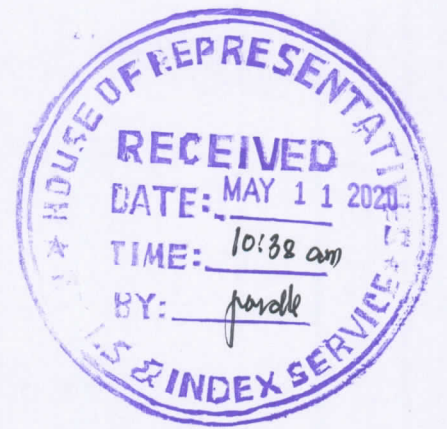


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION No. 850



Introduced by

BAYAN MUNA Representatives FERDINAND R. GAITE,
CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE and EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT,
ACT TEACHERS Party-List Representative FRANCE L. CASTRO,
GABRIELA Women's Party Representative ARLENE D. BROSAS
and KABATAAN Party-List Representative SARAH JANE I. ELAGO

RESOLUTION

URGING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, THROUGH THE COMMITTEE
ON HEALTH AND THE DEFEAT COVID-19 AD HOC COMMITTEE,
TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE HIGH
INCIDENCE OF INFECTION AND DEATHS DUE TO COVID-19 AMONG
FRONTLINE-HEALTH WORKERS, AND RECOMMEND URGENT MEASURES
TO PROTECT AND SUPPORT THE HEALTH WORKERS

WHEREAS, on May 8, 2020, Department of Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said that the numbers of health workers who tested positive climbed to 1,934 out of 10,343 total confirmed COVID-19 cases. Among the infected healthcare workers were 721 nurses, 616 physicians and 124 nursing assistants¹. The latest figure would show that 18.48% of the total COVID-19 cases are health workers. As of May 8, 34 health workers have died;

WHEREAS, the DOH said that since April 11, the number of infected healthcare workers has been slowing down. But the figure is still high, with 48 more cases than that on May 6, when the tally was at 1,886², and 315 increase since April 30, when the DOH tally was 1,619 positive health workers³;

WHEREAS, no less than the World Health Organization expressed concern over this high incidence of COVID-19 infection among health care workers. WHO-Western Pacific region COVID-19 incident manager, Dr. Abdi Mahamud, on April called "worrisome" the high incidence of healthworkers succumbing to COVID-19 infection. The 13% incidence in mid April is higher than the 2-3 percent overall regional average;

WHEREAS, while Dr. Mahamud of WHO said that the high incidence could be due to the inadequacy of personal protective equipment; improper use of the same, or the high number of cases overwhelming the health care system, DOH Undersecretary Vergeire claimed in various interviews denied that lack of PPEs caused the high infection rate among health workers. She said that health workers' infection is due to patients' non-declaration of travel history, health personnel

¹ <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/05/08/2012681/medical-frontliners-covid-19-rise-1934>

² <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2020/05/08/doh-hopes-to-keep-down-number-of-infected-healthcare-workers/>

³ <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/736307/doh-number-of-covid-positive-health-workers-now-at-1-619-with-33-deaths/story/>

1 exposure in their communities, and long duty hours;

2 **WHEREAS**, nurses and health workers from different hospitals have complained about the lack
3 of PPEs. Some nurses were only given 2 sets per 12-hour shift so that they could not even take a
4 break for more than two times. Others wash and reuse non-washable and non-reusable PPEs, still
5 others were not given any PPE sets at all if they were not assigned to wards with confirmed positive
6 cases. Most hospitals pitifully rely on donations;

7 **WHEREAS**, based on available reports, the Office of the Civil Defense in charge of distributing
8 government-procured PPE sets was able to distribute only 43,000 by the third week of April. There
9 is no clear report on the status of distribution of the purchased 1 million PPE sets worth P1.8 B.
10 Yet, the 2,000 PPE sets delivered by OCD to the Philippine General Hospital, for instance, will
11 reportedly last for only 4-5 days if there are 30 admitted COVID patients (probable and confirmed)
12 considering that about 12 sets of PPE sets per day for one patient is needed by health workers
13 from triage section to COVID ward or ICU. Some hospitals like San Lazaro Hospital and Lung
14 Center of the Philippines utilize more than 400 PPE sets each per day;

15 **WHEREAS**, most nurses work 12-hour per shift with duty days varying from 2 straight days to
16 14 straight duty days. Some are provided with food and accomodation, some accomodation only,
17 some are allowed to go home, still some are left to fend for themselves; and there is lack of
18 standards on the duration and use/reuse of PPEs;

19 **WHEREAS**, health workers report that there is no automatic mass testing for them after and
20 prior to duty, thus it cannot be ascertained if the infection came from their exposure to patients
21 or the communities. Asymptomatic health workers classified as probable cases are at times made
22 to report for duty in some hospitals thereby exposing fellow health workers and patients;

23 **WHEREAS**, health workers claimed that the lack of standards and protocols from the DOH
24 resulted to different interpretations and system on the use and distribution of PPEs, patient load,
25 duty days, among others.

26 **WHEREAS**, nurses from the Filipino Nurses United said that there is a need to investigate the
27 current practices in different hospitals and develop one standard protocol. The protection of
28 health workers must be ensured such that lack PPE sets must not be allowed to compromise the
29 health workers' safety and right to life;

30
31 **WHEREAS**, immediate mass hiring of regular health workers must be done as severe
32 understaffing of nurses in COVID-19 referral hospitals further increases their risk to infection to
33 COVID-19. High infection rate among health workers further worsens understaffing as thousands
34 of health workers are taken away from their work in providing direct patient care where they are
35 needed most;

36 **WHEREAS**, the long time government neglect has made the health workers doubly vulnerable
37 to COVID-19 infection. Even prior to the pandemic, health workers were already overworked and
38 underpaid. Inadequate salaries and benefits, unhealthy patient load, inadequate hospital budget
39 resulting to lack of equipment, medicines and supplies have severely compromised their physical,
40 financial, social and mental well-being and their capacity to fully provide care to the patients;

41 **WHEREAS**, the fight against COVID-19 necessitates that the high rate of infection and deaths
42 among the front-line health workers be immediately addressed and arrested. We need to save the
43 lives of more health workers so that they can save more people's lives. While the health workers
44 risk their lives as they continue to fulfill their oath to care for patients and save their lives, the
45 government must fulfill its primary responsibility of protecting and supporting the health workers
46 and providing for free, accessible, and comprehensive health services to the people. Much more
47 than calling them "heroes", the government must ensure and provide concrete actions and

1 programs to truly protect and support health workers;


2 **NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the House of Representatives, through the
3 Committee on Health and the Defeat COVID-19 Ad Hoc Committee, conduct an inquiry, in aid
4 of legislation, on the high incidence of infection and deaths due to COVID-19 among frontline-
5 health workers, and recommend urgent measures to protect and support the health workers.

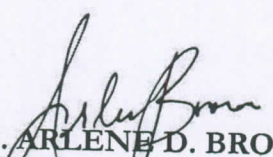
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15 **REP. FERDINAND R. GAITE**
16 *Bayan Muna Partylist*

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21 **REP. CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE**
22 *Bayan Muna Partylist*

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26 **REP. EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT**
27 *Bayan Muna Partylist*

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30 **REP. FRANCE L. CASTRO**
31 *ACT Teachers Partylist*

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34 **REP. ARLENE D. BROSAS**
35 *GABRIELA Women's Party*

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38 **REP. SARAH JANE I. ELAGO**
Kabataan Partylist