



## ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Senior Citizens (Special Committee)	Organizational meeting and adoption of the Committee's Rules of Procedure	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Francisco Datol Jr. (Party-List, Senior Citizens), held its organizational meeting during which the Committee's Rules of Procedure for the 18<sup>th</sup> Congress was adopted.</p> <p>Under the Rules of the House, the Committee has jurisdiction over "all matters directly and principally relating to the needs and welfare of senior citizens as well as policies and programs that will enhance their active participation in society."</p>

## COMMITTEE MEETINGS ON HOUSE MEASURES

COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Agriculture and Food	HRs 412 & 439	Reps. Benitez and Cullamat	Expressing the strong opposition of the House of Representatives to the planned liberalization or deregulation of the importation of sugar for the purpose of safeguarding the welfare of sugar farmers, farm and mill workers across the country	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga (1<sup>st</sup> District, Quezon), adopted HRs 412 and 439.</p> <p>The Secretariat was directed to prepare the corresponding Committee Report.</p> <p>At the outset, Rep. Enverga raised the apprehension of the stakeholders in the sugar industry relative to the Department of Finance's (DOF) economic bulletin issued on September 27, 2019. The DOF announcement is about the implementation of the full liberalization of the sugar industry by removing the quantitative restrictions on sugar imports. This, he said, prompted several lawmakers to file the resolutions opposing the move.</p> <p>Rep. Francisco "Kiko" Benitez (3<sup>rd</sup> District, Negros Occidental), author of HR 412, said that the filing of the two resolutions in 2019 which were signed by many legislators shows that a wide range of stakeholders oppose the planned liberalization or deregulation of the sugar industry.</p> <p>Rep. Eufemia "Ka Femia" Cullamat (Party-List, BAYAN MUNA), author of HR 439, also criticized the planned liberalization, saying that the sugar industry may suffer the same fate as the rice farmers when tariff was imposed instead of quantitative restriction (QR) on rice imports. She recalled that when the QR on rice imports was lifted, the price of palay drastically went down to the detriment of small farmers.</p> <p>Likewise, Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate (Party-List, BAYAN MUNA), co-author of HR 439, alleged that the DOF's bulletin is like a "death notice" to the local sugar industry, as well as on the country's agriculture and economy.</p>

Continuation... Agriculture and Food				<p>DOF Assistant Secretary Antonio Lambino clarified that sugar is now under the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) regime and is already tariffed at 5%. He added that mechanisms should be put in place to improve the competitiveness of the domestic sugar industry.</p> <p>ATIGA “aims to achieve free flow of goods in the ASEAN region resulting to less trade barriers and deeper economic linkages among member-states, lower business costs, increased trade, and a larger market and economies of scale for businesses.” (Source: ASEAN website)</p> <p>Several lawmakers were concerned about the ineffective implementation of RA 10659 or the Sugarcane Industry Development Act of 2015 (SIDA) and stressed that its implementing rules and regulations (IRR) must be revisited and amended accordingly.</p> <p>Philippine Sugar Millers Association, United Sugar Producers Federation of the Philippines, and Tanggol Asukal Network were among the stakeholders that opposed the planned liberalization of the sugar industry.</p>
Banks and Financial Intermediaries	HBs 4256, 4622 & 5143	Rep. Garin (S.), Deputy Speaker Hernandez, and Rep. Acosta-Alba	Strengthening rural banks in the Philippines, amending further for the purpose RA 7353, otherwise known as the Rural Banks Act of 1992, as amended	<p>The Committee, chaired by Quirino Rep. Junie Cua, will deliberate further on HBs 4256, 4622 and 5143 in its next meeting.</p> <p>Rep. Sharon Garin (Party-List, AAMBIS-OWA), author of HB 4256, said that the proposed law seeks to establish a rural banking system that will sustain the credit needs of the agricultural sector and promote financial inclusion within small communities.</p> <p>Rural Bankers Association of the Philippines (RBAP) Director Ma. Luisa Andres reported that among the challenges being faced by rural banks are bankruptcy, difficulty in raising capital, competition with other banks, and limited digitization reach. To address these concerns, she suggested amending RA 7353 or the Rural Banks Act of 1992 and mandate government financial institutions (GFIs), such as the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) and the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP), to infuse more capital to rural banks by way of stock subscription.</p> <p>The Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) expressed their support for the bills.</p> <p>However, representatives from the BSP and LBP expressed objection to some provisions of the proposed law.</p> <p>BSP Policy and Specialized Supervision Sub-Sector Managing Director Lyn Javier said that requiring LBP, DBP, and other GFIs to subscribe in the stocks of rural banks in order to raise their capital and comply with the</p>

Continuation... Banks and Financial Intermediaries				<p>minimum capital requirements imposed by BSP will merely benefit some rural banks. This, she said, runs contrary to the BSP's thrust of promoting market discipline among the participants in the banking industry.</p> <p>Javier added that maintaining a sound financial condition, including compliance with the minimum capital requirement, is the primary responsibility of the stockholders and directors of rural banks that should not be shifted to LBP, DBP or the government.</p> <p>Rep. Cua encouraged the stakeholders to come up with proposals to help rural banks generate more capital and widen their clientele without compromising the principles of good governance and financial discipline.</p>
Basic Education and Culture	HB 5626	Rep. Ramos	Converting the Sisigon Elementary School in Barangay Sisigon, Municipality of Matnog, Province of Sorsogon, into Sisigon Integrated School, and appropriating funds therefor	The Committee, chaired by Pasig City Rep. Roman Romulo, approved HB 5626, subject to style, and the corresponding Committee Report.
	HB 5693	Rep. Yu	Separating the Dulop National High School - Labangon Annex in the Municipality of Dumingag, Province of Zamboanga del Sur from the Dulop National High School, converting it into an independent national high school to be known as Labangon Subanen Agricultural National High School and appropriating funds therefor	The Committee approved HB 5693, subject to style, and the corresponding Committee Report.
	Substitute Bill to HBs 54, 285, 614, 758, 1312, 1400, 1915, 2136, 3311, 4099, 4116, 4127, 4214, 4399 & 4667	Reps. Cabochan, Suansing (E.), Vargas, Biazon, Gatchalian, Olivarez, Castelo, Villar, Fortun, Villarica, Guico, Tambunting, and Dy (F.)	Instituting services for learners with disabilities in support of inclusive education, establishing inclusive learning resource centers in all school districts, providing for standards, and appropriating funds therefor	<p>The Committee will deliberate further on the substitute bill.</p> <p>The proposed law seeks the establishment of an Inclusive Learning Resource Center (ILRC) for learners with disabilities in all school districts. Among the proposed functions of the ILRC are to capacitate regular schools to effectively handle the needs of learners with disabilities and to assess learners with disabilities to identify specific developmental areas and determine appropriate services and grade placement options.</p> <p>Department of Education's (DepEd) Bureau of Learning Delivery Director Leila Areola expressed support for the bill. She mentioned the proposal of some members of the technical working group (TWG), which crafted the substitute bill, to craft a separate legislation that will cater to the needs of the gifted and talented learners.</p> <p>Rep. Romulo reacted that the proposal will run counter to the idea of inclusive education, adding that the proposed Center should already serve the gifted and talented learners as well as the learners with disabilities.</p> <p>Likewise, Rep. Ramon "Mon-Mon" Guico III (5<sup>th</sup> District, Pangasinan), author of HB 4127</p>

Continuation... Basic Education and Culture				<p>and member of the TWG, said that the bill promotes the inclusion of learners with special needs in mainstream education as they are the ones that are frequently left behind.</p> <p>Several Committee Members said that the focus should be on the phase wherein the learners with disabilities will be integrated into regular schools as this may present challenges to both teachers and students.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair, Rep. Jocelyn Fortuno (5<sup>th</sup> District, Camarines Sur), suggested that there should be teachers specifically assigned to supervise learners with special needs in their integration to mainstream education.</p> <p>Coordinating Council of Private Educational Associations of the Philippines (COCOPEA) legal counsel Joseph Estrada expressed support for the bills and requested that private schools be covered by the proposed law.</p> <p>The DepEd was asked to submit its comments and recommendations on the bill.</p>
	HB 311	Rep. Salceda	Establishing the public schools of the future in technology, providing funds therefor	<p>The Committee agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to consolidate the 17 bills.</p> <p>Rep. Mohamad Khalid Dimaporo (1<sup>st</sup> District, Lanao del Norte), co-author of HB 4629, was designated to head the TWG.</p>
	HBs 514 & 5226	Reps. Roman and Rodriguez	Digitizing all books necessary for public education and establishing the Philippine online library, providing funds therefor	
	HB 1249	Deputy Speaker Villafuerte	Institutionalizing the use of digital technology in the public education system	
	HB 1411	Rep. Vargas	Mandating the automation of a national public school database	
	HB 2302	Rep. Castelo	Establishing an alternative online learning system for high school and first two years of college and appropriating funds therefor	
	HB 2671	Rep. Dy (F.M.C.)	Mandating the Department of Education (DepEd) to include in the curriculum of primary and secondary schools the responsible use of the internet, video/photo equipment, smart phones and the like	
	HBs 3303 & 3505	Reps. Yap (V.) and Silverio	Establishing a safety internet education program in the curriculum of all elementary and secondary schools	
	HBs 3433 & 4196	Deputy Speaker Santos-Recto and Rep. Yap (V.)	Strengthening the utilization of information and communication technology (ICT) in all public elementary schools and high schools, providing funds therefor	
	HB 4131	Rep. Lacson	Providing for the establishment of e-libraries in all public schools in the Philippines and providing funds therefor	
	HBs 4527 & 4719	Reps. Olivarez and Nieto	Requiring the establishment of computer laboratory in all public elementary and secondary schools	

Continuation... Basic Education and Culture	HB 4629	Rep. Dimaporo (A.)	Promoting inclusive education through innovation and responsive 21 <sup>st</sup> century education program for all Filipino learners	
	HB 5090	Rep. Bordado	Establishing a computer and internet laboratory in all public elementary and high schools in the country and appropriating funds therefor	
	HB 5806	Rep. Delos Santos	Creating the schools of the future driven by ICT-transformed education, and appropriating funds therefor	
	HB 307	Rep. Salceda	Establishing public schools in geographically isolated disadvantaged conflict-affected areas, and access roads leading to last mile public schools	The Committee deferred its consideration of the bills.
	HBs 3072 & 4978	Reps. Sy-Alvarado and Nieto	Establishing a basic education school in every indigenous peoples community in the country and appropriating funds therefor	
Higher and Technical Education	HB 903	Rep. Paduano	Mandating the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) to include in its annual approved budget an allocation intended for trainings and programs for the drug dependents that were already rehabilitated	<p>The Committee, chaired by Baguio City Rep. Mark Go, approved the bill.</p> <p>Rep. Joseph Stephen Paduano (Party-List, ABANG LINGKOD), author of HB 903, said that the existing budget of TESDA for its skills training program is not enough to accommodate the more than 400,000 rehabilitated drug dependents. He suggested that TESDA should include in its annual approved budget funds dedicated for the skills training of rehabilitated drug dependents.</p> <p>TESDA lawyer Clifford Pascual manifested his support for the bill, adding that as early as January 2019, TESDA has been conducting training seminars for drug surrenderees. He added that to date, TESDA has trained at least 18,000 rehabilitated drug dependents.</p>
	HB 5150	Rep. Rodriguez	Integrating the Pintuyan National Vocational High School into the Southern Leyte State University System	The Committee approved the bill.
	HB 5750	Rep. Bordado	Providing for the establishment of a TESDA training and accreditation center in the Municipality of Calabanga, Province of Camarines Sur, to be known as the Calabanga TESDA Training and Accreditation Center, and appropriating funds therefor	The Committee approved the bill.
	HB 5751	Rep. Zamora (M.)	Renaming Compostela Valley State College into the Davao de Oro State College	The Committee approved the bill.
	HB 5765	Rep. Barba	Establishing a field office of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in Batac City, Ilocos Norte and appropriating funds therefor	The Committee approved the bill.
	HB 5809	Rep. Singson	Establishing a TESDA Provincial Training and Assessment Center (TESDA PTAC) in	The Committee approved the bill.

Continuation... Higher and Technical Education			Bantay, Ilocos Sur, and appropriating funds therefor	
	HR 550	Rep. Silverio	Commending Miss Cristeta Pasia Comerford for receiving an honorary degree from the University of the Philippines in recognition for her exemplary achievements	The Committee adopted HR 550.
	HB 2201	Rep. Sy-Alvarado	Creating the Bulacan State University System, integrating modernization, appropriating funds therefor	The Committee deferred its discussion of the bill.
	HB 3225	Rep. Amatong	Converting the Kipit Agro-Fishery High School in Kipit, Labason, Zamboanga del Norte into a state college to be known as the Murcielagos State College and appropriating funds therefor	The Committee agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to deliberate further on the bill.
Poverty Alleviation	Consolidated Bill on HBs 3754, 4014 & 4718	Reps. Rodriguez, Villarica, and Nieto	Establishing a financial assistance program for poor litigants	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Dale "Along" Malapitan (1<sup>st</sup> District, Caloocan City), approved the consolidated bill and the corresponding Committee Report.</p> <p>Rep. Rufus Rodriguez (2<sup>nd</sup> District, Cagayan de Oro City), author of HB 3754, highlighted the forms of financial assistance to be given to poor litigants, namely: reasonable traveling expenses and subsistence allowance; the bond for provisional liberty; and civil liability as determined by the Public Attorneys Office (PAO), the courts, and the judge.</p>
	HB 4829	Rep. Malapitan	Providing 20% discount for poor job applicants in the payment of fees and charges for certain certificates and clearances issued by government agencies	<p>The Committee agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) that will craft the substitute bill to HB 4829.</p> <p>Expressing their support for the bill were representatives from the Department of Health (DOH), Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), Philippine National Police (PNP), National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), and the Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP).</p> <p>NBI Director Rolando Bernales recommended the inclusion of transcript of records (TOR) and certificate of good moral character (CGMC) issued by state universities and colleges (SUCs) as among the pre-employment certificates given to poor job seekers.</p> <p>Meanwhile, NAPC Director Nikkin Beronilla suggested the automatic inclusion of beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) in the proposed law's coverage. He also recommended that local government units (LGUs) be mandated to share their database on poor individuals per barangay with the national agencies, in order to facilitate the identification of beneficiaries who will enjoy the 20% discount.</p>

Continuation... Poverty Alleviation				The resource persons were requested to submit their respective position papers for the TWG's reference in its deliberations on the bill.
Science and Technology	HB 3372	Rep. Garin (S.)	Promoting safe and responsible use of modern biotechnology, establishing the Biotechnology Authority of the Philippines for this purpose and appropriating funds therefor	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Erico Aristotle Aumentado (2<sup>nd</sup> District, Bohol), approved HB 3372 subject to style.</p> <p>Rep. Sharon Garin (Party-List, AAMBIS-OWA), author of HB 3372, highlighted the need to regulate biotechnology in the country to ensure the safety and well-being of the people and even the animals.</p> <p>House Members and resource persons present during the meeting expressed their support for the bill.</p>
	HR 107	Rep. Elago	Commending and congratulating Eugene Rivera, Joscel Kent Manzanero, and Keith Russel Cadores for having three minor planets named after them for winning second-place in the "Energy: Physical" category of the 2018 Intel International Science and Engineering Fair	The Committee adopted HR 107.
	HR 284	Rep. Crisologo	Extending the full support of the House of Representatives for the invention of the Universal Structural Health Evaluation and Recording (USHER) System by the Mapua University, the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), and the Philippine Council for Industry, Energy and Emerging Technology Research and Development	<p>The Committee adopted HR 284.</p> <p>According to Rep. Anthony Peter "Onyx" Crisologo (1<sup>st</sup> District, Quezon City), author of HR 284, the USHER, which has claimed various international awards and recognition, would greatly enhance the country's preparedness and resilience in times of natural calamities such as the Taal Volcano eruption.</p> <p>USHER Lead Inventor Dr. Francis Adrine Uy informed the body that the installation of the USHER system in every government building or infrastructure would enable a 24/7 monitoring system which would determine the conditional status of the building or infrastructure based on structural integrity, and would promptly provide a notification when evacuation is necessary.</p>
	HR 475	Rep. Kho (E.)	Expressing the high esteem of the House of Representatives and congratulatory message to the newly awarded Filipino national scientist Dr. Emil Q. Javier for his distinguished achievements in science and technology conferred by President Rodrigo Duterte	<p>The Committee adopted HR 475.</p> <p>Expressing their support for the resolution were the Department of Agriculture's (DA) Biotech Program Office and the Department of Science and Technology's National Academy of Science and Technology (DOST-NAST).</p>
	HR 561	Rep. Velasco	Commending and recognizing Filipina scientist Jenny Anne Barretto for her extraordinary contribution to marine scientific research with her discovery of Apolaki Caldera in the Philippine Rise	<p>The Committee adopted HR 561.</p> <p>The Apolaki Caldera is considered the largest caldera in the world located in the Philippine Rise in Luzon. According to HR 561, a caldera is formerly a volcano that erupted and then collapsed upon its magma chamber.</p>
Ways and Means	Substitute Bill to HBs 1274, 3309, 3373, 3469, 4009 &	Deputy Speaker Villafuerte, Reps. Villar, Garin (S.),	Institutionalizing the Philippine Bamboo Industry Development Council (PBIDC), appropriating funds therefor	The Committee, presided by its Senior Vice Chair Rep. Estrellita Suansing (1 <sup>st</sup> District, Nueva Ecija), approved with amendments the tax provision of the Substitute Bill.

Continuation... Ways and Means	4926	Deputy Speaker Savellano, Reps. Villarica and Sy-Alvarado		
	Substitute Bill to HBs 4745, 4806, 4809, 4943, 5019, 5078 & 5348	Deputy Speaker Oaminal and Romero, Reps. Velasco, Olivarez, Rodriguez, Nograles (J.J.), and Gonzaga	Strengthening the Office of the Government Corporate Counsel by rationalizing and further professionalizing its organization, upgrading the compensation, benefits, and positions of its officials and employees, and appropriating funds therefor	The Committee approved the tax provision of the Substitute Bill.
Welfare of Children	Substitute Bill to HBs 179, 217, 475, 520, 689, 1945, 2173, 2253, 2832, 2848, 3027, 3398, 3705, 4006, 4010, 5287, 5513 & 5768	Rep. Suansing (H.), Deputy Speaker Puno, Reps. Brosas, Aglipay, Quimbo, Fortun, Herrera-Dy, Cabochan, Rodriguez, Yu, Palma, Revilla, Castelo, Agabas, Villarica, Dalipe, Acop, and Tambunting	Instituting the Magna Carta of Child Development Workers and providing funds therefor	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Yedda Marie Romualdez (Party-List, TINGOG SINIRANGAN), approved the Substitute Bill to the 18 bills with amendments.</p> <p>The bill will be referred to the Committee on Appropriations for consideration of its funding provision.</p> <p>Rep. Arlene Brosas (Party-list, GABRIELA) suggested the inclusion in the bill of a provision stating that child development workers shall in no way be required to shell out their own money to spend for electricity and rent of the child development center to which they are assigned. The Committee subsequently approved this suggestion.</p>
	HBs 76, 5512 & 5526	Reps. Daza, Saulog, and Deputy Speaker Villafuerte	Establishing the rules and policies on the domestic administrative adoption of Filipinos	<p>The Committee agreed to come up with a substitute bill to the three measures.</p> <p>Child Rights Network (CRN) Executive Director Romeo Dongeto thanked the Committee for giving priority to the proposed law, which seeks to create a more streamlined process of adoption and address the long, costly, and tedious adoption process in the Philippines.</p> <p>Dongeto added that the proposed measure is aligned with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which provides that if the child cannot be looked after by the immediate family, the government must provide the child special protection and assistance, and continuous alternative care.</p> <p>The Committee asked the stakeholders to submit their respective position papers within a week.</p>
	HBs 1920 & 5592	Reps. Sy-Alvarado and Noel	Prohibiting/protecting unattended children in motor vehicles	The Committee agreed to archive HBs 1920 and 5592 as the objectives of these bills were already covered by RA 11229 or the Child Safety in Motor Vehicles Act.

TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP MEETING				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/ DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Revision of Laws	HBs 478, 507, 1622,	Reps. Brosas, Barbers, Fortun,	Amending RA 8972, otherwise known as the Solo Parents' Welfare Act of 2000, by	The technical working group (TWG), chaired by Rep. Lawrence "Law" Fortun (1 <sup>st</sup> District,



Continuation... Revision of Laws (Technical Working Group)	1939, 2538, 2661, 3088, 3513, 3533, 3703, 3902, 3911, 4040, 4242, 4782, 4971, 5059, 5497, 5708 & 5819	Pineda, Deputy Speaker Gonzales (A.), Reps. Sy- Alvarado, Villaraza- Suarez, Aragones, Castelo, Deputy Speakers Fernandez, Legarda, and Hernandez, Reps. Abaya, Guico, Nieto, Agabas, Delos Santos, Pacquiao, and Vargas	providing additional benefits to solo parents	<p>Agusan del Norte), will deliberate further on the 20 bills in its next meeting.</p> <p>Rep. Fortun said that his bill, HB 1622, will be used as the working draft. He also informed the body that there are three contentious issues concerning the proposed law: the grant of additional benefits to solo parents on top of existing benefits, the required establishment of breastfeeding centers, and the imposition of penalties for failure to provide the mandated benefits.</p> <p>Under HB 1622, the additional benefits to solo parents include a 10% discount on children's clothing materials for all purchases made within two years from the birth of the child of the solo parent; 15% discount on food and micronutrient supplement for all purchases made within two years from the birth of the child; and 15% discount on all purchases of the solo parent of medicines and other medical supplements or supplies for the child aged five years old or below.</p> <p>Among the agreements reached during the meeting were the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An inter-agency composed of the Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Philippine Trade Training Center (PTTC), and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), among others, will come up with an alternative livelihood scheme for solo parents to enhance their income capacity;</li> <li>• Only solo parents with an average annual income of P250,000 and below will be qualified for the discounts;</li> <li>• The Department of Finance (DOF) will study and report on the effect of granting discounts to solo parents on the revenue collections of the government once the proposed law is enacted;</li> <li>• The Department of Health (DOH) will determine the best scheme for the grant of discounts on medicines and other medical supplements or supplies for solo parents; and</li> <li>• Companies may provide discounts to solo parents under their corporate social responsibility (CSR) program.</li> </ul> <p>The Drugstores Association of the Philippines (DSAP) and the Philippine Retailers Association (PRA) expressed their reservation on the bills saying that there are already several discount programs being implemented including those for senior citizens and persons with disabilities (PWDs), and adding another will already be a burden to the business sector.</p> <p>The TWG will invite in its next meeting resource persons from the DTI, Department of</p>
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Continuation... Revision of Laws (Technical Working Group)				Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Education (DepEd), local government units (LGUs), League of Provinces, Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), and Civil Service Commission (CSC).
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AGENCY BRIEFING				
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER			DISCUSSIONS
Senior Citizens (Special Committee)	<p>Briefing by the following government agencies on their plans and programs benefitting the senior citizens:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government Service Insurance System (GSIS)</li> <li>Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)</li> <li>Social Security System (SSS)</li> </ul>			<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Francisco Datol Jr. (Party-List, Senior Citizens), listened to the briefing conducted by different government agencies on their plans and programs for the senior citizens.</p> <p>GSIS Vice President Rodrigo Manuel informed the Committee that GSIS members who have reached the age of 60 and have rendered at least 15 years of government service can avail themselves of the retirement and pension benefits amounting to a minimum of P5,000 per month.</p> <p>Manuel added that pensioners who have received pensions for five years are entitled to a Christmas cash gift equivalent to one month of their current monthly pension or P10,000, whichever is lower, and an increase in pension of 1.5% every year thereafter. On the other hand, an additional milestone benefit equivalent to P20,000 will be given to pensioners who have reached the age of 90; P30,000 to those who have reached 95 years old; and P50,000 to those who have reached the age of 100 and above. GSIS pensioners can also avail themselves of pension and calamity loans.</p> <p>According to Manuel, the GSIS is considering a proposal that will allow pensioners to revalidate their status online on a yearly basis. At present, pensioners who are 79 years old and below must present themselves to GSIS to renew their status. For pensioners who are 80 years old and above and with poor health condition, Manuel said they may request for a home visit by writing to GSIS about their status. The home visit is done in coordination with the Philippine Postal Corporation.</p> <p>DSWD Director Maricel Deloria said that DSWD grants monthly social pension of P500 to indigent senior citizens who are not receiving pension from other entities and who do not receive any financial assistance from their relatives. Deloria added that DSWD grants P100,000 to centenarians and that 938 senior citizens have already received this benefit. DSWD also extends assistance to senior citizens in crisis situations and provides residential care facilities to elders 60 years old and above without families and bedridden patients in coordination with the Department of Health (DOH).</p> <p>As of December 2019, according to Deloria, there were P2.2 million senior citizens who were able to avail themselves of the social pension out of the targeted P3.7 million senior citizens nationwide. At present, the DSWD has a clean list of indigent senior citizens totaling to 3.3 million which it intends to provide social pension fully by February 2020. She explained that the delay in the release of funds for the purpose is due to the following: long process of validation of indigent senior citizens; lack of special disbursing officers; and delay in the release of cash cards by the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP).</p> <p>SSS Legal Affairs Department Officer-in-Charge Atty. Joseph Desunia reported that SSS members are entitled to retirement benefits that are given either on a monthly basis or through lump sum upon reaching</p>

<p>Continuation... Senior Citizens (Special Committee)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA)</li> <li>Department of Health (DOH)</li> <li>Department of Budget and Management (DBM)</li> </ul>	<p>the age of 60 as long as the member has paid at least 120 monthly contributions. Other benefits afforded by SSS to its pensioners include 13<sup>th</sup> month pay, hospitalization benefits; pension loan, and calamity loan assistance, Desunia said.</p> <p>Asked on the big disparity between the pension benefit that the SSS provides its members and that of the GSIS, Desunia explained that SSS sets a cap on the monthly SSS pension given to its members pegged at P16,000, as compared to the GSIS where there is no cap and the pension depends on the basic pay and length of service of its members. He added that another reason is the rate of contribution, wherein SSS collects only 7% from its members compared to GSIS which imposes 22% contribution rate.</p> <p>PSA Senior Statistical Specialist Jocelyn Abrenica informed the Committee that PSA acts as a support agency to the various agencies of government through the conduct of census and provision of statistics and other indicators that will guide the agencies in formulating their respective plans and programs.</p> <p>Dr. Minerva Vinluan, Medical Specialist IV, DOH's Disease Prevention and Control Bureau, said that the DOH is currently conducting forums with the local government units (LGUs) and the Office of Senior Citizens Affairs (OSCA) to disseminate information on its plans and programs for the senior citizens. This initiative by the DOH is aligned with its vision of "providing healthy and productive aging for senior citizens." Vinluan likewise said that the DOH is giving flu and pneumonia vaccines to indigent senior citizens as well as conducts training to health workers involved in providing health care to senior citizens.</p> <p>DBM Director Malou Aganon highlighted the budget earmarked to four major programs intended for senior citizens for FY 2020 that will be implemented by the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) and DSWD.</p> <p>Aganon said that the DBM has allocated P67.4 billion for the national health program; P37.2 billion for unconditional cash transfer program; P23.2 billion for social pension for indigent senior citizens; and P100 million for the implementation of RA 10868 or the Centenarian Act of 2016. She informed the Committee that the DBM is awaiting the submission of the proposed staffing pattern for the National Commission of Senior Citizens created pursuant to RA 11350.</p> <p>Rep. Datol requested the resource persons to submit the documents requested by the Committee in its next meeting.</p>
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DISCUSSION WITH AGENCIES/ENTITIES		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Overseas Workers Affairs	<p>Discussion on the following issues and concerns affecting overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) that need urgent attention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alleged illegal recruitment of OFW Jerson Enriquez and 14 others in Saudi Arabia</li> </ul>	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Raymond Democrito Mendoza (Party-List, TUCP), continued its discussion on the illegal recruitment case of OFW Jerson Enriquez, the death of Jeanelyn Villavende at the hands of her Kuwaiti employer, and the current situation of OFWs in Iraq and the Middle East.</p> <p>Abdul Khaled Tamano, the representative of the International Experts for Technical Support Services (IETSS), the recruiter of Enriquez and 14 other Filipinos, apprised the body that the affected OFWs are already set to return to the country next week.</p> <p>In the previous meeting of the Committee, Jerson Enriquez's wife Sorahayda Samporna-Enriquez reported that Jerson and his co-</p>

<p>Continuation... Overseas Workers Affairs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maltreatment/abuse of OFW Jeanelyn Villavende, a household service worker, by her employer in Kuwait that led to her death</li> </ul>	<p>workers complained that upon arrival in Saudi Arabia, they found out that the job specification in their contract was to be just a common laborer and that the nature of employment will just be on a “standby mode or rental basis” as opposed to being a safety officer as originally informed by the IETSSI.</p> <p>Rep. Mendoza expressed his disappointment at the slow response of the recruiter, citing its earlier promise that the affected OFWs would be repatriated by December last year.</p> <p>Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) Administrator Bernardo Olalia informed the body that the recruitment operation of IETSS is currently suspended due to its failure to repatriate the group.</p> <p>With the continuing problems confronting the OFWs, Muntinlupa City Rep. Rozzano Rufino Biazon underscored the need to further improve the system and institutions responsible for protecting the OFWs abroad, to prevent the recurrence of unfortunate incidents in the future.</p> <p>OFW Jeanelyn Villavende not only suffered serious physical injuries caused by her Kuwaiti employer that led to her death but was also sexually abused, according to the autopsy conducted by the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI). She was deployed to Kuwait as a household service worker (HSW) in July 2019.</p> <p>Rep. Alberto “Bobby” Pacquiao (Party-List, OFW Family) informed the body that based on the information given by the victim’s grandmother, Villavende sought help from her recruitment agency, 5 Star Recruitment &amp; Manpower Corporation, months before her death.</p> <p>The recruitment agency’s representative, Reynaldo Madamba, claimed that personnel from its counterpart agency in Kuwait were sent to the house of Villavende’s employer to personally check on her situation. However, during the meeting, Villavende did not mention any maltreatment other than the delay in the release of her salary, which was already addressed prior to the meeting. Madamba also alleged that Villavende even said during that meeting that her employer has agreed to allow her to return to the Philippines by January of this year.</p> <p>Rep. Erico Pineda (Party-List, 1-PACMAN) emphasized that it should have been the duty of the recruitment agency to report to the POEA the delay in the release of the salary of Villavende, which is in itself a form of maltreatment.</p> <p>Olalia concurred with the statement of Rep. Pineda, adding that the case of Villavende was only reported to them this month. Had it been promptly reported to the POEA, immediate response could have been undertaken that could have prevented her death. He also apprised the body that 5 Star Recruitment &amp; Manpower Corporation’s operations are now suspended.</p> <p>Department of Foreign Affairs Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs Sarah Lou Arriola (DFA-OUMWA) explained that her office was not informed of Villavende’s case early on and was only able to respond to it when it came out in the news.</p> <p>Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Secretary Silvestre Bello III said that the Kuwaiti government failed to comply with the 2018 Philippines-Kuwait Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on the protection of OFWs, which includes a provision establishing a standard employment contract for OFWs working in Kuwait.</p> <p>Not convinced of the autopsy report submitted by the Kuwaiti government on the remains of Villavende, Sec. Bello said he</p>
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<p>Continuation... Overseas Workers Affairs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current situation of OFWs in Iraq and other countries in the Middle East in view of the tension between Iran and the United States</li> </ul>	<p>requested the NBI to conduct its own autopsy, which revealed that Villavende not only suffered physical injuries but also sexual abuse from her employer. This prompted the government to impose a ban on the deployment of all HSWs to Kuwait, except for the skilled and professional workers who generally enjoy better working conditions.</p> <p>NBI Medico Legal Division Chief Ricardo Rodaje confirmed that the victim's body sustained innumerable injuries including sexual assault and that the physical maltreatment could have occurred for a period of five months. Rodaje added that the victim was too thin at the time of her death which is a clear manifestation that she was also deprived of food for a long time.</p> <p>Representatives from Migrante International, Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP), Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino (KAMPI), and NAGKAISA Labor Coalition expressed their support for the total deployment ban of HSWs to Kuwait.</p> <p>In view of the current conflict between Iran and the United States, Rep. Mendoza called on the concerned agencies to lay down contingency measures that will immediately assist OFWs in Iran, Iraq, and other countries in the Middle East as well as evacuate or repatriate affected OFWs in case the conflict escalates.</p> <p>Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary Delfin Lorenzana apprised the body that the President has already created a committee tasked to respond to the situation in the Middle East, including the repatriation of OFWs. The DFA has also directed its personnel in the affected areas to start locating OFWs who are in need of assistance.</p> <p>Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Roy Cimatu, who was designated as the country's Special Envoy to the Middle East to oversee repatriation of OFWs, reported that based on his assessment of the situation in Baghdad, Iraq when he went there, there is a need to start the repatriation of OFWs before the tension between Iran and the US worsens.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the DFA gave a brief situationer on the condition of Filipinos in the Middle East and discussed its repatriation and evacuation plans in the area including the difficulties being faced by government personnel due to safety and security concerns. Arriola also reported that despite the deployment ban of workers to Iraq, over a thousand OFWs are in Iraq as a result of trafficking.</p> <p>Bello mentioned the programs of DOLE and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) for the returning OFWs such as livelihood assistance, re-employment in the country through the government's Build, Build, Build Program or in other countries, and scholarship grants to the children of OFWs.</p> <p>Executive Director Ramon Casiple of the Institute for Political and Electoral Reforms (IPER) said that it is high time that the government should look for alternative labor markets for Filipinos outside of the Middle East where OFWs may be safer, pointing out that other conflicts, aside from that of the US and Iran, are likely to occur in the region.</p>
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