instead of restricting the health workers’
38 right to more decent jobs abroad and forcing them to stay against their will;

39 **NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the House of Representatives, through the
40 Defeat COVID-19 Ad Hoc Committee and the Committee on Overseas Workers Affairs to
41 conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the plight of health workers affected by the
42 deployment ban in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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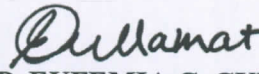
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REP. FERDINAND R. GAITE
Bayan Muna Partylist



REP. CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE
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REP. EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT
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