



Congressional Record

PLENARY PROCEEDINGS OF THE 19th CONGRESS, SECOND REGULAR SESSION

House of Representatives

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No. 42

CALL TO ORDER

At 3:00 p.m., Deputy Speaker Raymond Democrito C. Mendoza called the session to order.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza).
This session is now called to order.

Maayong hapon. Good afternoon everyone, my fellow colleagues. Welcome to the first day of session for the year 2024. We are in Session No. 42 of the Second Regular Session of the Nineteenth Congress.

NATIONAL ANTHEM

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza).
Everybody will please rise for the singing of the Philippine National Anthem.

Everybody rose to sing the Philippine National Anthem.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza).
My dear colleagues, may we humbly remain standing for the Invocation to be delivered by Cong. Natasha Co of BHW Party-List. Please proceed.

Everybody remained standing for the Invocation.

INVOCATION

REP. CO (A.N.). *Our Father, as we resume the first session of the year 2024, we seek guidance and wisdom. Grant us the ability to govern justly, make courageous decisions, and consider the needs of all our constituents.*

May our work be marked with mutual respect, open-mindedness, and a commitment to the common good. Bless each House Member with strength to fulfill our duties with integrity and dedication.

As we convene, may our efforts be guided by justice, tempered by mercy, and driven by a sincere desire to serve the people.

Amen.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza).
Amen.

Maraming salamat, fellow party-list colleague, Cong. Angelica Natasha Co.

ROLL CALL

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza).
The Secretary General is directed to call the Roll of Members.

*The Secretary General called the Roll, and the result is reflected in Journal No. 42, dated January 22, 2024.**

THE SECRETARY GENERAL.
Mr. Speaker, the roll call shows that 209 Members responded to the Call.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza).
With 209 Members responding to the Call, the Chair declares the presence of a quorum.
Majority Leader.

REP. VARGAS. Mr. Speaker, considering that copies of *Journal No. 40* dated December 11 and 12, 2023 and *Journal*

* See ANNEX (printed separately)

No. 41 dated December 13, 2023 were already distributed to the Members, I move to dispense with the reading of the said Journals.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza). There is a motion to dispense with the reading of the aforementioned Journals. Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The reading of the said Journals is dispensed with.

REP. LAGMAN. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza). Majority Leader.

REP. VARGAS. Mr. Speaker, I move that we approve *Journal No. 40* dated December 11 and 12, 2023 and *Journal No. 41* dated December 13, 2023.

REP. LAGMAN. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza). Yes, Congressman Lagman is recognized.

REP. LAGMAN. Mr. Speaker, I object to the approval of *Journal No. 41*, Wednesday, dated December 13, 2023.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza). Majority Leader.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. VARGAS. Mr. Speaker, may we request for a temporary suspension of the session.

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

It was 3:12 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:13 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza). The session is resumed.
Majority Leader.

REP. VARGAS. Mr. Speaker, may we inquire as to the nature of the objection of Congressman Lagman.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza). Congressman Lagman will please respond.

REP. LAGMAN. Mr. Speaker, *Journal No. 41*, more particularly on page 10, the synopsis of the proceedings does not reflect what actually happened. With respect to the recommitment of House Bill No. 9349, I seasonably objected. I rose and objected, but unfortunately, the then Presiding Officer did not see me and ruled that there was no objection and the recommitment was approved.

At this point, I reiterated my objection and asked why the Bill is being recommitted to the Committee? There was a suspension of the session and was not taken up anymore in Plenary. In other words, there was an approval of the motion for recommitment with alacrity and my objection was not entertained. So, I would like to reiterate my objection, and what should have happened during our last session day then must be reflected in the Journal, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza). Thank you, Gentleman from Albay, Congressman Lagman.
Majority Leader.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. VARGAS. Mr. Speaker, may we request for a temporary suspension of the session again.

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

It was 3:15 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:15 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza). The session is resumed.
Majority Leader.

REP. ACIDRE. Mr. Speaker, I move that we direct the Secretariat to reflect the objection of the Honorable Lagman and for that purpose, make the necessary corrections on page 10 of *Journal No. 41*, dated December 13, 2023, Wednesday.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Mr. Speaker, thank you for that motion from the Majority Leader.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza). We thank you, Congressman Lagman.

REP. LAGMAN. What is the ruling of the Chair with respect to the motion?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza). Yes, Congressman Lagman, the Secretary General is hereby directed to reflect the correction as stated by the Majority Leader.

REP. LAGMAN. Consequently, Mr. Speaker, am I to understand that the approval of the recommitment of House Bill No. 9349 is withdrawn?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza). Majority Leader.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. ACIDRE. May I ask for a suspension of the session, Mr. Speaker.

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

It was 3:17 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:27 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza). The session is resumed.
Majority Leader.

REP. DEFENSOR. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May I refer to the previous motion of the Majority Leader, if the Secretary

General has resolved the request to correct the Journal on page 10, to appropriately reflect the objection of the Honorable Lagman to the recommitment of House Bill No. 9349?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza). The Secretary General is directed to correct *Journal No. 41*.

Majority Leader.

REP. DEFENSOR. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Journal having been properly corrected and reflected the objection of the Honorable Lagman, Mr. Speaker, in order to resolve the objection of the Honorable Lagman, I move that we recommit House Bill No. 9349, pursuant to our Rules, to the Committee on Population and Family Relations.

REP. LAGMAN. I am objecting to that motion, Mr. Speaker.

One of the merits I am objecting to that, procedurally, Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that the Secretary General will first reflect the correction where I have objected seasonably, and the ruling then that the motion was approved was rather errant and in alacrity. After that motion of mine for the correction is done by the Secretary General, but it has not been done, then I will continue with my objection.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza). Majority Leader.

REP. DEFENSOR. Mr. Speaker, just to get some clarity from the Honorable Lagman, it has been said by the Secretary General that the appropriate correction will be reflected in the Journal. May I know what is the specific request of the Honorable Lagman in terms of the correction?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza). Congressman Lagman is recognized.

REP. LAGMAN. One, that I seasonably objected before the ruling of the Chair that the motion to recommit was approved. Number

two, that my objection would be reflected, in essence, in the Journal. Number three, after the necessary correction is made, then I will pursue my objection. Meanwhile, the approval of the motion to recommit should be withdrawn.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza).
Majority Leader.

REP. DEFENSOR. Mr. Speaker, the Majority Leader will not withdraw the motion to recommit the same. The Journal, being a final evidence of what transpired during the session on December 13, and considering further that the Majority Leader, as well as the Chair have already allowed that the proper objection be reflected in the Journal, we are no longer constrained to withdraw the motion to recommit House Bill No. 9349, Mr. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Then I will wait for the Journal to be corrected so that I can see the correction.

REP. DEFENSOR. Mr. Speaker, we will proceed with the recommitment motion and if ever the Honorable Lagman has further comments or requests, it will be resolved on the floor.

Mr. Speaker, I reiterate my motion to recommit House Bill No. 9349.

REP. LAGMAN. Mr. Speaker.

REP. DEFENSOR. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recommit House Bill No. 9349.

REP. LAGMAN. I object, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza).
Majority Leader.

REP. DEFENSOR. The objection will be properly reflected in today's Journal.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza).
Yes. Please proceed.

REP. DEFENSOR. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recommit House Bill No. 9349.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza).
There is a motion to recommit House Bill No. 9349.

REP. LAGMAN. I object to the recommitment, Mr. Speaker.

VIVA VOCE VOTING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza).
All those in favor, please say *Aye*.

SEVERAL MEMBERS. *Aye*.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza).
All those who are not in favor, please say *Nay*.
(*Silence*)

RECOMMITMENT OF H.B. NO. 9349
TO THE CTTEE. ON POPULATION
AND FAMILY RELATIONS

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

House Bill No. 9349 is recommitted to the
Committee on Population and Family Relations.

REP. DEFENSOR. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza).
Majority Leader.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. DEFENSOR. I move that we suspend
the session, Mr. Speaker.

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

It was 3:32 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:34 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza).
The session is resumed.
Majority Leader.

REP. DEFENSOR. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May I request that the Honorable Lagman be recognized once more.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza). The Gentleman from Albay, Cong. Edcel Lagman, is recognized. Please proceed.

REP. LAGMAN. Mr. Speaker, thank you for this opportunity to explain my appeal on the ruling of the Chair.

First, may we know from the Majority Leader, what was the reason or what were the reasons for recommitting House Bill No. 9349 to the Committee on Population and Family Relations?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza). Majority Leader.

REP. DEFENSOR. Mr. Speaker, there was no appropriations provision for House Bill No. 9349.

REP. LAGMAN. Okay. Is there any rule which says that bills without any appropriation language should be recommitted back to the original committee?

REP. DEFENSOR. Mr. Speaker, considering that the recommitment has already been done, maybe the Honorable Lagman, together with the chairmen, as well as the members of the Committee, could thresh out these matters in the Committee so that we can proceed with the Order of Business.

REP. LAGMAN. This will not end this question, Mr. Speaker, because there is no rule of the House which would require recommitment of a bill without an appropriation language to the original Committee. There have been instances before when a bill was deliberated in this Chamber where the bill does not have an appropriation language, and this bill was subsequently enacted into law, and I am referring to Republic Act No. 11596, entitled: AN ACT PROHIBITING THE PRACTICE OF CHILD MARRIAGE

AND IMPOSING PENALTIES FOR VIOLATIONS THEREOF.

The Bill approved by the Appropriate Committee did not include an appropriation language. The Bill discussed in Plenary did not have an appropriation language. The Bill submitted to the Conference Committee did not have an appropriation language and the Act itself, Republic Act No. 11596, did not have any appropriation language. That is a very important precedent when bills approved by a Committee which do not have an appropriation language need not be recommitted to the original Committee.

Another case. This is with respect to House Bill No. 9513, entitled: AN ACT PROVIDING—no, I am sorry. I am referring to House Bill No. 4244, under Committee Report No. 664, entitled: AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A NATIONAL POLICY ON REPRODUCTIVE—no, I withdraw that statement, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DEFENSOR. Mr. Speaker, may I be recognized.

REP. LAGMAN. Let me just continue, Mr. Speaker.

Another example where a bill which did not have any appropriation language was not referred back to the committee but was deliberated on by the House. This is House Bill No. 8910, entitled: AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A NATIONAL POLICY IN PREVENTING ADOLESCENT PREGNANCIES AND INSTITUTIONALIZING SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR ADOLESCENT PARENTS. A perusal of this Bill shows that there is no appropriation language. It was approved on Third Reading by this Chamber without having been referred or recommitted to the mother Committee because there is no rule that a bill without any appropriation language should be recommitted to the Committee or to the Committee on Appropriations because, one, the absence or no appropriation language can be taken up during the Plenary before the bill is approved on Third Reading through an individual or Committee

amendment; number two, it can be provided for by the counterpart bill in the Senate or it can be provided for during the Conference Committee, or it can be provided for in the General Appropriations Act to fully implement the law.

Consequently, I see no reason why House Bill No. 9349 should be referred back to the Committee on Population and Family Relations. It is errant, it should not be done and we should not practice such a policy which is not consistent with precedents.

I therefore object, Mr. Speaker, to the approval of the motion to refer this Bill to the Committee on Population and Family Relations, and I appeal the ruling of the Chair.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza). Thank you, Congressman Lagman. Majority Leader.

REP. DEFENSOR. Mr. Speaker, while there is no rule that the appropriations provisions are necessary or an integral part before a bill could pass, may we know if the Honorable Lagman will agree that there is also no rule that precedence should be cast in stone.

REP. LAGMAN. That is correct. That is a general rule but in this particular case, the precedent should be appreciated and applied. There is no need to refer this back to the Committee on Population and Family Relations just because it has no appropriation language.

REP. DEFENSOR. Mr. Speaker, will the Honorable Lagman also agree that there can be new methods, new precedents that could be done that could also stand as precedents by itself similar to the *stare decisis*? Even precedents by the Supreme Court also get overturned.

REP. LAGMAN. Yes, that is true. That is true but you just do not overturn precedents just because there can be a new or a novel approach to a situation. There must be some good reasons to reject or overturn precedents.

In this case, there is no good reason because if ever there is "any defect" because of an absent appropriation language, the Plenary can do that because the Plenary is supreme over all other committees.

If the Plenary does not include an appropriation language, that can be included in the Conference Committee without delaying the process of legislation, and even if the law itself does not have an appropriation language, the General Appropriations Act can provide such funding. So, there is no rhyme, no reason to overturn a precedent in this particular case except to delay the process of enacting a Divorce Bill in the Philippines, because this Bill refers to the Divorce Bill where almost 80 Members of this House are coauthors, and this Bill has been pending for ages in this Congress. We are the only nation in the world, except the small circular Vatican State, which do not have a Divorce Bill. All other Catholic countries in the world have their own divorce laws in varying stages of liberality. This will just delay further the enactment of a Divorce Bill by this Congress.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza). Majority Leader.

REP. DEFENSOR. Mr. Speaker, considering that the motion has already been approved and a division of the House has been made, while I share some of the sentiments of the Honorable Lagman on House Bill No. 9349, may I request that the deliberations for this recommitment under the House Journal be noted.

REP. BROSAS. Mr. Speaker.

REP. DEFENSOR. Mr. Speaker, before we recognize the Honorable Brosas, may I request that the deliberations previously done for this recommitment under the House Journal be noted.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza). As already said, the Chair duly takes note of the statements of Congressman Lagman,

therefore let us proceed with the Business for the Day.

Majority Leader.

REP. DEFENSOR. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we recognize the Hon. Arlene Brosas for her manifestation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza). The Hon. Arlene Brosas is recognized. The Lady may please proceed.

MANIFESTATION OF REP. BROSAS

REP. BROSAS. Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we join the objection of Hon. Edcel Lagman with regard to the recommitment of the Divorce Bill. Inaasahan po sana natin na magkakaroon na ng debate dito sa Plenaryo kaugnay sa Divorce Bill. Ito po ay matagal nang hinintay ng mga kababaihan, ng mga women rights advocates, at optimistiko po sila na mapag-uusapan na ito, kung kaya we are one in objecting dito, na napaka-slim or halos walang reason kung bakit ire-recommit ulit pabalik sa Committee on Population and Family Relations ang Divorce Bill.

Mr. Speaker, ito po ay dapat pinag-uusapan na natin ngayon. Ito po ay kailangan ng mga kababaihan na nagsusulong ng pangangailangan sa Divorce Law sa ating bansa. Ito po ay pagbabalik sa divorce bilang rights-based option ng majority ng mga Pilipino. At gusto po sana namin na mismo ngayon ay mapag-uusapan na ito. We would like to manifest iyong objection na ito at iyong pangangailangan po na pag-uusapan na ito sa Plenaryo at isalang mismo sa debate. We do not find any reason kung bakit hindi kailangang pag-uusapan itong issue na ito, lalong-lalo na, ito naman ay dumaaan sa proper process at nandoon po ako, kaming mga primary authors nitong Bill nang isinalang sa Committee. So, we were expecting na ito ay mapag-uusapan na ngayon.

Actually, malaki po ang kasalanan natin kung according sa study ng Center for Women Resources, every 14 minutes

and 36 seconds, a woman is battered by her husband or partner. Matindi ang domestic violence sa atin, not by the hour but by the minutes. Kaya sa konteksto na ito, should a woman still stay within the marital relationship even if it is abusive, disadvantageous, and unhealthy? Hindi na po dapat iyon nangyayari. Kaya, Mr. Speaker, it is of utmost importance na pag-uusapan ang Divorce Bill dito sa Plenaryo.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maraming salamat, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza). The manifestation of GABRIELA Party-List Representative, the Honorable Brosas, is duly noted.

Majority Leader.

REP. VARGAS. Mr. Speaker, before we proceed to the Business for the Day, I move that we acknowledge the guests of Rep. Marissa "Del Mar" Magsino of OFW Party-List, namely, Rolando Gregorio Buenafe, Bogs Dimaunahan Bolor, Elizel Fulay Artiaga, Rosemarie Bolanos Robles, Maria Elaine Malagad Llanto, Wendelyn Villa Parocha, Bobby E. Aban, Dearlie A. Dela Cruz, Jeff Balsarza, Frank Naval, Rod Zulueta, Pete Ordiales, Ramon Sta. Maria, Ken Andrade Bautista, Ferdinand Delos Reyes, Lito Soriano, Dr. Elsa Tembriza, Dr. Ali Busran, Joan Nouf, Yasmin Mua, Gafar Dimalutang, Maria Medina, Atty. David Castillon, Matt Bubong, Marilou Bazan Matula, Jag Cor, Liza Que, Jurry N. Tanduyan, Nonie Sagadal, Bishop Bartolome Sagadal, June Vincent Gaudan, and Nica Lizardo.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza). To the 32 guests of Congresswoman Magsino, please stand and be acknowledged. Welcome to the House of Representatives. *(Applause)*

Majority Leader.

REP. VARGAS. Mr. Speaker, I also move that we acknowledge the guests of our Senior Deputy Majority Leader, Cong. Sandro Marcos, the national president of PCL or the Philippine Councilors League,

Mr. Handy Lao and Coun. Jaybee Baquiran from Laoag City.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Mendoza). To the esteemed guests of Cong. Sandro Marcos, welcome to the House of Representatives. *(Applause)*
Majority Leader.

REP. VARGAS. Mr. Speaker, I move that we proceed with the Reference of Business.

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

The Secretary General will please read the Reference of Business.

REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

The Secretary General read the titles of the following House Bills and Resolutions on First Reading as filed, Messages from the President and the Senate, Communications, and Committee Reports; and the Deputy Speaker made the corresponding references:

BILLS ON FIRST READING

House Bill No. 9759, entitled:
AN ACT PROVIDING FOR MARITIME TRAFFIC AND ANTI-POLLUTION REGULATIONS IN THE STRAITS OF BALABAG, BASILAN, BONGGAO, LUZON, MINDORO, SAN BERNARDINO, SURIGAO, AND VERDE PASSAGE ADOPTING FOR THE PURPOSE TRAFFIC SEPARATION SCHEMES, PROVIDING PENALTIES FOR VIOLATIONS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR
By Representative Olaso
TO THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

House Bill No. 9760, entitled:
AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE ADVANCED MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY BY UPGRADING AND DESIGNATING THE DR3AM CENTER

OF THE BATAAN PENINSULA STATE UNIVERSITY AS THE CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ON ADVANCED MANUFACTURING AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

By Representative Garcia (Albert)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

House Bill No. 9761, entitled:
AN ACT DECLARING A PARCEL OF LAND OF THE PUBLIC DOMAIN, LOCATED IN BARANGAYS BERONG, ARAMAYWAN, ISUGOD, TABON, MALATGAO, QUINLOGAN, AND CALUMPANG OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF QUEZON, PROVINCE OF PALAWAN, AS AGRICULTURAL LAND OPEN TO DISPOSITION FOR AGRICULTURAL, COMMERCIAL, RESIDENTIAL, INDUSTRIAL AND OTHER PRODUCTIVE PURPOSES

By Representative Alvarez (Jose)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

House Bill No. 9762, entitled:
AN ACT DECLARING A PARCEL OF LAND OF THE PUBLIC DOMAIN, LOCATED IN BARANGAYS BUNOG, IRAAN, PUNTA BAJA, CAMPOUNG ULAY AND RANSANG OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF JOSE P. RIZAL, PROVINCE OF PALAWAN, AS AGRICULTURAL LAND OPEN TO DISPOSITION FOR AGRICULTURAL, COMMERCIAL, RESIDENTIAL, INDUSTRIAL AND OTHER PRODUCTIVE PURPOSES

By Representative Alvarez (Jose)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

House Bill No. 9763, entitled:
AN ACT ESTABLISHING A MULTI-SPECIALTY MEDICAL CENTER TO BE KNOWN AS THE WESTERN PHILIPPINES MULTI-SPECIALTY MEDICAL CENTER,

AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

By Representative Alvarez (Jose)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

House Bill No. 9765, entitled:

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE CONVERSION OF THE F. VESTIL ROAD, LOCATED IN THE CITY OF CEBU, INTO A NATIONAL ROAD AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

By Representative Rama
TO THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND HIGHWAYS

House Bill No. 9766, entitled:

AN ACT CREATING A NEW VISA CATEGORY FOR DIGITAL NOMADS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

By Representative Rama
TO THE COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE

House Bill No. 9767, entitled:

AN ACT INTEGRATING BASIC FINANCIAL LITERACY AS A CORE SUBJECT IN THE K-12 CURRICULUM AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

By Representative Rama
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 9768, entitled:

KABUHAYAN AT KAUNLARAN NG KABABAYANG KATUTUBO ACT

By Representative Delos Santos
TO THE COMMITTEE ON INDIGENOUS CULTURAL COMMUNITIES AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

House Bill No. 9769, entitled:

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE FULL AND EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION AND ENFORCEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL MARITIME INSTRUMENTS OF WHICH THE PHILIPPINES IS A STATE PARTY

By Representative Gonzalez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

House Bill No. 9770, entitled:

AN ACT ENSURING THAT SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES UNDER THE K TO 12 PROGRAM ARE EQUIPPED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE, TRAINING AND SKILLS DEMANDED IN THE LABOR MARKET, ENHANCING THEIR EMPLOYABILITY AND COMPETITIVENESS, CREATING THE BATANG MAGALING COUNCILS TO STRENGTHEN MULTI-STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION AND SUPPORT FOR THEIR EMPLOYMENT, ALLOWING FULL DEDUCTION OF TRAINING EXPENSES INCURRED FOR THEIR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

By Representative Quimbo
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE AND THE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

House Bill No. 9773, entitled:

AN ACT DECLARING AUGUST 1 OF EVERY YEAR AS A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF NASIPIT, PROVINCE OF AGUSAN DEL NORTE, TO BE KNOWN AS THE "ARAW NG NASIPIT"

By Representative Corvera
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

House Bill No. 9774, entitled:

AN ACT DECLARING SEPTEMBER 29 OF EVERY YEAR AS A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF NASIPIT, PROVINCE OF AGUSAN DEL NORTE IN CELEBRATION OF THE DUNGGO FESTIVAL

By Representative Corvera
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

House Bill No. 9775, entitled:

AN ACT GRANTING THE SORSOGON II ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE (SORECO

II) A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, ESTABLISH, OPERATE, OWN, MANAGE AND MAINTAIN DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS FOR THE CONVEYANCE OF ELECTRIC POWER TO THE END USERS IN THE CITY OF SORSOGON; THE MUNICIPALITIES OF DONSOL, PILAR, CASTILLA, GUBAT, PRIETO DIAZ, BARCELONA AND ITS NEIGHBORING SUBURBS

By Representative Escudero
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE FRANCHISES

House Bill No. 9776, entitled:

AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9646 ENTITLED "AN ACT REGULATING THE PRACTICE OF REAL ESTATE SERVICE IN THE PHILIPPINES, CREATING FOR THE PURPOSE A PROFESSIONAL REGULATORY BOARD OF REAL ESTATE SERVICE, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES"

By Representative Rodriguez (Rufus)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE AND PROFESSIONAL REGULATION

House Bill No. 9777, entitled:

AN ACT PROTECTING SENIOR CITIZEN FROM VIOLENCE, DEFINING ELDER ABUSE, AND PRESCRIBING PENALTIES THEREFOR

By Representative Rodriguez (Rufus)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON SENIOR CITIZENS

House Bill No. 9778, entitled:

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A MORE RESPONSIVE AND COMPREHENSIVE REGULATION FOR THE REGISTRATION, LICENSING AND PRACTICE OF PROFESSIONAL COMPUTER ENGINEERS, REGISTERED COMPUTER ENGINEERS, COMPUTER ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGISTS, AND COMPUTER TECHNICIANS

By Representative Rodriguez (Rufus)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE AND PROFESSIONAL REGULATION

House Bill No. 9779, entitled:

AN ACT AMENDING ARTICLES 333 AND 344, AND REPEALING ARTICLE 334, OF THE REVISED PENAL CODE, ELIMINATING GENDER BIAS IN ADULTERY AND CONCUBINAGE

By Representative Rodriguez (Rufus)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON REVISION OF LAWS

House Bill No. 9780, entitled:

AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE NATIONAL MEASUREMENT INFRASTRUCTURE SYSTEM (NMIS) AMENDING RA 9236 ALSO KNOWN AS "THE NATIONAL METROLOGY ACT OF 2003," AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

By Representative Rodriguez (Rufus)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

House Bill No. 9781, entitled:

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE EVALUATION OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PROGRAMS IN ORDER TO REDUCE THE RATE OF TEENAGE PREGNANCY

By Representative Rodriguez (Rufus)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON YOUTH AND SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

House Bill No. 9782, entitled:

AN ACT AMENDING SECTION 4 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10149, ENTITLED "AN ACT TO PROMOTE FINANCIAL VIABILITY AND FISCAL DISCIPLINE IN GOVERNMENT-OWNED OR - CONTROLLED CORPORATIONS AND TO STRENGTHEN THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN ITS GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT TO MAKE THEM MORE RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF PUBLIC INTEREST AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES"

By Representative Rodriguez (Rufus)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT ENTERPRISES AND PRIVATIZATION

House Bill No. 9783, entitled:

AN ACT AMENDING CERTAIN SECTIONS OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 2382, AS AMENDED, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "MEDICAL ACT OF 1959", AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

By Representative Rodriguez (Rufus)

TO THE COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE AND PROFESSIONAL REGULATION AND THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

House Bill No. 9785, entitled:

CONSUMER DATA RIGHTS ACT OF 2024

By Representative Salceda

TO THE COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND INDUSTRY

House Bill No. 9786, entitled:

AN ACT INTEGRATING FINANCIAL LITERACY AND PEACE EDUCATION IN THE K TO 12 BASIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFORE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

By Representative Adiong

TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 9787, entitled:

AN ACT RECOGNIZING DIFFERENCE IN NEURODEVELOPMENT, UPHOLDING THE RIGHTS OF NEURODIVERGENT PEOPLE, AND INSTITUTING A NATIONAL CARE AND SUPPORT PLAN FOR NEURODIVERSITY

By Representative Adiong

TO THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

House Bill No. 9788, entitled:

AN ACT ESTABLISHING AND CONVERTING THE EXISTING NEWLY CONSTRUCTED HOSPITAL BUILDING IN BRGY. TANDUBATO MUNICIPALITY OF LUUK, 2ND DISTRICT OF SULU TO SULU SANITARIUM LUUK ANNEX AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

By Representative Arbison

TO THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

House Bill No. 9789, entitled:

AN ACT AMENDING, AND RENEWING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS, THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO DOMESTIC SATELLITE PHILIPPINES, INCORPORATED UNDER PRESIDENTIAL DECREE 947, ENTITLED "A PRESIDENTIAL DECREE GRANTING DOMSAT A FRANCHISE TO INSTALL, MAINTAIN AND OPERATE TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES, IN ANY PLACE IN THE PHILIPPINES STATIONS FOR PROVIDING TELECOMMUNICATION SERVICES THROUGH THE USE OF SATELLITES, TELECOMMUNICATIONS (RADIO, TELEGRAPH, TELEPHONE, AND TELEVISION SYSTEMS), LINES, CIRCUITS, WIRE AND/OR WIRELESS TO SERVE ALL THOSE NEEDING SUCH SERVICE ON LAND, AT SEA, AND IN THE AIR"

By Representative Chua

TO THE COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE FRANCHISES

House Bill No. 9790, entitled:

AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS (CHR) AS A NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTION (NHRI) AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

By Representatives Romualdez (Ferdinand Martin), Dalipe, Marcos, Abante, Romualdez (Yedda Marie) and Acidre

TO THE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

RESOLUTIONS

At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Mendoza relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Antonio "Tony" T. Albano.

House Resolution No. 1528, entitled:

A RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S CLUB (CWC) FOR ITS DYNAMISM, SIGNIFICANCE AND RELEVANCE

IN THE FIELD OF CHARITY
WORK BY INITIATING AND
FACILITATING PROJECTS AIMED
AT UPLIFTING THE QUALITY OF
LIFE OF THE UNDERPRIVILEGED

By Representative Villarica

TO THE COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND
GENDER EQUALITY

House Resolution No. 1530, entitled:

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE
COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE
AND PROFESSIONAL REGULATION
AND COMMITTEE ON BASIC
EDUCATION AND CULTURE,
TO INVESTIGATE, IN AID OF
LEGISLATION, THE ALLEGED
FAILURE OF THE DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION TO TIMELY REMIT
THE BENEFIT CONTRIBUTIONS OF
ITS EMPLOYEES EVERY YEAR

By Representatives Castro (France), Brosas
and Manuel

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1531, entitled:

A RESOLUTION CALLING ON THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC
ORDER AND SAFETY TO CONDUCT
AN INVESTIGATION, IN AID OF
LEGISLATION, ON THE DELAYS IN
THE PROMOTION OF THIRD LEVEL
OFFICERS OF THE PHILIPPINE
NATIONAL POLICE

By Representatives Acop, Abante and
Fernandez

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1532, entitled:

RESOLUTION URGING ACTION
TO IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL
STANDARDS AND PERFORMANCE
IN READING, MATHEMATICS,
AND SCIENCE AMONG FILIPINO
STUDENTS

By Representative Luistro

TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC
EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Resolution No. 1533, entitled:

RESOLUTION URGING THE HOUSE OF

REPRESENTATIVES TO CONDUCT
AN INVESTIGATION, IN AID OF
LEGISLATION, INTO THE LATEST
ISSUANCES OF THE DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION (DEPED) AND
THE COMMISSION ON HIGHER
EDUCATION (CHED) OF THE
GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE TO
STUDENTS AND TEACHERS IN
PRIVATE EDUCATION PROGRAM,
IN LIGHT OF THE RIGHT TO ACCESS
TO QUALITY EDUCATION

By Representatives Castro (France), Brosas
and Manuel

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1534, entitled:

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE
APPROPRIATE COMMITTEE(S) TO
CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID
OF LEGISLATION, ON THE RECENT
WIDESPREAD POWER DISTURBANCE
IN WESTERN VISAYAS

By Representative Marcos

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1535, entitled:

A RESOLUTION URGING THE HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES THROUGH
THE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY TO
CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION
IN AID OF LEGISLATION ON THE
RECURRING GRID DISTURBANCE
OF THE WESTERN VISAYAS PANAY
ISLAND TRANSMISSION LINE
RESULTING TO UNSCHEDULED
POWER OUTAGE IN THE SAID
AREA

By Representatives De Jesus and
Dagooc

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1536, entitled:

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE HOUSE
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY TO
CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID
OF LEGISLATION, IN THE MASSIVE
POWER OUTAGE IN THE PROVINCE
OF CAPIZ

By Representative Guintu

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1537, entitled:

A RESOLUTION URGING THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY TO IMMEDIATELY CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE REGION-WIDE UNSCHEDULED AND INTERMITTENT JANUARY 2024 BLACKOUT IN WESTERN VISAYAS

By Representatives Baronda, Gorriceta, Tupas, Defensor, Garin, Biron, Billones, Castro (Jane), Legarda, Haresco, Marquez, Nava, Gasataya, Valmayor, Marañon, Benitez, Ferrer (Juliet Marie), Alvarez (Mercedes), Ang and Colada
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1538, entitled:

A RESOLUTION ENJOINING THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY IN AID OF LEGISLATION ON THE ONGOING BOUNDARY DISPUTE BETWEEN THE PROVINCES OF COTABATO AND BUKIDNON

By Representative Santos
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1539, entitled:

A RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING THE FIBA LOCAL ORGANIZING COMMITTEE (LOC), THE SAMAHANG BASKETBALL NG PILIPINAS (SBP) AS WELL AS THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND ALL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND INSTRUMENTALITIES FOR THE SUCCESSFUL HOSTING OF THE 2023 FIBA BASKETBALL WORLD CUP

By Representative Puno
TO THE COMMITTEE ON YOUTH AND SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

House Resolution No. 1540, entitled:

A RESOLUTION COMMENDING AND CONGRATULATING HON. RALPH GONZALEZ RECTO FOR HIS APPOINTMENT AS THE

SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE

By Representative Chua
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1541, entitled:

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, THROUGH ITS COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS, TO INVESTIGATE, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, THE REPORTED SIGNATURE-BUYING AND ALLEGED USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS FOR THE SO-CALLED PEOPLE'S INITIATIVE TO AMEND THE 1987 PHILIPPINE CONSTITUTION

By Representatives Castro (France), Brosas and Manuel
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 1542, entitled:

RESOLUTION URGING THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS TO UPDATE AND CLEANSE THE CERTIFIED LIST OF VOTERS IN THE ENTIRE COUNTRY BEFORE RESUMING THIS YEAR THE SYSTEM OF CONTINUING REGISTRATION OF VOTERS IN ORDER TO ENSURE CLEAN, HONEST AND CREDIBLE ELECTIONS

By Representative Gomez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON SUFFRAGE AND ELECTORAL REFORMS

House Resolution No. 1544, entitled:

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON ISSUES OF SUFFICIENCY, RELIABILITY, AND AFFORDABILITY OF ELECTRICITY IN THE PROVINCE OF PALAWAN WITH THE END VIEW OF PROVIDING REASONABLE ENERGY RATES, EFFICIENT POWER DISTRIBUTION, AND SUSTAINABLE SOURCE OF ENERGY SUPPLY FOR PALAWAÑOS

By Representatives Romualdez (Ferdinand Martin), Alvarez (Jose) and Salvame
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT



MALACAÑAN PALACE
MANILA

20 December 2023

**THE HONORABLE SPEAKER
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN OF
THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

By the power vested in me by the 1987 Constitution, I hereby sign into law Republic Act (RA) No. 11975, the General Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024, entitled -

**AN ACT APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR THE OPERATION OF THE
GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES FROM
JANUARY ONE TO DECEMBER THIRTY-ONE, TWO THOUSAND AND
TWENTY-FOUR.**

This is the second National Budget to be passed and the first to be fully crafted under my Administration.

For continuity, we will maintain the theme Agenda for Prosperity. Guided by the overarching goal of economic transformation towards inclusivity and sustainability, we now focus on securing a future-proof and sustainable economy.

I. GENERAL COMMENTS

The total programmed appropriations for FY 2024 amounts to Php 5.768 trillion, equivalent to 21.1 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) and higher by 9.5 percent compared to FY 2023. This has been designed to sustain the country's high-growth trajectory and is the key to unlocking the Administration's goals for economic transformation in pursuit of our Agenda for Prosperity.

It honors the 8-Point Socioeconomic Agenda that is aligned with the Medium-Term Fiscal Framework (MTFF) and consists of the following focus areas: (1) food security, (2) improved transportation, (3) affordable and clean energy, (4) health care, (5) social services, (6) education, (7) bureaucratic efficiency, and (8) sound fiscal management. This is evident in the budget prioritization of Education, Health, Social Welfare, and Agriculture, including the Administration's flagship infrastructure development program Build, Better, More.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES

With the goal of economic transformation towards a sustainable economy, inclusivity is paramount. Towards this end, the National Budget also supports the government's continuing efforts on digital transformation and regional development which will redound to bureaucratic efficiency, sound fiscal management, and sustainability.

In line with the Sustainable Development Goal of Climate Action, the government will continue to adopt Climate Change Expenditure Tagging to monitor the scope and distribution of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in the country. Considering its fundamental importance, the bulk of climate change expenditures will be allocated to water-sufficiency projects that will benefit all communities in the country.

Aside from the MTFF, these priorities are aligned with the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023-2028—the blueprint of the Administration's economic and social transformation agenda.

II. DIRECT VETO

In accordance with my constitutional mandate to ensure that laws are faithfully executed, I am obliged to veto **Department of Justice (DOJ)-Office of the Secretary (OSEC), Special Provision No. 1, "DOJ Revolving Fund," Volume I-A, page 1119**, inasmuch as there is no law which authorizes the DOJ to establish a revolving fund for the purpose indicated therein. It may be emphasized that the service fees sought to be charged and collected are to be imposed upon complaints and affidavits filed with the National Prosecution Service, and petitions for review filed before the DOJ, when, in fact, such pleadings are filed with the said agencies by virtue of their jurisdiction vested by law.

Further, the charges are clearly not from business-type activities within the contemplation of the General Provision on Revolving Funds in this Act which permits the constitution of a revolving fund from receipts derived from business-type activities of agencies to be utilized for the operational expenses of said business-type activities.

In the case of *Philippine Constitution Association, et al. v. Enriquez, et al.*, G.R. No. 113105, August 19, 1994, the Supreme Court (SC) pronounced that "included in the category of 'inappropriate provisions' are unconstitutional provisions and provisions which are intended to amend other laws, because clearly these kind[s] of laws have no place in an appropriations bill. These are matters of general legislation more appropriately dealt with in separate enactments."

In the same vein, I veto **Section 38, General Provisions, "Implementation of National Government's Career Executive Service Development Program (NGCESDP)," Volume I-B, page 762**. On one hand, the said Section does not relate to any particular appropriation in this Budget. On the other hand, it is noted that Presidential Decree (PD) No. 336 dated November 14, 1973 (Amending Part III, Article IV, Sections 2 and 5 [G], of the Integrated Reorganization Plan approved under Presidential Decree No. 1 dated September 24, 1972), which is considered a substantive law, created the Career Executive Service Board (CESB). PD No. 336 further delineated the functions of



the CESB as the governing body of the Career Executive Service (CES) and the Development Academy of the Philippines tasked to prepare a CES program appropriate and necessary for the organization and operation of the CES, and in consultation with the CESB, initiate and continue to implement the aforesaid program. Moreover, Section 8 (2), Chapter 2, Subtitle A, Title I, Book V of Executive Order (EO) No. 292, s. 1987 (Administrative Code of 1987), also considered a substantive law, expressly prescribed that entrance to the third level career service position shall be prescribed by the CESB.

III. CONDITIONAL IMPLEMENTATION

The faithful execution of laws is intricately tied with prudent stewardship of public funds. Consequently, it is paramount to ensure that government funds are utilized in accordance with their authorized purposes and in compliance with applicable laws, policies, rules, and regulations.

A. STRICT ADHERENCE TO LAWS, POLICIES, RULES, AND REGULATIONS

1. Receipts and Revenues Collected by Agencies

I place **DOJ-Bureau of Corrections, Special Provision No. 1, "Revolving Fund for Agro-Industrial Products," Volume I-A, page 1125-1126**, under conditional implementation that in the utilization of the revolving fund constituted from the sale of agro-industrial products, priority shall be given to the following: (i) payment of allowance to inmates working in agricultural or industrial projects at a rate of not less than Five Hundred Pesos (P500) for each inmate per month; (ii) payment of additional subsistence and medicine allowances of inmates in the National Penitentiary; and (iii) purchase of additional supplies and materials, farm tools, and equipment for the construction, maintenance, repair, and operations of agricultural or industrial projects and prison facilities.

Moreover, I acknowledge the noble intent of Congress in including the proviso in **DOJ-Bureau of Immigration (BI), Special Provision No. 1, "Immigration Fees and Collections," Volume I-A, page 1131**, that travel expenses incurred by Filipino passengers who were deferred or denied boarding without a court order shall be charged from the balance of the special trust fund account. However, it must be clearly understood that this should not render nugatory the mandate of the BI to administer and enforce immigration laws, as well as RA No. 11862 (Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act).

Therefore, the guidelines to be issued by the BI, Commission on Audit (COA), and Department of Budget and Management (DBM) to implement this Special Provision shall prescribe the necessary and sufficient standards to ensure the balance between the protection and convenience of Filipino passengers and the duty of the BI to effectively enforce immigration and related laws.



2. Quick Response Fund

Under RA No. 10121 (Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010), the Quick Response Fund (QRF) is a stand-by fund for relief and recovery programs in order that the situation and living conditions of people in communities or areas stricken by disasters, calamities, epidemics, or complex emergencies may be normalized as quickly as possible. Hence, considering the very nature of the QRF, I place **Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)-OSEC, Special Provision No. 6, "Quick Response Fund," Volume I-B, page 241**, under conditional implementation requiring the DSWD to ensure that in the implementation of the QRF, priority shall be given to the quick rehabilitation and relief of communities affected by the more recent calamities, epidemics, crises, and catastrophes, inasmuch as the other relief, recovery, reconstruction and other works or services may be covered by various appropriations in this Act, such as the relevant items in agency budgets and the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund. Similarly, **Department of Health (DOH)-OSEC, Special Provision No. 5, "Quick Response Fund," Volume I-A, page 976**, is hereby placed under conditional implementation that the funding requirements for the prepositioning of medicines, hygiene kits, and medical supplies and equipment shall be primarily charged against the DOH's regular budget for the purpose.

3. Engineering and Administrative Overhead Expenses

Overhead expenses are inevitably necessary in the implementation of programs and projects. However, the incurrence of said expenses should be guided, not only by established laws, rules, and regulations, but also by prudence in spending.

Relatedly, it is to be noted that under Section 7 of RA No. 8150 (Public Works and Highways Infrastructure Program Act of 1995), the direct engineering and administrative overhead (EAO) expenditures incidental thereto shall be reflected in the program of work for the project concerned and shall not exceed four percent (4%) of the amount actually released for the project: Provided, that the said percentage shall be reduced as the total project cost increases. In this regard, it must be emphasized that the same Section 7 prescribes that appropriations for projects shall be used solely for project implementation, which includes the direct engineering and administrative overhead expenditures incidental to the project implementation.

Hence, I am placing **Department of Education-OSEC, Special Provision No. 5, "Basic Education Facilities," Volume I-A, page 196-197**, and **Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH)-OSEC, Special Provision No. 18, "Project Related Expenses," Volume I-B, page 3-4**, under conditional implementation that the utilization of the EAO expenses under these Special Provisions shall be in accordance with RA No. 8150 and other relevant rules and



regulations, and that the agency concerned shall guard against overlapping of funding sources.

Lastly, to ensure that effective implementation is not at the expense of fiscal prudence, **DOTr-OSEC, Special Provision No. 9, "Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program and its Components," Volume I-B, page 353**, particularly the utilization of the overhead and administrative costs of the program, not exceeding five percent (5%) of the total amount appropriated, is placed under conditional implementation to require the DOTr to ensure that the overhead and administrative costs are directly related or incidental to the implementation of the program. The DOTr shall issue the necessary guidelines for this purpose.

4. Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses

The recognition of judicial independence is evident under **The Judiciary-Supreme Court of the Philippines and the Lower Courts, Special Provision No. 7, "Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses of Lower Courts," Volume I-B, page 567**. In this regard, I am confident that the SC shall continuously ensure the equitable allocation and prompt release of the Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses allocations to the lower courts for the efficient administration of justice.

5. Implementation of National Programs and Projects

Consistent with the government's continuing efforts to pursue the decentralization of the delivery of public services, the implementation of infrastructure projects under **DPWH-OSEC, Special Provision No. 6, "Basic Infrastructure Program," Volume I-B, page 2**, including the maintenance and repair thereof, shall be in accordance with RA No. 7160 (Local Government Code of 1991), and other pertinent laws, rules, regulations, and guidelines.

On another note, I welcome the additional purposes included by the Congress under the Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged or Displaced Workers Program or TUPAD Program, particularly: (i) clean-up operations of rivers, riverbanks, canals, esteros, seashores, and planting of trees as part of emergency employment; (ii) self-employment activities to ensure steady income; and (iii) immediate temporary employment to victims of calamities, epidemics, crises, and catastrophes. Nonetheless, to ensure that the additional components of the program will be carried out effectively, the implementation of **Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE)-OSEC, Special Provision No. 1, "Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged or Displaced Workers Program (TUPAD) and Government Internship Program (GIP)," Volume I-A, page 1159-1160**, shall be subject to the guidelines to be issued by the DOLE.



6. Utilization of Funds for Pension and Retirement Claims

Item (a) (iv) of **Pension and Gratuity Fund, Special Provision No. 1, "Pension and Gratuity Fund," Volume I-B, page 731**, shall cover the arrears for the period during which the military veterans were entitled to the total administrative disability pension only, pursuant to Section 2 of RA No. 7696 (An Act Amending Certain Sections of RA No. 6948 Otherwise Known as "An Act Standardizing and Upgrading the Benefits for Military Veterans and Their Dependents"), amending among others, Section 5 (h) of RA No. 6948. The entitlement is only deemed established upon the validation of the list of claimants by the COA.

Further, the release of the subsidy covering the payment for retirement benefits from FYs 2002 to 2024 under **Budgetary Support to Government Corporations (BSGC)-Presidential Communications Office-Intercontinental Broadcasting Corporation (IBC), Special Provision No. 1, "Subsidy to the Intercontinental Broadcasting Corporation," Volume I-B, page 685**, shall be subject to the submission of necessary requirements by the IBC to the Governance Commission for GOCCs for review and evaluation considering relevant laws, rules, and regulations.

7. Funding for Foreign-Assisted Projects

As in the recent fiscal years, the Congress identified specific foreign-assisted projects (FAPs) under the **Unprogrammed Appropriations (UA), Special Provision No. 5, "Support to Foreign-Assisted Projects," Volume I-B, page 738**, chargeable against **Purpose No. 3**. However, by the authority vested upon the President under Section 20, Article VII of the 1987 Constitution, such identification of the specific FAPs shall not limit the President in negotiating other foreign loan agreements.

Moreover, the release of funds chargeable against the same **Purpose No. 3** of the UA shall be subject to the submission of a Special Budget pursuant to Section 35, Chapter 5, Book VI of EO No. 292, together with the physical and financial plan, project profile, and a copy of the perfected loan agreement, as approved in accordance with pertinent laws, rules, regulations, and guidelines issued thereon. Further, any change in the project title, scope, or amount of the FAPs shall further be subject to the appropriate approval in accordance with existing guidelines.

B. SHARED FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Section 29 (1) of Article VI of the 1987 Constitution directs that no money shall be paid out of the Treasury except in pursuance of an appropriation made by law, and Section 32, Chapter 5, Book VI of EO No. 292 provides that all moneys appropriated for functions, activities, projects, and programs shall be available

solely for the specific purposes for which these are appropriated. Hence, as in previous years, I place **Congress of the Philippines, Special Provision No. 6, "Availability of Appropriations and Cash Allocations," Volume I-A, page 15,** under conditional implementation to emphasize that the use and disbursements of funds shall be for the specified purposes and within the period of availability of appropriations as prescribed under the General Provision on Cash Budgeting System in this Act.

IV. GENERAL OBSERVATION

Aligned with the intention to secure a future-proof and sustainable economy under my Administration's Agenda for Prosperity, I hereby express my position on how some provisions in this Budget will be construed and implemented.

A. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Consistently, we put emphasis on compliance with salary standardization and compensation laws, rules, and regulations, including the policies on the use of appropriations or savings for the creation of new positions, and the provision of retirement benefits and separation pay. The scrap and build policy in the adjustment and modification of organizational structure, and other existing organization, staffing, compensation, and position classification standards of the DBM aims to ensure a stable organizational structure across all government agencies. I believe that the Congress will constantly uphold the policy set forth under Section 8, Article IX-B of the 1987 Constitution, which prohibits the payment of additional compensation.

Therefore, I express my continuing trust in the Congress in its implementation of **Congress of the Philippines, Special Provision No. 2, "Organizational Structure of the Senate, the House of Representatives, the Senate and House of Representatives Electoral Tribunals and the Commission on Appointments," Volume I-A, page 15.**

B. AUTOMATIC APPROPRIATIONS

Under Section 2 (d), Chapter 3, Volume I of the Government Accounting Manual for National Government Agencies issued by the COA, automatic appropriations, such as Special Accounts in the General Fund (SAGF), "are the authorizations programmed annually or for some other period prescribed by law, by virtue of outstanding legislation which [do] not require periodic action by Congress." These automatic appropriations, thus, need not be included in the annual appropriations.

Hence, while Congress increased or removed specified amounts pertaining to the SAGFs under the following agencies, it is understood that the Executive



Branch is not precluded from exercising judicious programming of funds based on actual collections and utilization:

- a. Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG)-Bureau of Fire Protection, Special Provision No. 1, "Fire Code Revenues," Volume I-A, page 1056;
- b. Other Executive Offices-Dangerous Drugs Board, Special Provision No. 1, "Collections for Drug Rehabilitation Activities," Volume I-B, page 494-495; and
- c. DOTr-Office for Transportation Security, Special Provision No. 1, "Aviation Security Fees," Volume I-B, page 381.

C. COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS UNDER EXISTING LAWS, RULES AND REGULATIONS

It is apparent that Department of Agrarian Reform-OSEC, Special Provision No. 4, "Exclusion of Lands Owned and Occupied by State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) from the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program," Volume I-A, page 27, is anchored on Section 10 of RA No. 6657 (Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law of 1988) which prescribes that "[l]ands actually, directly and exclusively used and found to be necessary for xxx school sites and campuses including experimental farm stations operated by public or private schools for educational purposes, xxx shall be exempt from the coverage of this Act." Hence, the implementation of this Special Provision shall conform to the aforecited provision of law.

Meanwhile, it is hereby emphasized that the implementation of DILG-OSEC, Special Provision No. 9, "Local Climate Budget Tagging," Volume I-A, page 1048, shall be subject to the requirement under DBM-Climate Change Commission-DILG Joint Memorandum Circular No. 2015-01 dated July 23, 2015 (Revised Guidelines for Tagging/Tracking Climate Change Expenditures in the Local Budget [Amending JMC 2014-01, dated August 7, 2014]) of submission by the local government units of the list of tagged climate change programs, projects, and activities to the DILG and DBM during the annual submission of budget proposals.

Moreover, it is understood that BSGC-Department of Agriculture-Philippine Coconut Authority, Special Provision No. 2, "Coconut Farmers and Industry Trust Fund," Volume I-B, page 645, shall be subject to Section 8 of RA No. 11524 (Coconut Farmers and Industry Trust Fund Act), specifically the last paragraph thereof, which states that "[t]hat the amount in the Trust Fund account for disposition by the designated government implementing agencies under the Development Plan, which shall be released directly to them, shall not be lower than Five Billion Pesos (P5,000,000,000.00) for any given year."



D. PRUDENT USE OF GOVERNMENT FUNDS

Item (c) of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund (Calamity Fund), Special Provision No. 1, "National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Program," Volume I-B, page 728, requires the DBM and the Department of Finance (DOF) to issue the necessary guidelines, in coordination with the Government Service Insurance System. However, it is understood that the said guidelines shall ensure that the implementation of the appropriation for the parametric insurance coverage of government facilities against natural calamities is harmonized with the implementation of DOF-Bureau of the Treasury, Special Provision No. 2, "Use of Trust Receipts from Catastrophe Bond Payout," Volume I-A, page 939, in order to promote the prudent use of government funds, and avoid duplication of funding and overlapping of purposes.

V. INCREASES AND REDUCTIONS IN APPROPRIATIONS AND NEW BUDGETARY ITEMS

In the exercise of the budget execution function vested upon the Executive Branch, it is understood that increases in appropriations and new budgetary items introduced by Congress in this Budget shall be subject to the National Government's cash programming, observance of prudent fiscal management, and applicable budget execution rules and procedures.

Further, considering that increases and reductions in appropriations, and new budgetary items introduced by Congress in this Act will have corresponding effects on the outputs and outcomes of the agencies concerned, said agencies shall ensure that their performance targets are revised accordingly and reflected in the relevant budget execution documents submitted to the DBM for monitoring and evaluation.

VI. CLOSING STATEMENTS

The Philippines is now considered one of the fastest emerging markets in the Asia Pacific, thanks to our strong rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic, as seen in our 7.6 percent GDP growth rate for 2022, the fastest pace of growth since 1976.

While 2023 was a year of economic challenges due to global headwinds, with global inflation rates hitting record highs, we have proven that with our determination to meet the objectives set out in our Medium-Term Fiscal Framework through a whole-of-government approach, we could be able to stay on track with our Agenda for Prosperity.

The timely passage of the 2024 General Appropriations Bill (GAB) by both Houses of Congress is a testament to our unified effort towards the Philippines we aspire for, *Ang Bagong Pilipinas*.

Working together towards sustained economic recovery and long-term fiscal stability, there is no doubt in my mind that we will continue to meet our economic targets and soon become an upper-middle income economy, on our way towards achieving our Agenda for Prosperity.

Very truly yours,



Copy furnished:

SEN. JUAN MIGUEL F. ZUBIRI
Senate President
Senate of the Philippines
GSIS Bldg., Pasay City

SECRETARY MARK LLANDRO L. MENDOZA
Head
Presidential Legislative Liaison Office
2/F New Executive Bldg.
Malacañang, Manila



TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES



MALACAÑAN PALACE
MANILA

05 January 2024

THE HONORABLE SPEAKER
and Members of the House of Representatives
House of Representatives
Batasan Hills, Quezon City

Ladies and Gentlemen:

In accordance with my firm commitment to modernize and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of tax administration and to strengthen taxpayer rights, I sign into law Republic Act No. **11976**, entitled "**AN ACT INTRODUCING ADMINISTRATIVE TAX REFORMS, AMENDING SECTIONS 21, 22, 51, 57, 58, 76, 77, 81, 90, 91, 103, 106, 108, 109, 110, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 128, 200, 204, 229, 235, 256, 237, 238, 241, 242, 245, 248, AND 269; AND REPEALING SECTION 34 (K) OF THE NATIONAL INTERNAL REVENUE CODE OF 1997, AS AMENDED, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**"

After the comprehensive amendments to tax policy introduced by the previous administration, we now focus our sights on tax administration with the passage of the Ease of Paying Taxes (EOPT) Act. Recognizing the importance of how the government collects taxes, this measure solidifies our commitment to our countrymen towards a dynamic and efficient tax administration which is responsive to the needs of our taxpayers, both individuals and those who are doing business, adapts to the changing times, and ultimately supports our recovery and growth objectives.

The EOPT Act will simplify tax filings for micro and small enterprises, allow most tax processes to be done online, shift to an invoice system to accelerate value-added tax (VAT) refunds, and create a special division in the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) for small and medium taxpayers.

I thank the legislators of the 19th Congress, especially the leadership of both Houses and the Chairpersons of the Committees on Ways and Means, for this crucial and far-reaching Act.

However, I cannot fully support certain provisions of the measure that tend to defeat its very objectives and would not only pose a substantial fiscal risk but also reduce the efficiency of tax administration in the long run.

We seek a tax system that would alleviate the tax burden of our citizenry and support lasting economic development. It is crucial, therefore, to maintain a fiscally disciplined policy that will ultimately be favorable for everyone.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES

Exempting micro-enterprises from the obligation to withhold taxes

Under Section 27(2) of Article VI in the 1987 Constitution, the President may veto particular items in an appropriation, revenue, or tariff bill, but the veto shall not affect the item or items to which he does not object. This power covers items of appropriation, revenue, tariff, as well as inappropriate provisions in the measure. As such, I am constrained to veto **Section 8** of the Act, which exempts micro-enterprises from the obligation to withhold taxes under Section 57(b) of the Tax Code, to wit:

SEC. 8. Section 57 of the National Internal Revenue Code of 1997, as amended, is hereby further amended to read as follows:

“SEC. 57. *Withholding of Tax at Source.* –

(A) x x x

(B) x x x

(C) *Tax-free Covenants Bonds.* – x x x

The Department of Finance shall review, at least once every three (3) years, regulations and processes for the withholding of creditable tax under this Code, and direct the Bureau of Internal Revenue to amend rules and regulations for the same, should it be found during the review that the existing rules, regulations, and processes for the withholding of creditable tax under this Code adversely and materially impact the taxpayer: *Provided, That micro taxpayers shall not be required to withhold taxes under Subsection (B) of this Section.*” [underscoring added]

The withholding tax system provides the benefit of collecting the seller's income taxes in advance. It also serves as an audit trail that mitigates underdeclaration of sales and income and underpayment of the corresponding value-added tax (VAT). If not vetoed, removing the withholding tax requirement for micro taxpayers will likely result in an understatement of tax obligations, negatively affecting the cash flow of the government.

Assuming a 50 percent non-compliance rate (based on a 2018 World Bank study placing the country's personal income tax gap at 53.4 percent), the exemption of micro taxpayers will cost the government **P40.4 billion in 2024 alone**, equivalent to **0.15 percent of GDP**. The total estimated **forgone revenues for 2024 to 2028** is approximately **P206.4 billion**. Even at a modest non-compliance rate of 25 percent, the estimated average annual revenue loss will still be at P25.8 billion or a total of P103.2 billion from 2024 to 2028. **The government cannot afford to lose such considerable revenue amid limited fiscal space at a time when the country needs government support to maintain its economic growth momentum.**

The aim of the EOPT Act to support micro and small enterprises must be fulfilled without impairing the government's tax administration capacities which are crucial to a responsive, effective, and sustainable implementation of fiscal policies. We have to strike a balance between providing relief to taxpayers, on the one hand, and maintaining administrative efficiency through the integrity of our tax collection and monitoring mechanisms, on the other. When we keep our reforms balanced and equitable, we ensure a resilient public financial management system that will facilitate stronger economic growth.

Very truly yours,



Copy furnished:

SEN. JUAN MIGUEL F. ZUBIRI
Senate President
Senate of the Philippines
GSIS Bldg., Pasay City

SECRETARY MARK LLANDRO L. MENDOZA
Head
Presidential Legislative Liaison Office
2/F New Executive Bldg.
Malacañang, Manila

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

Message dated December 18, 2023, informing the House of Representatives that on December 13, 2023, the Senate approved the Conference Committee Report of the Bicameral Conference Committee on the disagreeing provisions of Senate Bill No. 2221 and House Bill No. 7325, entitled:
AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE MAGNA CARTA OF FILIPINO SEAFARERS.
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

COMMUNICATIONS

Letter dated November 3, 2023 of Ronald Gian Carlo Cardema, Chairperson and CEO, National Youth Commission, informing the House of Representatives that their Report on the Utilization of Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) Mandatory and Continuing Training Fund - Statement of Appropriations, Allotments, Obligations, Disbursements and Balances (FAR No. 1) for the quarter ending September 30, 2023 was posted on their website - Transparency Seal on October 27, 2023.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON
APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated November 7, 2023 of Romeo D. Lumagui, Jr., Commissioner, Bureau of Internal Revenue, submitting to the House of Representatives a copy of their Consolidated Monthly Report of Disbursements (FAR No. 4) for the month of October 2023.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON
APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated November 9, 2023 of Kim Robert C. De Leon, Undersecretary for Administration and Finance, Department of Transportation, transmitting to the House of Representatives the following financial reports for the month of October 2023:

1. Monthly Report of Disbursements – FAR No. 4, Fund Cluster 01;
2. Monthly Report of Disbursements – FAR

No. 4, Fund Cluster 02; and
3. Monthly Report of Disbursements – FAR No. 4, Fund Cluster 02 – Working Fund.
TO THE COMMITTEE ON
APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated November 10, 2023 of Secretary Carlito G. Galvez, Jr., Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity, Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity (OPAPRU), informing the House of Representatives that OPAPRU's Financial Report for the month of October 2023 was submitted to the Unified Reporting System (URS) and posted on their official website.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON
APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated November 14, 2023 of Kelvin T. Chan, Municipal Mayor, Municipality of Pozorrubio, Province of Pangasinan, informing the House of Representatives that their Agency Action Plan and Status of Implementation as of November 3, 2023 on Audit Observations and Recommendations for the Calendar Year 2022 was posted on their official website <https://pozorrubio.gov.ph>.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON
APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated November 17, 2023 of Michelle N. Rabat, City Mayor, City of Mati, Province of Davao Oriental, submitting to the House of Representatives a copy of their Report on Fund Utilization and Status of Program/Project Implementation of the Local Government Support Fund – Support to Barangay Development Program for the quarter ending September 30, 2023.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON
APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated November 21, 2023 of Rodolfo D. Marson, Punong Barangay, Barangay R.M. Tan, City of Ormoc, Province of Leyte, transmitting to the House of Representatives a copy of their Report on Fund Utilization and Status of Program/

Project Implementation of the Local Government Support Fund for the third quarter of 2023.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON
APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated November 21, 2023 of Arthur R. Defensor, Jr., Governor, Province of Iloilo, submitting to the House of Representatives a copy of their Report on Fund Utilization and Status of Program/Project Implementation of the Local Government Support Fund - Financial Assistance to Local Government Units as of September 30, 2023 which was posted on their official website.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON
APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated November 21, 2023 of Leo Carmelo J. Locsin, Sr., Acting City Mayor, City of Ormoc, Province of Leyte, transmitting to the House of Representatives a copy of their Report on Fund Utilization and Status of Program/Project Implementation of the Local Government Support Fund for the third quarter ending September 30, 2023.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON
APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated November 22, 2023 of Alex L. Advincula, City Mayor, City of Imus, Province of Cavite, informing the House of Representatives that their Report on Fund Utilization and Status of Program/Project Implementation of the Local Government Support Fund for the quarter ending September 30, 2023 was posted on their official website <https://cityofimus.gov.ph/>.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON
APPROPRIATIONS

Letters dated November 30 and December 6, 2023 of Joseph B. Salud, Bank Officer VI, Office of the General Counsel and Legal Services, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), transmitting to the House of Representatives duly certified copies of the following BSP issuances:

1. Circular No. 1183 dated 24 November 2023;

2. Circular Letter No. CL-2023-065 dated 01 December 2023; and
3. Circular Letter No. CL-2023-066 dated 01 December 2023.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON BANKS AND
FINANCIAL INTERMEDIARIES

Report dated January 10, 2024 of Honorable Reginald S. Velasco, Secretary General, House of Representatives, on enrolled copies of House Bill No. 8980, entitled:

AN ACT APPROPRIATING FUNDS
FOR THE OPERATION OF THE
GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC
OF THE PHILIPPINES FROM
JANUARY ONE TO DECEMBER
THIRTY-ONE, TWO THOUSAND
AND TWENTY-FOUR

which were transmitted to the Office of the President on December 19, 2023, for His Excellency's consideration and signature, pursuant to Section 18(h), Rule VI of the Rules of the House of Representatives.

Letter dated December 20, 2023 of Lucas P. Bersamin, Executive Secretary, Office of the President, Malacañang, transmitting two (2) original copies of Republic Act No. 11975, entitled:

AN ACT APPROPRIATING FUNDS
FOR THE OPERATION OF THE
GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC
OF THE PHILIPPINES FROM
JANUARY ONE TO DECEMBER
THIRTY-ONE, TWO THOUSAND
AND TWENTY-FOUR

which was signed by President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr., together with his line-veto message. TO THE ARCHIVES

Letter dated December 27, 2023 of Lucas P. Bersamin, Executive Secretary, Office of the President, Malacañang, transmitting two (2) original copies each of the following Republic Acts which were signed by President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr.:

1. R.A. No. 11968, entitled: AN ACT CONVERTING THE SAN ISIDRO SATELLITE CAMPUS OF THE LEYTE NORMAL UNIVERSITY LOCATED

- IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SAN ISIDRO, PROVINCE OF LEYTE, INTO A REGULAR CAMPUS OF THE LEYTE NORMAL UNIVERSITY TO BE KNOWN AS THE LEYTE NORMAL UNIVERSITY-SAN ISIDRO CAMPUS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;
2. R.A. No. 11969, entitled: AN ACT CONVERTING THE BATAAN PENINSULA STATE UNIVERSITY BAGAC EXTENSION CAMPUS IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF BAGAC, PROVINCE OF BATAAN, INTO A REGULAR CAMPUS OF THE BATAAN PENINSULA STATE UNIVERSITY, TO BE KNOWN AS THE "BATAAN PENINSULA STATE UNIVERSITY-BAGAC CAMPUS", AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;
 3. R.A. No. 11970, entitled: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COLLEGE OF MEDICINE IN THE BENGUET STATE UNIVERSITY LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF LA TRINIDAD, PROVINCE OF BENGUET, TO BE KNOWN AS THE BENGUET STATE UNIVERSITY-COLLEGE OF MEDICINE, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;
 4. R.A. No. 11971, entitled: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COLLEGE OF MEDICINE IN THE SOUTHERN LUZON STATE UNIVERSITY MAIN CAMPUS LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF LUCBAN, PROVINCE OF QUEZON, TO BE KNOWN AS THE SOUTHERN LUZON STATE UNIVERSITY-COLLEGE OF MEDICINE, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;
 5. R.A. No. 11972, entitled: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COLLEGE OF MEDICINE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN PHILIPPINES LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF CATARMAN, PROVINCE OF NORTHERN SAMAR, TO BE KNOWN AS THE UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN PHILIPPINES-COLLEGE OF MEDICINE, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR;
 6. R.A. No. 11973, entitled: AN ACT ESTABLISHING IN THE CITY OF LIGAO, PROVINCE OF ALBAY, A COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE OF THE BICOL UNIVERSITY, TO BE KNOWN AS THE BICOL UNIVERSITY-COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR; and
 7. R.A. No. 11974, entitled: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COLLEGE OF MEDICINE IN THE VISAYAS STATE UNIVERSITY LOCATED IN THE CITY OF BAYBAY, PROVINCE OF LEYTE, TO BE KNOWN AS THE VISAYAS STATE UNIVERSITY-COLLEGE OF MEDICINE, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.
TO THE ARCHIVES
- Letter dated January 5, 2024 of Lucas P. Bersamin, Executive Secretary, Office of the President, Malacañang, transmitting two (2) original copies of Republic Act No. 11976, entitled:
- AN ACT INTRODUCING ADMINISTRATIVE TAX REFORMS, AMENDING SECTIONS 21, 22, 51, 56, 57, 58, 76, 77, 81, 90, 91, 103, 106, 108, 109, 110, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 128, 200, 204, 229, 235, 236, 237, 238, 241, 242, 243, 245, 248, AND 269; AND REPEALING SECTION 34(K) OF THE NATIONAL INTERNAL REVENUE CODE OF 1997, AS AMENDED, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES which was signed by President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr., together with his line-veto message.
TO THE ARCHIVES
- COMMITTEE REPORTS
- Committee Report No. 927, submitted by the Committee on Transportation and the Committee on Appropriations on H.B. No. 9757, entitled:
- AN ACT CONVERTING THE EXTENSION OFFICE OF THE LAND

TRANSPORTATION OFFICE IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF TRENTO, PROVINCE OF AGUSAN DEL SUR, INTO A REGULAR DISTRICT OFFICE AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 6812

Sponsors: Representatives Acop, Co (Elizaldy), Plaza and Bascug
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Committee Report No. 928, submitted by the Committee on Transportation and the Committee on Appropriations on H.B. No. 9758, entitled:

A N A C T C O N V E R T I N G T H E EXTENSION OFFICE OF THE LAND TRANSPORTATION OFFICE LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF BURGOS, PROVINCE OF ILOCOS NORTE, INTO A REGULAR DISTRICT OFFICE AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 6410

Sponsors: Representatives Acop, Co (Elizaldy) and Marcos
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Committee Report No. 929, submitted by the Committee on Civil Service and Professional Regulation on H.B. No. 9764, entitled:

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A FIVE-YEAR VALIDITY PERIOD OF THE PROFESSIONAL IDENTIFICATION CARDS OF ALL PROFESSIONAL UNDER THE PROFESSIONAL REGULATION COMMISSION

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bills Numbered 3445, 6222 and 8750

Sponsor: Representative Tutor
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Committee Report No. 930, submitted by the Special Committee on Creative Industries on H.R. No. 1529, entitled:

RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING ARCHITECT JORGE YULO, ICONIC

AWARDEE FOR INNOVATIVE ARCHITECTURE FOR THE DESIGN OF THE EQUILATERAL HOUSE IN MAKATI CITY, AND ARCHITECT WILLIAM TI, ICONIC AWARDEE BEST OF THE BEST IN MASTERPLANNING FOR "THE BATANGAS FOREST CITY", BOTH DURING THE GERMAN DESIGN COUNCIL'S ICONIC AWARDS ON OCTOBER 5, 2022 AT THE BMW WELT MUSEUM IN MUNICH GERMANY, AND THE EIGHT FILIPINO ARCHITECTURE FIRMS SHORTLISTED AS FINALISTS AT THE WORLD ARCHITECTURE FESTIVAL 2022 HELD FROM NOVEMBER 30 TO DECEMBER 3, 2022, IN LISBON, PORTUGAL recommending its adoption in substitution of House Resolution No. 606

Sponsors: Representatives de Venecia, Hernandez, Del Mar, Co (Angelica Natasha), Benitez and Maceda
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Committee Report No. 931, submitted by the Committee on Local Government on H.B. No. 9771, entitled:

AN ACT DECLARING APRIL 25 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NONWORKING HOLIDAY IN THE CITY OF ISABELA, PROVINCE OF BASILAN IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS CHARTER DAY ANNIVERSARY TO BE KNOWN AS "ARAW NG ISABELA DE BASILAN, ARAW NG SAKAYAN"

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 5964

Sponsors: Representatives Alvarez (Mercedes) and Hataman
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Committee Report No. 932, submitted by the Committee on Higher and Technical Education and the Committee on Appropriations on H.B. No. 9772, entitled:
AN ACT CONVERTING THE EXTENSION CAMPUS OF THE EASTERN SAMAR STATE UNIVERSITY IN

THE MUNICIPALITY OF ARTECHE,
PROVINCE OF EASTERN SAMAR
INTO A REGULAR CAMPUS
AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR

recommending its approval in substitution
of House Bills Numbered 3044 and 5726
Sponsors: Representatives Go (Mark), Co
(Elizaldy) and Romualdez (Yedda Marie)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Committee Report No. 933, submitted by the
Committee on Micro, Small and Medium
Enterprise Development and the Committee
on Ways and Means on H.B. No. 9784, entitled:
AN ACT REGULATING THE
ORGANIZATION AND OPERATION
OF COMMUNITY FUND POOLING
OR PALUWAGAN GROUPS AND
PROVIDING PENALTIES FOR
VIOLATION THEREOF

recommending its approval in substitution
of House Bills Numbered 7356 and 7757
Sponsors: Representatives Unabia, Garcia
(Dante), Lacson and Salceda
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Committee Report No. 934, submitted by the
Special Committee on Creative Industries
on H.R. No. 1543, entitled:

RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING
AND COMMENDING IAN FERMIN
ROSALES CASOCOT FOR WINNING
FIRST PRIZE IN THE SHORT STORY
CATEGORY OF THE 2022 CARLOS
PALANCA MEMORIAL AWARDS
FOR LITERATURE

recommending its adoption in substitution
of House Resolution No. 609

Sponsors: Representatives de Venecia and
Benitez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Committee Report No. 935, submitted by the
Committee on Ways and Means on H.B.
No. 9794, entitled:

AN ACT ENHANCING PHILIPPINE TAX
INCENTIVES, AMENDING FOR THE
PURPOSE SECTIONS 27, 28, 112, 292,
293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 300, 301, 309,
310 AND 311, AND ADDING A NEW

SECTION 295-A IN THE NATIONAL
INTERNAL REVENUE CODE OF
1997, AS AMENDED, AND FOR
OTHER PURPOSES

recommending its approval in substitution
of House Bill No. 8968

Sponsor: Representative Salceda
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano).
Majority Leader.

REP. BONGALON. Mr. Speaker, before
we proceed with the Privilege Hour, may I
request that we acknowledge the guests of the
Hon. Joseph Violago of the Second District of
Nueva Ecija. They are the students, including
their school administrators and faculty advisers,
from PHINMA Araullo University, San Jose
City, Nueva Ecija, led by Mme. Anabelle Arcilla.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano).
We would like to acknowledge the guests of
Cong. Joseph Violago of the Second District of
Nueva Ecija. Since they are here in the House
of Representatives, let us all give them a round
of applause. (*Applause*)

Majority Leader.

REP. BONGALON. Likewise, Mr. Speaker,
may I request that we acknowledge the guests of
the Hon. Raoul Danniell Manuel, Representative
of KABATAAN Party-List. They are the
following: Ruben Baylon, Ernane Gallardo,
Zaldy Canabal, Rebong Aguinaldo, Emilio
Millares, Dione Dayola, Dionisio Bendoy,
Eduardo Buella, Marilyn Lapitan, Josephine
Ladera, Artemio Piñero, and Eden Piñero.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano).
Thank you. To the guests of Cong. Raoul
Danniell Manuel of the KABATAAN Party-
List, we welcome you to the House of
Representatives. (*Applause*)

Majority Leader.

PRIVILEGE HOUR

REP. BONGALON. Mr. Speaker, today
being a Monday and pursuant to our Rules, I
move that we open the Privilege Hour.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) Hearing none, the motion is approved. The Privilege Hour is opened.

Majority Leader.

REP. BONGALON. Mr. Speaker, I now move that we recognize the Gentleman from the Lone District of Pasig City, Rep. Roman T. Romulo, to avail of the Privilege Hour.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). The Hon. Roman Romulo of the Lone District of Pasig City is hereby recognized.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH
OF REP. ROMULO

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

Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez; my distinguished colleagues in the Nineteenth Congress; Co-Chairperson of EDCOM II, Cong. Mark Go; EDCOM II Commissioners Cong. Kiko Benitez, Khalid Dimaporo, and PJ Garcia; Exec. Dir. Karol Mark Yee; to the Advisory Council and Secretariat of EDCOM II present here today, a pleasant afternoon to us all.

Mr. Speaker, my honorable colleagues, allow me to update this august Chamber on the state of education in our country based on the Year 1 Report of EDCOM II.

In December 2019, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development released the report from the 2018 cycle of the Programme for International Student Assessment or PISA, which the Philippines joined for the first time. Headlines at that time consistently highlighted a distressing reality, I quote: "That among 79 participating countries, the Philippines ranks lowest in reading, math, and science." This raised alarms and ignited a collective acknowledgment of issues within our educational system. The subsequent response from Congress which culminated in the passage of Republic Act No. 11899 marked the beginning of our collective endeavor to address the prevailing issues within our education system, and ensure that our government provides the caliber of education that our children rightfully deserve.

A year ago today, the second Congressional Commission on Education convened to answer a pressing question. Is our country facing an education crisis? Beyond mere validation, our objective was to delve into the roots of this crisis and understand why it persists.

Today, I stand before you to share the initial findings derived from a year spent unraveling the complexities of our educational landscape. These preliminary discoveries, focusing on 12 of our 28 priority areas, result from extensive data analysis and deliberations, 19 hearings, 12 focus group discussions, and 23 site visits across the nation. As we delve deeper, we anticipate a more profound understanding of the challenges at hand which will in turn enable us to craft enduring solutions. Let us begin with early childhood.

Studies show that the Philippines has one of the highest rates of under-five stunting globally. And while our laws and programs adhere to global standards, implementation has become fragmented, coverage remains low, and targeting has been weak. During this critical period of cognitive development, lack of nourishment for both the mother and the child, especially in the first 1,000 days of life, carries consequences on the child's growth, learning trajectory, and overall life outcomes.

On the matter of early childhood education, despite Republic Act No. 6972 of 1990, which requires each barangay to have at least one daycare center access to such facilities remains inequitable. A study by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) shows that only 36 percent of barangays have daycares or child development centers. The disparities are also stark. In the first-class municipalities, there are up to six centers for every 10,000 children ages three to four. However, in sixth-class municipalities, this number drops to only one to two centers for every 10,000 children.

Adding to the complexities, another issue of concern arises in the qualification of those entrusted with running these centers. The workers and teachers, by and large, lack the necessary training in early childhood education (ECE). Alarming, barely half of them have a college degree, 17 percent possess only a high school diploma, and staggering few have received formal training in ECE based on data provided by the ECCD.

Since 2005, the higher education institutions nationwide offering an ECE teaching program have only 3,993 graduates. This translates to less than 4,000 graduates in two decades, averaging barely 80 per year, a figure insufficient to meet the demands of our population. Compounding the issue is the employment status of the majority of these workers and teachers holding non-permanent positions and receiving an average monthly wage of only P5,000. Worse, 90 percent of them, about one in five, receive only an honorarium of P1,000 per month. While our basic education system boasts of a net enrollment rate close to 90 percent, the results of various international and national assessments underscore a disconcerting reality.

Students are not learning effectively during their time in school. This disconnect between enrollment figures and the actual efficacy of learning within our educational institutions highlight the necessity of reevaluating our pedagogical approaches and education policies.

With regard to textbooks and learning module, we allocate over a billion pesos annually for textbook procurement on the belief that students benefit significantly from access to printed materials for both structured and self-directed learning. The review of EDCOM II, however, reveals that over the past decade, the government has effectively procured merely 27 textbook titles for Grades 1 to 10 students. Out of the P12.6 billion allocated for textbooks from Fiscal Year 2018 to 2022, less than a billion pesos has been utilized.

The challenges in procurement have also impeded our ability to assess and gauge the learning outcomes of our students. On paper, despite the existence of numerous assessments such as the National Achievement Test or NAT designed to inform the development and adjustment of any such interventions in the basic education sector, EDCOM II's analysis shows that out of 27 key stage assessment scheduled from 2016 to 2023, 13 were administered late, and 11 were not administered at all. This lapse in conducting assessments at designated times created a void in systems-level assessment data.

Consequently, stakeholders have resorted to implementing additional tests, resulting in the proliferation of redundant assessments with varying quality, producing results that were neither comparable nor are generalizable at the national level, and ultimately placing an undue burden on teachers who sacrifice valuable instructional time to administer tests without obtaining meaningful and actionable results.

In response to the perceived learning loss during the COVID-19 lockdown, schools are on track to implement the National Learning Recovery Program. However, as revealed in consultations conducted by EDCOM II, interventions such as the learning camps during the school year breaks may not effectively reach the learners most in need of remediation due to costs associated with attending extra days in schools. It is crucial for us to strive to make learning equitable and to target support toward those who need it most.

Higher education in our country exhibits a paradox. While enrollment numbers are increasing, we are also seeing heightened dropout rates. Alarming data from the CHED indicate an attrition rate as high as 41 percent in 2020. Access to higher education also remains elusive for the economically disadvantaged. Despite budget allocations, inequities persist and the intended beneficiaries of subsidy programs deviate from their original purpose.

Enrollment figures among the poorest students have only seen a marginal improvement from 1.7 percent in 1999 to 6.1 percent in 2019. Illustrating the depth of inequity in access, most of those who have availed of the Tertiary Education Subsidy lie outside the category of the poorest of the poor, clearly deviating from the spirit behind the enactment of the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Law. In 2018, Listahanan beneficiaries in the subsidy program comprised 74 percent of enrollees; in 2022, this share dropped to 31 percent, with majority of grantees hailing from the municipalities without SUCs and LUCs.

In teachers education, disconcerting passing rates in the licensure examinations persist, raising questions about the continued operation of the underperforming institutions.

From 2009 to 2023, the average passing rate in the licensure examinations for elementary and secondary teachers has been dismal compared to those in other professions, at 33 percent and 40 percent, respectively. The EDCOM also found that between 2012 and 2022, 77 higher education institutions offering Bachelor of Elementary Education and 105 HEIs offering Bachelor of Secondary Education continue to operate despite having consistently zero passing rates in the licensure examination for teachers or LET. Against this backdrop, the strengthened Teacher Education Council remains unrealized, two years after our work in passing this much-needed measure.

Throughout our consultations across the nation, teachers consistently voiced a plea: "Please help us, we just want to teach." However, as what many of us has been made aware, their lamentation extends beyond issues in the classroom, and as additional responsibilities ranging from canteen management to filling up forms for the Central Office, and even serving as coordinators for programs such as 4Ps or DRRM—over 50 tasks, according to the Department of Education's inventory, pull them out of the classrooms and away from their students. While efforts are being made to address this issue, such as hiring of new admin officers which number at 5,000 per year starting in 2020, the reality is that these officers are often shared by multiple schools, thus making only a limited impact against the long list of ancillary and administrative tasks that we have asked our teachers to take on. Some of these additional responsibilities date back as far as 1925, as reported in the Monroe survey. To compound teachers' frustrations, career advancement and professional development opportunities also remain limited.

Turning our focus to tech-voc education, we saw an increased participation enabled by the rise in TVET institutions and the expanded subsidies and scholarships provided by the government. However, majority of these enrollees, 3.7 million from 2014 to 2022, participated in community-based training programs. Unfortunately, these programs typically fall outside the purview of training regulations and thus, do not lead to assessment

and certifications which are, in essence, the very proof of their acquired skill.

In fact, of TESDA's 2,203 programs, only 315 or less than 15 percent lead to a national certification. These underscores a critical gap in aligning skills acquisition with required standards, hindering the advancement of our large but mostly uncertified skilled workforce.

An additional challenge also lies in the maze of policies governing enterprise-based training with the existence of six distinct government policies and programs contributing confusion on the ground. This is all more concerning considering that majority of our skilling programs, 64 percent are designed for NC1 and NC2 levels, yield only marginal improvements in income for our learners after completing the training.

Industry participation remains limited and prohibitive, with numerous stakeholders expressing frustration over the voluminous paperwork, rigid but obsolete requirements, and prolonged processing times associated with TESDA. The resounding message, Mr. Speaker, is unmistakable. We must invest in higher-level qualifications that align with the dynamic demands of the labor market. This requires the transformation in bureaucratic systems, making them more agile and responsive to the rapidly changing needs of the industry.

At the root of these are the profound challenges in governance and finance. We found that staffing levels in education agencies have not kept pace with their growing responsibilities. For example, in 2013 to 2023, CHED's budget increased by 633 percent, but the agency's staffing complement only marginally rose from 543 to 666 during this period, leaving the agency dependent on 752 contract-of-service and job order personnel. Similarly, in the case of TESDA, the provincial offices grappled with a meager seven to 12 personnel responsible for services including the supervision of 17 to 88 public and private technical vocational institutions (TVIs).

The first EDCOM envisioned the establishment of a National Coordinating Council for Education, a high-level coordinating body intended to foster synergy

among the DepEd, the CHED, and the TESDA. Regrettably, this vision did not materialize. Instead, we find ourselves with 68 interagency bodies working on a broad range of concerns, leading to an impracticable situation that results in misalignment at the system, agency, and individual levels.

Despite substantial growth in education funding over the past decade, sustaining increased investments, ensuring absorptive capacity, and strategically allocating resources that genuinely support learning remain crucial challenges. This involves not just the quality of funding, but the effectiveness of its utilization.

We must also see these issues at the school level: where, as what was discovered during consultations, principals have lamented that their meager school maintenance and operating expenses are easily depleted by electricity bills – in some areas consuming up to 70 percent of these funds.

The challenges faced by our schools, compounded by the inequities in the Special Education Fund. The median SEF income of municipalities stands at P1.6 million, which is roughly equivalent to 4 percent of the median SEF income of cities and provinces. The contrast bears further between first-income class municipalities, which have 68 times more SEF compared to their sixth-income class peers. The SEF is burdened with a growing list of expenditures, including nutrition and early childhood education, therefore it becomes incumbent upon us to revisit this policy to ensure equitable resourcing so that no child is left behind.

Mr. Speaker, dear colleagues, the Commission's findings highlight the prevailing situation of the Philippine Education System as it falls short of several standards. For one, a system is defined as "a regularly interacting or interdependent group of items forming a unified whole." By this standard, the education system in the Philippines struggles to meet the criteria of a true "system."

Moreover, it has fallen short of fulfilling the constitutional mandate of providing "a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education." Instead of working as an interconnected system, the various agencies, bureaus, and offices have often devoted solely

on their respective mandates and targets, operating independently of one another. This is evident in the findings uncovered by the Commission in its first year. Ultimately, this fragmentation has led to the "miseducation" or poorly delivered education of Filipino learners, bringing about a profound education crisis as has been laid bare by both national and international assessments; issues that the Commission is committed to squarely addressing.

The headline we have shared offer a glimpse into the comprehensive findings within the 400-plus pages of the EDCOM II's inaugural year report. Within those pages lie a thorough and measured examination of the challenges permeating our schools – from their context and roots to the potential pathways forward.

While these ways forward seem difficult to parse from the sheer volume of findings, and the task at hand may appear daunting, the imperative, however, is clear. It is incumbent upon us to shift from piecemeal reform towards a strategic and united approach that aspires to not merely seeking short-term solutions to the challenges we have uncovered, but to ultimately build a robust and genuine education system. Such a shift requires moving away from a mindset that is narrowly focused on our own individual targets to one that recognizes the interdependence of our work, from plans that are "perfect on paper" to those that are "doable in practice."

The foundational step toward solutions involves a meticulous examination of the problems and determining the precise obstacles that impede genuine reform – a task that the Commission diligently pursued in our Year-One Report. This is the role of EDCOM II – translating this clarity into actionable points so that together, we can work towards a nation where every learner has access to quality education.

As we embark on the remaining two years of EDCOM II, our resolve is even stronger. This year, we will examine the remaining 16 priorities, addressing concerns from early childhood to higher education, including issues such as shortage in classrooms, bullying, and research productivity.

Nevertheless, we are mindful that our ultimate goal extends beyond resolving issues that are symptoms of underlying problems. It is about the need to build and future-proof our system of education. One that is not only responsive to the needs of the present day, but also capable of evolving to meet the needs of the future.

We carry forward the momentum gained in our first year, a momentum fueled not just by the tireless work of our Advisory Council and Standing Committee members and our colleagues in Congress, but also by the unwavering solidarity and sense of duty of individuals profoundly passionate about Philippine education. This collective commitment encompasses teachers, parents, our partners in DepEd, CHED, and TESDA, as well as advocates and stakeholders at every level who remain steadfast in their dedication to do their part for the betterment of our country and our learners.

Congratulations to EDCOM II and to each and every individual who has contributed to the progress that we have achieved at this point. However, our work is far from over. Let us leverage this momentum and continue to move forward together in the remaining two years of EDCOM II for a brighter future for Philippine education and the Filipino people.

Consistent and in accordance with R.A. No. 11899, EDCOM II will be submitting to this august Chamber, to the Speaker of the House, its Year-One Report on those levels, on those skills, on those spheres that the EDCOM II have already disclosed in this report and that we have heard upon.

I urge all the Members of this august Chamber to read this 400-page report—a road map already for those basic foundational things that we must do.

Again, this is the Year-One Report. There is still two years to go for EDCOM II, but just in Year One we have seen that there are many foundational problems that we must already address.

With the cooperation and with the patience of all the Members, hopefully, together and united, we will push for these reforms for a better future, for a better Philippines, for the future of our Filipino learners.

Maraming salamat, Mr. Speaker. Maraming salamat, distinguished colleagues. *(Applause)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). Majority Leader.

REP. BONGALON. Mr. Speaker, may we respectfully recognize the Gentleman from the First District of Albay, Cong. Edcel Lagman.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). Cong. Edcel Lagman, you are hereby recognized.

REP. LAGMAN. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I truly congratulate the Gentleman from Pasig, the Chairman of the Committee on Basic Education and Culture, for exposing and underscoring the miseducation in the Philippines for several decades already up to the present. I join him in asking our colleagues to study the report.

I have only one question, Mr. Speaker. Would the distinguished Gentleman yield to this solitary question?

REP. ROMULO. It is an honor, Mr. Speaker, to receive a question from the distinguished Gentleman from Albay.

REP. LAGMAN. Is the crisis in Philippine education traceable to any defects or deficiencies in the Philippine Constitution of 1987?

REP. ROMULO. Mr. Speaker, to the Constitution itself, I do not think there is anything that can be traceable for the simple reason that the Constitution, in fact, provides that the highest budget allocation should go to the education sector of our country.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the Constitution itself is quite bare with respect to the education system that we have. Many of what I stated here, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Gentleman from Albay, in fact, even laws—we have so many laws already that we passed—but the problem really is in implementation, the fragmented implementation of these laws and, sadly, in many instances, the negligence in the implementation of these laws.

REP. LAGMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Gentleman, for that very candid and truthful answer.

Maraming salamat.

REP. ROMULO. Thank you, distinguished Gentleman from Albay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). Thank you, Cong. Edcel Lagman, our independent Congressman from the First District of Albay.

Majority Leader.

REP. BONGALON. Mr. Speaker, may I respectfully request that we recognize Cong. Mark Go from the city of Baguio to deliver his manifestation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). Rep. Mark Go of the city of Baguio is hereby recognized.

MANIFESTATION OF REP. GO (M.)

REP. GO (M.). Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, my dear colleagues, and to our guests who have granted us the privilege to be present with us here today. Allow me to manifest my appreciation and full support to Rep. Roman Romulo's privilege speech on the Second Congressional Commission on Education Year One Report.

First and foremost, allow me to thank our colleagues from EDCOM II for their hard work and dedication in improving the educational system in the Philippines. Producing an accurate and comprehensive report is no easy task as it would take days of sleepless nights, as well as great political will to achieve this feat. Truly, EDCOM II continues to be our dependable partner in championing educational reforms in the Philippines.

As we have heard from Rep. Roman Romulo's report, the Commission's findings reveal significant shortcomings in the Philippine Education System. It struggles to meet the criteria of a true "system" as it fails to function as a regularly interacting and interdependent unified whole. The system fell

short of fulfilling the constitutional mandate of providing a complete, adequate, and integrated education.

Though it may seem that the country is barely surviving the strong currents of the educational crisis, the report produced by EDCOM II has given us a valuable opportunity to uplift the quality of education in the country, and steer the fate of the succeeding generations of Filipinos into an empowered and enlightened future where access to quality education is truly the solution in transcending the cycle of poverty.

My dear colleagues, educational reform is not an easy task and all hands must be on deck in resolving this issue. We are up against many problems concerning education on multiple fronts, but I know that our love for our country, as well as our concern for the welfare of the youth, shall serve as our motivation to craft, support, and pass meaningful measures in Congress.

The data we need is already available through the EDCOM II Year 1 Report which has already been launched today and made available to the public. Furthermore, may I encourage you to visit the lobby of the Ramon V. Mitra Building where an exhibit is now ongoing to show the urgency of the education crisis and our role in resolving this issue.

It is time to face the problems head-on with renewed fervor and a sense of duty. Together, let us commend the lengths of EDCOM II that has gone to surface problems of our education system's dire need for reform and, on the part of Congress, be champions of education and take concrete steps in reforming our educational system. Together, let us make education for all Filipinos a meaningful experience and a gateway to the future that they dream of.

Again, thank you very much and may God continue to guide us in our journey of improving our country's quality education.

REP. ROMULO. Mr. Speaker, may I also congratulate our co-Chairperson in EDCOM II, Chairman of the Committee on Higher and Technical Education, the Hon. Mark Go. With him, he was able to successfully steer most of the discussions, not only in Higher Education but also in Basic Education.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). We thank Chairman Go for his manifestation and we also thank the Sponsor.

Majority Leader.

REP. BONGALON. Mr. Speaker, with the kind indulgence of the Members who wish to interpellate the Sponsor, I move that we temporarily suspend the Privilege Hour.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) Hearing none, we temporarily suspend the Privilege Hour.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. BONGALON. Mr. Speaker, I move that we suspend the session for a few minutes.

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

It was 4:48 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:00 p.m., the session was resumed with Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez presiding.

THE SPEAKER. The session is resumed.
Majority Leader.

REP. DALIPE. Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues of the House of Representatives, the honorable Speaker, Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez, will address the Body. (*Applause*)

ADDRESS OF THE SPEAKER

THE SPEAKER. (*Applause*) Thank you. Thank you. Welcome back. Happy New Year. Please take your seats.

Honorable Deputy Speakers, Majority Leader, Minority Leader, distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, a pleasant afternoon.

Allow me to welcome and greet everyone a Happy New Year and I am pleased to see the distinctive look of excitement and happiness that each of you exudes as we report back in

Plenary. Apparently, there are still some who are on vacation mode, but I am sure they will be back soon enough.

A renowned American psychiatrist and writer, Theodore Isaac Rubin, once said: "Happiness does not come from doing easy work but from the afterglow of satisfaction that comes after the achievement of a difficult task that demanded our best." And, indeed, you have done your best.

Truly, we have achieved several demanding and arduous tasks and we have given our best. Thus, it is but fitting to express my utmost gratitude to all of you for our prodigious performance and monumental output from the beginning of the Nineteenth Congress in July 2022 until the adjournment in December 2023.

The numbers speak for themselves.

As of January 17, 2024, we filed 11,379 legislative measures composed of 9,784 House bills and 1,594 resolutions. A total of 43 measures were enacted into law, 943 committee reports were filed, 663 measures were approved on Third and final Reading which are now awaiting action by the Senate, and four measures are currently for consideration and approval by the President.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we have approved a total of 971 legislative measures including a total of 212 adopted resolutions since the opening of the First Regular Session.

I might add, among the 17 priority measures outlined by His Excellency, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. in his second State of the Nation Address last July 2023, two were enacted into laws, particularly Republic Act No. 11964 or the Automatic Income Classification of Local Government Units Act and R.A. No. 11976 or the Ease of Paying Taxes Act.

For the rest of the SONA priority measures, one Conference Committee Report was ratified by both Houses of Congress, one is on Bicam deliberation, and 13 House bills were approved by the House on Third and final Reading: a flawless score of 17 out of 17 passed by the House, which is seven months ahead of the President's next State of the Nation Address in July 2024. Give yourselves a round of applause because you deserve it. (*Applause*)

Tapos nating lahat ang assignment na ibinigay sa atin ni Pang. Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. sa kanyang SONA noong isang taon. Tumupad din tayo sa kasunduan na napagkaisahan sa LEDAC para sa mga batas na kailangang ipasa ng Senado at House of Representatives.

Of the LEDAC priority measures targeted for passage by December 2023, we approved 20 out of the 20 measures, three months ahead of schedule, with three Conference Committee Reports already ratified by both Houses of Congress. We will be reporting this remarkable achievement to the President when the fourth LEDAC Council convenes this Thursday, on January 25.

Considering your boundless capacity to persist and strive until your work is done and despite the odds and challenges along the way, this does not come as a surprise.

Further, of the LEDAC priority measures for the Nineteenth Congress, 11 measures were enacted, among the latest of which are: 1) R.A. No. 11962 or the Trabaho Para sa Bayan Act; 2) Republic Act No. 11966 or the Public-Private Partnership Code of the Philippines; and 3) Republic Act No. 11967 or the Internet Transactions Act of 2023.

In addition, for the past two years, this Congress not only passed the national budget on time, but ensured that it is truly responsive to the needs of our people while observing fiscal discipline and sound economic fundamentals.

Nasa oras ang pagpasa ng budget. Bukas ang proseso para sa lahat. May sapat na pondo sa bawat distrito. Higit sa lahat, may malaking alokasyon bilang ayuda para sa mamamayan nating nahihirapan sa panahon ng inflation.

Moving forward, we still need to approve other priority measures, such as: the Philippine Defense Industry Development Act, amendments to the Electric Power Industry Reform Act, Budget Modernization Act, and the National Defense Act.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we also ably demonstrated our resolve to address issues that impact our fellow Filipinos by exercising our oversight functions. We scrutinized government operations by conducting legislative inquiries in aid of legislation. We engaged our counterparts in the Executive

Department in an open and honest discussions, gathered reliable information, and offered immediate recommendations.

Among the most recent legislative investigations undertaken by the House include:

1. The investigation by the Committee on Dangerous Drugs on the alleged recycling, reward system; the alleged commission being received by the assets or non-organic intelligence people of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency; and the alleged involvement of some Philippine National Police officials in the 900-kilo shabu haul in Tondo, Manila;

2. The Committee on Public Order and Safety also held its own investigation on the procurement of body-worn cameras and other mission-essential equipment of the PNP; the reported disappearance of a person deprived of liberty; and the discovery of mass graves at the maximum security compound of the New Bilibid Prison;

3. The Committee on Energy, for its part, launched an investigation on the massive power outage in Western Visayas that caused financial losses and hardships to many of our kababayans;

4. The Committee on Transportation investigated the alleged anomalies and charges of corruption involving the implementation of the Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program; and

5. Just last week, the Committees on Ways and Means, Senior Citizens, and Special Committee on Persons with Disabilities conducted an investigation on the improper implementation of the 20 percent discount and the 12 percent VAT exemption for senior citizens and PWDs on certain transactions.

Hindi lamang tayo gumagawa ng batas. Ayon sa ating mandato, sinisigurado rin natin na ipinapatupad ang mga batas na ito nang wasto at patas. Tinitiyak natin na bawat batas na ipinasa natin ay may direktang pakinabang sa ordinaryong mamamayan.

These are just but a few of our notable accomplishments. And the question that begs for a sincere response is, however, what additional measures could we still do to better serve the Filipino people?

Dear colleagues, there are more compelling issues that demand our full attention. Foremost of these is inflation, which is now reduced from 4.1 percent in November 2023 to 3.9 percent in December. The unemployment rate which fell to 3.6 percent, the lowest recorded since April 2005. On the other hand, the employment rate rose to 96.4 percent, also the highest recorded since April 2005. The economic data underscores the importance of executing sound economic and investment strategies to establish a favorable business environment and enhance the appeal to our investors.

One strategy, obviously, is to boost assistance for the vulnerable sectors such as the farmers and the fisherfolk, to guarantee lower prices on essential commodities and increase the purchasing power of our consumers.

Sa mga sumusunod na araw at buwan, ilalarga ng ating administrasyon ang malalaking programa para mabigyan ng ginhawa ang ating mga mamamayan sa harap ng inflation na nagaganap ngayon sa buong mundo. Lahat ng programang ito ay nilagyan na natin ng sapat na pondo rito sa Kongreso. Tulungan natin ang Pangulo para matiyak na bawat sentimo sa mga programang ito ay makakarating sa lahat ng distrito mula sa mga siyudad hanggang sa mga baryo.

Another strategy, obviously, is to optimize the utilization of government financial resources and encourage intergenerational management through the Maharlika Investment Fund, to expedite the progress of the infrastructure development in the country, generate opportunities for high-quality employment, attract foreign investors and propel the country towards higher economic growth.

Everyone is aware of the recent power outages that nearly paralyzed Panay and Guimaras Islands. This incident demonstrated the crucial role of our power infrastructure in ensuring energy security and sustainable development in the country.

The government, through the Maharlika Investment Fund, may opt to participate in critical infrastructure upgrades by investing in the NGCP. The investment will help improve overall grid performance, fortify the country's energy sector, and contribute to lowering the

cost of energy. And, of course, this comes with the assurance that the nation's public funds will be used efficiently and with full transparency.

The Maharlika Investment Fund is at the forefront of the Marcos Administration's developmental agenda. It forms a huge part of the President's strategic vision for a more sustainable and beneficial economy. And for our part, we helped deliver and formulate this meritorious policy in solidarity with the objectives of the Executive Department.

Just recently, the Executive Department tapped one of our own, the honorable and highly respected House Deputy Speaker, Ralph G. Recto, who now helms the Department of Finance. His broad knowledge in economics and taxation, coupled with extensive legislative experience of crafting significant fiscal policies, are sure fire guarantee to further toughen the country's financial position.

We shall also continue to review our laws and policies, and remain open to the challenges of our duties as Representatives of the people. Our aim is to address pressing, contemporary issues and introduce reforms. We need to strengthen the relevance and applicability of the established laws and policies to align with existing conditions, including amendments to the Constitution, all for the benefit of the people and the economic prosperity of our nation.

It is critical that we facilitate the entry of foreign capital and direct investments into our economy, and it is imperative that we reexamine the Constitution and carefully scrutinize pertinent economic provisions to eliminate the barriers that restrict potential growth.

We therefore welcome the recent move of the Senate, led by the honorable Senate President Juan Miguel Zubiri, in joining the House of Representatives in its historic and laudable efforts towards Charter change via Constituent Assembly. *(Applause)*

The Senate President, together with Sen. Sonny Angara and Sen. Loren Legarda, filed Resolution of Both Houses No. 6, which proposes amendments to specific economic provisions of the 1987 Constitution. This signals a strong sense of unity and purpose.

The Congress of the Philippines, now acting as one body, will eventually fulfill the call for a reformed, responsible, and result-oriented constitutional framework.

Sa tulong ng Senado at lahat ng Pilipinong naghahangad ng pagbabago, matutupad na rin ang pangarap natin na mabuksan ang ekonomiya para makapasok ang pondong kailangan sa paglikha ng mas maraming negosyo, trabaho, at kabuhayan ng mga Pilipino.

Ladies and Gentlemen of this distinguished Body, we have reached the midpoint of our term, yet the pressure upon us continues. And as Representatives of the people, our capacity is constantly put to a test that, I must admit, could be both intimidating and unsettling. Humans as we are, we possess inherent limitations and weaknesses.

Nevertheless, as I constantly and fiercely say every time I stand on this platform, collectively, we shall confront and conquer the arduous tasks to faithfully perform our sworn duty to serve the people and ultimately prevail.

Let us now get back to work, powered by optimism and excitement for a more responsive House of Representatives and a progressive Philippines.

Maraming salamat po. Mabuhay ang mamayang Pilipino! (*Applause*)

Thank you. (*Applause*)

Majority Leader.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

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

THE SPEAKER. The session is suspended.

It was 5:16 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:32 p.m., the session was resumed with Deputy Speaker Antonio "Tonypet" T. Albano presiding.

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

May we ask the Members to settle down.
Majority Leader.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

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

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

It was 5:32 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:33 p.m., the session was resumed.

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

May we ask the Members to please settle down so we can do our business.

Majority Leader.

REP. VELOSO-TUAZON. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Rep. Roman Romulo for the continuation of his privilege speech and, thereafter, also recognize Rep. France Castro of ACT TEACHERS Party-List for her interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). Yes, we will resume now the interpellations to our honorable Chairperson from the Committee on Basic Education, Rep. Roman Romulo.

We also recognize our distinguished colleague from the Party-List ACT TEACHERS, Rep. France Castro, for her interpellation.

REP. CASTRO (F.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker, magandang hapon po sa ating lahat. May I congratulate the Chair of the Committee on Basic Education for what I think is a very truthful and a very brave report on the situation of our education.

Ang unang tanong po, Mr. Speaker, dahil hindi pa naman ito iyong kompleto. The Sponsor just have described the situation, our educational system in a nutshell. Nakita natin dito, Mr. Speaker, and sabi natin iyong foundation – meron tayong problema sa foundation pa lang ng ating mga kabataan, doon na nagsisimula iyong problema natin.

We start with the, of course, iyong health noong ating mga bata. How would the stunted students – stunting na ganoon, paano makaka-receive o maa-absorb nila iyong mga itinuturo sa eskuwelahan? At the early years ng pag-aaral, Mr. Speaker, on the daycare center, ang report marami na tayong mga aging na mga teacher and wala pang training ang mga teacher. Iyon po ang mahalaga kasi paano natin tuturuan iyong mga bata ng mga basic foundation kung wala pong basic skills ang ating mga teacher? Iyon po ang nag-stuck sa akin.

At isa sa mga nakita ko rin, Mr. Speaker, ay ang kakulangan ng textbooks. We have implemented, Mr. Speaker, iyong K to 12 Program. Tama iyong sinabi at inire-report din ng mga teacher--I mean, for example--sa Pilipino sa Grade 7, talagang walang textbooks na inire-report sa amin. Okay. Kaya tama iyong nakita, tama iyong report, Mr. Speaker. At isa rin sa nag-struck sa akin ay iyong 77 higher education institutions, with offering ng BEED at 105 BSED, zero passing rate.

REP. ROMULO. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.). Paano ito nangyayari, Mr. Speaker, through the years?

REP. ROMULO. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.). Ano po ba ang recommendation dito? Kasi kailangan nating magsimula din doon at tukuyin natin iyong problema sa teachers. Meron bang recommendation this early kung ano pa iyong dapat gawin? Kasi hindi ko pa nabasa iyong 400 pages na report; may recommendations na po ba doon, Mr. Speaker?

REP. ROMULO. Mr. Speaker, Honorable Castro, Members present here this afternoon, unang-una po, Honorable Castro, tama po kayo. Actually, ang na-identify ng EDCOM II are 28 priority areas. Iyong kasama po noong report pala ngayon for Year 1 only covers 12 of the 28 priority areas. Tama po kayo, talagang medyo mahaba-haba pa ang pupuntahan natin.

Pangalawa, tama rin po kayo, inumpisahan ninyo po doon sa early, early years po. Ang

totoo po niyan, base sa datos na huli naming nakita, we have about 12.5 million Filipinos under the age of five. Alam naman po natin ang totoo. Pagdating ng three and four, doon palagi – three years old and four years old, doon pa lamang pumapasok iyong Daycare System.

Below five po, we have about 12 to 12.5 million learners na. Pero base rin sa datos na ipinakita po sa amin, napakababa po ng mga enrollee kahit sa daycare pa lamang. In fact, in one study, ang sinabi po, less than 20 percent ang naka-enroll dito sa daycare centers kasi hindi naman po ito mandatory.

Pangalawa po, pero ito po, Honorable Castro, dapat pag-isipan nating lahat. Sa isang FGD o Focus Group Discussion na naganap, tinanong po iyong mga magulang na mayroong anak na three to four years old. In-enroll po ba ninyo ang anak ninyo sa daycare centers natin? Alam niyo po kung anong sagot nila? “Hindi.” Alam niyo may rason sila bakit hindi nila in-enroll. Ang sabi nila, ang daycare centers po natin, more or less, three to four hours a day lang iyan. Ang sabi ng magulang doon sa FGD, pag hinatid namin iyong isang anak namin sa daycare, paghatid namin pauwi pa lamang kami, may maiiwan na kaming anak. Masyadong maikli iyong three to four hours.

Isa po iyan sa mga issue na sa totoo lang, Honorable Castro, kailangan natin lahat pag-isipan kasi ito po nanggagaling na rin sa mga magulang. Of course, it is an FGD, pero makikita po natin, it may explain bakit napakababa noong mga enrollee natin sa daycare centers, kung less than 20 percent. In addition, kung titingnan po natin sa daycare centers natin, nagka-confusion pa po diyan, Honorable Castro. Sino ba ang in-charge, iyong ECCD, DSWD, or DepEd?

Ngayon po, iyon ang isa sa mga recommendation, na liwanagan po natin kung sino po ba talaga ang magiging in-charge diyan.

REP. CASTRO (F.). Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ROMULO. Tungkol naman po sa binanggit ninyo na learning materials, sa napakakaunting learning materials, sa totoo lang, Honorable Castro, Members of

this august Chamber, this is one issue na kailangan natin talaga pag-isipan. Bakit? Base sa flow chart ng DepEd, it will take them five years from, first, iyong call pa lamang for a textbook. Kasi una po, magko-call sila na kailangan nila ng textbook. Pangalawa, ire-review iyong proposed content kung sino magka-qualify. Then before printing, may review pa po kung may typographical error o wala. The whole system po takes about five years kung talagang tototohanin.

Sabi sa amin ng ibang mga resource guest namin noon, short cut pa nga po iyan at one point. Iyong dating review na dapat nine months, na dapat paggawa ng isang curriculum ay nine months ang pinakamaikli. Iyong iba po, nag-call ang DepEd na dapat six months. Sabi nga ng mga publisher imposible, pero siyempre gusto nilang pumasok. Pero again po, on paper, parang ang dali; on paper, parang one year, six months to two years makapo-produce ng libro, textbook, pero in reality, iyon ang sinasabi natin kanina, sa papel, parang ang ganda ng sistema, pero in actuality po, sa haba ng proseso, it will take five years from call to the actual delivery. Kaya makikita po natin, kung ikaw po, ay reputable po kayo na publication house, ganoon katagal po. Medyo sobrang laki po ng investment. Napakahirap po noon.

Pangalawa po, Mr. Speaker, kasama rin sa isyu na iyan, hindi ba iyong pag-review ng text na ginawa? Sa totoo po, wala tayong independent group. Wala pong nagre-review kung tama po ba iyong text, iyong curriculum na lumabas sa textbook. Ang gumagawa rin po niyan isang departamento, isang office within the Department of Education, pero hindi lang iyon ang trabaho nila kasi marami pang iba. Makikita po natin talagang napakahirap. Minsan nagagalit na rin tayo sa DepEd pero sa totoo lang, iyong system rin po kasi, napakahirap for them. Sa totoo po, tama rin kayo. Kanina sinabi ninyo, “O sige, sa first 12, baka mayroon ng solusyon.” Pero wala pa pong perpektong solusyon. Kasi katulad po sa five years na iyon, napakahirap at napakatagal po noon. By that time, baka passé na po iyong nilalaman ng textbook or ng learning material na iyon.

Iyon po ang kailangan nating maresolbahan. Paano iyong procurement process, papaano po magiging mas practical para mas marami at mas mabilis ang pag-deliver natin ng tamang libro? Iyong sinabi ninyong huli po, kung may nakalimutan ako, iyong sinabi ninyo, iyong mga HEI natin na nagbibigay po ng education degrees for elementary and for secondary, tama po kayo, eksakto iyong number. Mayroon pong mga HEI na may programang ganoon. Noong 2012 pa po iyon, hindi lang ngayon. Since 2012 hanggang ngayon, wala naman pong naipasa na estudyante, pero again po, nandiyan pa rin, still existing pa rin po iyong degree sa HEI na iyon.

Again po, iyon naman, Honorable Castro, siguro naman puwede nang gumalaw ang CHED sa bagay na iyan. Siguro naman nakita na natin gaano katagal na rin po na wala naman pumapasa. Siguro naman, hindi naman po natin kailangan pa ng batas diyan. Siguro po oversight lang, pero siguro kailangan umakto rin ang CHED kasi nandodoon naman po, kitang-kita naman. Siguro, mag-show cause sila, magpaliwanag. Since 2012 po, existing na, may mga HEI tayo na hindi naman pumapasa iyong estudyante nila. Walang passer, pero again po, hindi naman isinara.

REP. CASTRO (F.). Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Chairman of the Committee on Basic Education and Culture.

Talagang na-shock ako dito sa mga HEI na walang pumapasa na mga teacher natin sa Licensure Examination. Tama kayo, dapat na i-revisit or i-oversight ng Higher Education. Maybe mayroong gagawing trabaho ang ating Committee on Higher and Technical Education kaugnay dito. Ano ba iyong mga standard? Bakit nangyayari ito na tingin natin nasasayang lang? Nagkakaroon ng sayang and wastage.

Okay. Isa pa po sa nakita natin dito, Mr. Speaker, na medyo talagang malapit na malapit sa puso ko at iyan din iyong panawagan ng mga teacher, iyong ang dami-daming ancillary services.

Napansin ko doon, kinunan ko pa nga ng picture iyong 50— hindi nga lang yata 50 iyon,

Mr. Speaker, baka mas marami pa doon iyong ancillary services na pinagagawa sa ating mga teacher. Okay.

Halimbawa, iyong pamamalengke. Sa feeding program, si teacher, umagang-umaga, alas kuwatro, alas tres namamalengke na iyan para iluto sa feeding program. Gawain pa ba iyon ng teacher? Sana hindi na. Alam ninyo po iyong mga binanbanggit natin na mga gawain, ito iyong 4Ps. Sinasabi ko na, matagal ko lagi sinasabi diyan, nagmo-monitor ang teacher ng 4Ps. Gawain pa rin ba iyan ng teacher?

Makatutulong iyong teacher dahil puwedeng mag-coordinate, pero dahil nga tayo ay may learning crisis at through the times, Mr. Speaker, at sa ating kasamahan, to our colleague, through the years, napansin natin iyong dami ng mga ipinagagawa na sa ating mga teacher na hindi naman talaga nila gawain, to the detriment of the education ng estudyante kasi hindi na makapag-focus iyong mga bata.

Ito, may sinasabi pa nga sa akin, "Sana Congresswoman France, makagawa ka rin ng bill na sana ay pag off hours na ang teacher o Saturday and Sunday, hindi na siya tatawagan ng principal o ng PSDS o ng supervisor na mag-submit ng report." Biro ninyo, wee hours of the day, siguro natutulog na siya noon o nagpapahinga na, magsa-submit pa ng report. Iyon ang mga problema natin na puwede naman na sigurong gawin ngayon ng DepEd iyan. Tanggalin iyong ancillary services. Kaya lang ang problema natin, Mr. Speaker, parang kulang para sa akin iyong P5,000 a year na dinadagdag sa mga education support personnel.

Noong weekend, Mr. Speaker, galing ako sa Mindoro. Nalaman ko doon na although mayroon namang mga education support personnel na hired, kulang po itong P5,000 nationwide. Kaya diyan pa lang puwede nang gawin ng DepEd iyon. Tanggalan ng ancillary services ang teachers so that maka-focus talaga sa teaching. Kung mayroon tayong read, read, read, mayroon tayong teach, teach, teach. Dapat, hindi ba, naka-focus si teacher sa pagtuturo at hindi niya naiwan ang mga bata dahil mayroong nira-rush na mga report at iba pang cocurricular activities na nakadi-distract din doon sa pag-aaral ng mga bata?

REP. ROMULO. Tama, Mr. Speaker, si Honorable Castro. Madagdagan ko lang po iyong sinabi niya. In fact, sinabi rin po natin sa report kanina, iyong additional P5,000 na iyon kulang. Tama kayo. Kulang talaga iyon. In fact, in some areas po, iyong na-hire na services are for three schools. Imagine po, siguro talagang kailangan natin may sense of urgency.

REP. CASTRO (F.). Opo, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ROMULO. Kailangan pabilisin po natin itong pag-hire. Alam ko naman hindi puwedeng mag-hire lang. Kailangan po talagang paspasan lang, sense of urgency. Siguraduhin lang natin tama ang ma-hire ng DepEd para mawalan rin po ng additional burden iyong ating mga teacher. Siguro add ko rin po, hindi lamang po sa non-teaching na mga ginagawa nila.

Noong Thursday, sa isang EDCOM 2 meeting na naganap dito sa Mitra Hall – RVM, ipinaalala rin po natin sa DepEd, sa NEAP, iyong National Educators' Academy of the Philippines, na ginawan po natin ng batas iyong Excellence in Teachers' Education. Sinabi natin sa kanila na marami rin na mga guro ang nagsasabi sa atin na napakaraming training, napakaraming seminar, na kailangan sila lumabas ng paaralan para lamang mag-attend sa mga ito.

Sa totoo lang, iyong iba nga sinabi sa akin hindi naman ganoon ka-productive iyong pag-attend nila. Sa traffic rin po nale-late pa sila. Ang nangyayari po, walang teacher sa classroom. Wala naman magsa-substitute kung ganoon kaikli lang naman na mawawala sila, pero para sa estudyante, walang klase habang nasa seminar.

Ipinaalala po natin, ang sinabi po sa atin ng DepEd at ng NEAP, in fact, ginagamit nila ngayon, siyempre iyong Zoom. Pero iyong Zoom po, sabi rin nila sa amin, aminin natin ang totoo at totoo rin naman, hindi naman ganoon ka-effective. Kaya ang polisiya na po nila, pag mayroong upskilling of teachers o may seminar, ang ginagawa nila in-school na po, hindi na kailangan lumabas ng paaralan iyong ating mga guro. Kasi iyong traffic lang, iyong oras sa paglalabas, iyon pa lamang po nakapapagod na rin. Nakauubos po ng oras nila.

Kaya in that respect po, we are looking forward that DepEd really implements it this way, na iyong mga upskilling nila, iyong training seminars nila, in-school na para hindi na kailangan lumabas pa iyong teacher sa paaralan nila.

At siguro, Mr. Speaker, Honorable Castro, babanggitin ko na rin ito, ni-remind na rin po natin ang DepEd na sa totoo lang po, ang pinakaimportante, tama po iyan may mga summer camp, reading camp, hindi ba, may mga ganyan? Sa totoo lang okay naman iyan, pero more or less po, a student stays in school for about 180 days. Hindi ba dapat habang nasa paaralan sila, doon sinisigurado na may reading, reading, reading comprehension? Hindi dapat inaasa iyan sa summer camps.

Sa summer camps, hindi ba, ito binanggit ko na rin sa DepEd, pag may summer camps, sino po ang tinatawag nila doon? Hindi ba teachers rin, nagvo-volunteer sila? Pero alam natin ang totoo, Honorable Castro, walang allowance na ibinibigay pagka may mga reading camp. Ang ibinibigay sa kanila service leaves. Ano ang ibig sabihin noon? Gusto pa natin mas mag-absent pa sila pag regular?

Kaya ipinaalala po natin sa DepEd na, unang-una, you have 100 days of regular academic classes. Doon pa lamang dapat siguraduhin natin tama, sigurado iyong curriculum, natuto iyong mag-aaral. Hindi dapat may bridging pa. Wala akong problema sa bridging pero dapat hindi tayo nagbi-bridging. Dapat sa main pa lang natuturo na natin.

Pangalawa, kung kailangan talaga, huwag naman nating iwan iyong mga teacher, na ang ibinibigay natin sa kanila libreng lunch o merienda at service incentive leave. Oras rin po iyong ibinigay nila doon. Kung gagawin lang natin iyon, siguraduhin na rin natin may budget tayo, may allowance na ibibigay sa ating mga teacher. Ipinaalala na rin po natin sa DepEd iyan.

REP. CASTRO (F.). Yes. Opo, Mr. Speaker.

Tama, ito nga iyong mga learning camp na ginaganap tuwing summer. Maraming teacher talaga. Ito nga iyong 60 days na rest ng teachers dahil 10 months silang nagtuturo, hindi po ba? Ang teachers walang sick

leave iyan, wala iyang forced leave. Kung magkasakit ka man, no work, no pay. Kung magkasakit ka, gagamitin mo iyong sick leave, hindi ito namo-monetize.

Even iyong overtime ng teachers ay hindi rin binabayaran. Kaya ito, talagang magagawa na ito ng DepEd, na sinasabi na rin niya na tanggalin talaga iyong ancillary services, hindi po ba, sa ating mga teacher at mag-hire ng more education support personnel.

Itong mga training na ito, iyong feedback kay Congressman Roman, Mr. Speaker, iyan din po iyong na-feedback sa akin ng ating mga teacher.

Ito pa, Mr. Speaker, mainit na mainit na issue ng mga teacher ngayon, speaking of in-service training na dapat ay ginagawa na ng DepEd. Pero ngayon, ang problema ng mga teacher, iyong mga in-service training daw ay hindi naman accredited ng PRC, so hindi nila magagamit ito for their CPD units. Kasi may batas tayo, iyong tungkol sa CPD. Bagaman at kami, repeal kami dito, repeal CPD dapat, na hindi naman kailangan ng teachers natin dahil mayroon na iyang mga training sa kanilang schools or sa DepEd. Kaya lang namomroblema tayo, itong mga in-service training na conducted sa division, sa region, even sa mga school ay hindi ito accredited. Isa rin iyan sa mga pinoproblema ng mga teacher natin, iyong sa mga magli-list iyong kanilang PRC ID.

REP. ROMULO. Oo nga po, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.). Kasi ngayon, 2024, wala ng undertaking na nangyayari. Ibig sabihin iyong mangangako na mag-e-earn sila ng certain units in three years, wala na rin po iyang undertaking na iyan. Kaya isa ngayon sa problema at dapat na solusyonan din ng DepEd ay itong mga in-service training na ngayon na ay nagaganap, na ma-accredit ito sa ngayon, na mayroon pa tayong batas sa CPD, at maka-renew sila ng PRC kasi malaki ang effect ng wala silang renewed na PRC ID.

REP. ROMULO. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.). Iyon din po iyong problema natin aside from sa quality ng

training na ginaganap, Mr. Speaker, sa ating mga region, divisions, and schools.

REP. ROMULO. Mr. Speaker, Honorable Castro, sa totoo lang po, if you remember, last December, in one of our last Committee hearings, may proposal na po. Babanggitin ko lang iyong doon sa sabi ninyo nga wala kasing overtime pay, wala iyong mga bagay na iyan. Hindi ba na-bring up natin iyong issue sa mga teacher napinapa-request natin na magturo sila, sumama sila sa summer camps, pero hindi tayo nagbibigay ng allowance? Ang ibinibigay natin service incentive leave, hindi po ba, iyong additional na pupuwede nilang gamitin iyan, sabi ninyo nga pag may sakit? Ang isang suggestion po, I think nandoon kayo sa Committee meeting na iyan, ang sinasabi nga ay kunyari matutuloy ang isang reading camp, nandoon iyong teacher, bibigyan ng incentive leave, hindi po ba? Pag hindi niya ginamit iyon, dapat i-monetize iyon.

Iyon iyong isa sa napag-usapan during the Committee meeting. Kaya sana, Honorable Castro, sa totoo lang, marami tayo dito na talagang nag-a-agree tayo tungkol sa mga bagay kasi ang gusto natin access to quality education. Siguro, sa totoo lang ay marami naman tayo kung hindi lahat. Tingin ko nga lahat ng Miyembro iisa lang naman talaga iyong objective. Masigurado iyon, masigurado na iyong ating learners ay maturuan nang mabuti at iyong mga teacher naman, mapangalagaan naman po iyong kanilang sitwasyon. Kaya sana po tuloy-tuloy talaga iyong pagtutulungan natin sa bagay na ito.

REP. CASTRO (F.). Okay, thank you po. Gusto ko pa rin basahin iyong 400 pages na report ng EDCOM at natutuwa nga ako doon. (*Laughter*) Tingin ko totoo lahat iyong mga naka-report doon at babasahin ko pa lahat. Hindi ko lang narinig iyong tungkol mismo, Mr. Speaker, doon sa, halimbawa iyong budget. Nakapaloob ba iyan doon sa report? Did you analyze the budget ng ating education? Kasi isa rin po sa nakikita ng ACT TEACHERS Party-List na bahagi talaga ng problema natin ay iyong nabanggit na kanina ni Representative Lagman—iyong budget

sa education and it should be prioritized. At least po 6 percent of our GDP ay inilalaan sa education budget but unfortunately, hindi pa po tumataas sa 5 percent taon-taon iyong budget sa education. Alam po ninyo sa ASEAN countries, dito na lang sa Southeast Asia, mataas po ang budget sa kanilang education. In fact, ang Malaysia, halimbawa, parang sa huling report ay 20 percent (*Laughter*) ng kanilang budget ay sa education. Mayroon po kasing study diyan, Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleague, Representative Roman, na talagang budget matters, (*Laughter*) hindi po ba? Iyon talaga iyong budget. Mayroon po ba tayong study tungkol sa budget?

Iyong tungkol po sa class size, hindi rin nababanggit iyong class size. Mahalaga din na pag-aralan natin iyong class size. Sabi nga sa international studies, class size matters. Kailangan natin din tingnan iyong class size.

Iyong siyempre salary ng teachers, (*Laughter*) mahalaga din iyong salary ng teachers. Kung gusto natin talagang magkaroon tayo ng motivated, walang pinoproblema na mga teacher na magtuturo, at focused lang sila sa pagtuturo, dapat ay ma-compensate. Pinakamababa po ang Pilipinas, halos nasa baba kung iko-compare natin sa Southeast Asian countries. Except for Laos and Myanmar, pinakamababa na ang mga teacher natin na Pilipino in terms of salary. Iyan din dapat iyong pag-isipan. Paano natin iyan mabibigyan din ng solusyon?

Nakakatakot, Mr. Speaker, marami na akong kakilala, magagaling na mga teacher, pumunta na ng iba't-ibang mga bansa. Kahit nga sa Southeast Asia nagtitiyaga na sila, kasi halos doble ng suweldo nila sa Southeast Asian countries, pero mas marami ngayong tumatanggap sa US, sa Canada, at iba pang mga bansa kasi very enticing ang kanilang offer, pati pamilya dadalhin na nila doon. Marami na ngayon akong mga teacher dito sa Quezon City na pumunta na sa ibang bansa with their family para magturo at mamuhay na rin doon. Nakakatakot na magkaroon na tayo ng brain drain. Iyong ating mga magagaling na teachers ay nandodoon na sa ibang bansa, pinakikinabangan ng ibang nasyon. Sana pag-aaral sa salary, iyong budget, iyong medium of instructions, at iba pang mga benefit po ng teachers.

REP. ROMULO. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.). Kasama ba iyan sa EDCOM?

REP. ROMULO. Yes. Maraming salamat, Honorable Castro. Katulad ng binanggit ko kanina, there are 28 priority areas. Itong Year 1 Report only covers 12, pero para siguro maumpisahan natin, kasi governance and finance po iyan. Sa totoo lang po, napakalawak po nang discussion ng priority area na iyan. Part iyan, kasama na rin po dito sa Year 1 Report, pero hindi pa iyan kompleto kasi sa dami rin talaga ng napapaloob sa priority area na iyan. Pero mabanggit ko lang, sa kasalukuyan po, sa national level, almost 4 percent na po ang ng GDP ang ginagastos po ng national government. Pero dapat po maalala rin natin, hindi pa po counted doon iyong ginagamit po nang local government. Nabanggit din po iyan during the meetings ng EDCOM II kaya iyon isa—hindi naman ganoon kabilis talaga iyong pag-aaral po niyan, dahil iba-iba po talaga iyong budget ng local para makita natin talaga, lalong-lalo na sa mga area iyong kunwari urban centers like NCR, na alam natin maraming mayaman po rito na mga lungsod, mga siyudad. Gusto rin nating malaman iyong SCF ba nila, iyong regular budget nila, magkano ang kanilang contribution in addition to the 4 percent ng GDP na binibigay po ng national government?

Sa totoo lang, tama po kayo na budget matters, pero ang totoo rin po, kailangan din tama iyong paggamit kasi ang nangyayari, nabanggit namin kanina sa report, makikita niyo po sa report, maraming batas, may budget. Halimbawa iyong textbooks, sa totoo lang, P1 billion per year pero hindi nga nagagastos kasi nga hindi na-implement. Karamihan po ng problema is implementation. Karamihan po ng problema ay iyong mindset po na fragmented na rin iyong education system natin.

Dati po isa lang. Ngayon meron tayong basic education, may higher education, may techvoc tayo, tapos may ECCD pa rin po for the early years. Dapat po nagtutulungan lahat ng departamento. Pero sa totoo lang po, fragmented na rin ang kooperasyon doon. Kaya doon pa lamang nakikita natin

na napakahirap na po talaga sa budget issue na iyan, pero tina-tackle na po iyan, gusto na natin mapasok rin po diyan iyong tungkol sa local contribution.

Pangalawa po, class size. Kung maaalala po ninyo sa last hearing ng Committee on Basic Education and Culture, nabanggit iyong class size, ano iyong ideal? Sa ngayon, nandidito tayo sa one is to 50, pero iyong ideal should be less than that, pero ang problema po, sa totoo lang, is again po buildable space rin. Marami po tayong learners o estudyante na nag-aaral po sa urban centers kung saan, sa totoo lang po ay ubos na. That is why, hindi po ba gusto nating ma-expand iyong GASTPE kasi kailangan rin po natin ng tulong ng private schools, baka hindi na kayanin. Pero again po, nabanggit na rin namin sa Year 1 Report ay mas titingnan pa iyon sa Year 2. Pero again, lahat po iyan, Honorable Castro, either tine-take up natin sa EDCOM II o sa Committee. Kasama po diyan iyong increase sa salary grade. Pasado na po natin sa Committee iyong Teacher Career Progression Bill. Nasa Appropriations na po iyan. Diyan po inaangat natin ang salary grade ng bawat guro. We have about 800 plus thousand teachers at lahat po iyon gusto natin magka-salary upgrade.

REP. CASTRO (F.). Yes, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). Honorable Castro, your time has expired.

REP. CASTRO (F.). Okay. Last minute na lang po.

REP. ZAMORA (Y.M.). Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). Majority Leader.

REP. ZAMORA (Y.M.). Mr. Speaker, may I move that we extend the Privilege Hour for another hour to allow the Lady and the Gentleman to continue.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the Privilege Hour is extended.

The Honorable Castro may continue.

REP. CASTRO (F.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your indulgence. Anyway, sa pag-uusap natin doon sa salary, high time po na talagang taasan ang suweldo ng ating mga teacher lalong-lalo na ngayon, Mr. Speaker, tapos na po iyong SSL 5. Sa 2024, nagtatanong ang mga teacher, may salary increase pa ba sa 2024? Wala pa po.

Idagdag ko na lang, Mr. Speaker, iyong tungkol sa mga teacher na nagtuturo nang hindi naman nila specialization. Isa rin iyon sa mga problema na dapat tingnan. Mr. Speaker, marami pa po sana akong itatanong, pero babasahin ko muna iyong EDCOM Report at alam ko naman, we are one with the Chairman of the Basic Education Committee on how to improve our educational system, at talagang ang priority natin bata ang mga estudyante at lahat ng stakeholders. Iyon na lang po, Mr. Speaker, and thank you po.

REP. ROMULO. Mr. Speaker, madagdag ko lang po, talagang kaisa rin tayo kay Honorable Castro, matagal nating napag-usapan ito sa Committee. Gusto nating ma-increase iyong salary grade kahit by one grade lahat nang 800 plus thousand teachers natin, and it will take about P50 billion just for the first year. In fact po, I will also take this opportunity to also commend—nandito po iyong isa sa mga principal authors nang Teacher Career Progression, iyong pag-angat nang salary grade. Honorable Acidre is one of our principal authors, together with Speaker Martin Romualdez.

REP. CASTRO (F.). Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ROMULO. That is why po, kahit papaano nandito na tayo sa Committee on Appropriations. Sana po magtuloy-tuloy. First year pa lang po ng implementation, ganoon kalaki iyong gusto nating ilaan para sa improvement nang salary grade na ito. If you recall, Honorable Castro, hindi ba sa Teacher Career Progression nga kinukwestiyon, pinapatanggal natin iyong mga sa tingin natin na napaka-subjective na mga kondisyon para ma-promote ang isang teacher? Katulad ng pagkuha ng kung ano-anong degree, na ang sabi sa atin nang

iba, online na nga nakukuha iyon. Wala naman direct relation po iyon sa talagang kaalaman nang isang guro. Ang gusto po nating masigurado, na talagang kung gusto nating quality education, we also have to trust our teachers. We have to give them that due respect na talagang gusto rin po nila quality education.

REP. CASTRO (F.). Okay. Thank you po, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). Thank you, Congresswoman France.

REP. ROMULO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Honorable Castro.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). Majority Leader.

REP. ZAMORA (Y.M.). Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Cong. Lorenz Defensor for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). Cong. Lorenz Defensor is hereby recognized.

REP. DEFENSOR. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Sponsor yield?

REP. ROMULO. Most definitely, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Honorable Defensor is one of the most respected Members of this Nineteenth Congress, and it is an honor to receive questions from such a distinguished Gentleman. *(Applause)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). I agree. The distinguished Gentleman, Honorable Defensor, is now recognized.

REP. DEFENSOR. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, thank you for raising the issues on the status and quality of our education here in the Philippines. Also, thank you for reminding us that the DepEd has the largest allocation every year in the national budget.

Do you recall the last OECD PISA survey results in 2018?

REP. ROMULO. I recall the 2018 results and the latest is the 2022 PISA results.

REP. DEFENSOR. Yes. For the 2018 OECD PISA results, do you recall that out of the 79 countries surveyed, what was the rank of the Philippines for reading and comprehension?

REP. ROMULO. We were at the bottom part of that ranking.

REP. DEFENSOR. That is correct, Mr. Speaker, we were number 79 in the 2018 OECD PISA survey.

Considering that the DepEd has the largest budget allocation since 2019, 2020, 2021, for the past four years, would the Sponsor know what has the DepEd has done differently to change the results of the 2018 OECD PISA results?

REP. ROMULO. Yes. Thank you for that question, distinguished Gentleman. First, that PISA exam you are referring to was 2018. The last PISA exam we took was 2022. If we all recall, in the interim, during the middle of all those things, we had to go through the COVID-19 lockdowns. But despite that, there were reforms instituted at the beginning of 2019, before the lockdown in 2020. If you recall, under the K to 12 curriculum, the requirement is about 15,000 plus competencies from the K to 12 Program.

What the DepEd at that time did, led by Secretary Briones, was to reduce the number of competencies – from 15,000 plus to what they call the most essential competencies, to about a little more than 5,000. To be honest with the distinguished Gentleman, Mr. Speaker, I still believe at that time, that was too much and also, I believe that was not enough because it is not only the competencies that must be reduced but also the subjects.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 dawned upon us. There were other more pressing problems that one had to take care of, especially the face-to-face, Zoom, learning modules, the health of our teachers, the health of our learners, parents. With the adjustments, I think, all the reforms they wanted to do could not be fully implemented.

Then, the 2022 exam happened. That was still under the Briones administration of the DepEd. The results are already out. We all

expected that we would have been worse than the 2018 results. Our learners, our teachers, despite the handicap, despite the lockdowns, despite WiFi not being present, in a way, held the line. We did not regress too much.

Now comes the new administration, the Marcos administration. Under the Marcos administration, not only did they lessen the competencies but for the K to 3 muna, they will reduce the number of subjects. There will only be five subjects for K to 3, focusing on functional literacy, meaning reading, reading, reading comprehension and also mathematics, age appropriate, including what we passed in the last Congress – the reinstatement of the GMRC.

REP. DEFENSOR. Thank you for the information, Mr. Speaker. It is very helpful for the Members of Congress to be aware of what the DepEd has done.

May I know from the Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, if our results in 2018—we were the last and the results for 2022 has not increased significantly—may I know if the Sponsor has any data if other countries have progressed or have stayed stagnant despite the COVID-19 pandemic? Because while we accept the burdens put upon our educational system by COVID-19, did the other countries surveyed by the OECD have the same stagnant results or it is just the Philippines?

REP. ROMULO. Thank you again for the question distinguished Gentleman. First of all, much to be desired pa rin for our education system, but for most of the countries, they either stagnated or regressed.

REP. DEFENSOR. What is our result in 2022 for reading and comprehension; still ranked last?

REP. ROMULO. We were still within the range of the bottom but not the last.

REP. DEFENSOR. May we request the Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, if they could extract data from other countries in terms of their results if the top or the bottom 10 has moved or if the bottom 20 has moved while we remained

stagnant? Mr. Speaker, may I know from the Sponsor that while we accept the challenges faced by our education system, will the Sponsor agree that despite these challenges, our improvement in the education sector cannot wait?

REP. ROMULO. I fully agree with the distinguished Gentleman. Could I just put on record that the 2018 and the 2022 results as compared to the other countries, much is still to be desired. I think the potential of the Filipino learner was not at all maximized. But just comparing the results of Filipino learners in 2018 and 2022, in reading, we increased by two points; in mathematics, almost the same, and then in science, I think we regressed by a point.

Again, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Gentleman, I just want to point this out because I just really want to give credit to our learners and to our teachers. Despite all the odds, despite the lockdown, despite the fact that not everyone had the technology, despite the fact that there was no wi-fi, and we very well know that face-to-face classes are still the most effective, our learners and our teachers held that line.

Of course, much is still to be desired compared to the other countries. We will provide the Gentleman with specific data, but again, the results of most of the other countries who also took part in the PISA 2022 and 2018 showed that they either just held the line, or they regressed.

REP. DEFENSOR. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor. While we are bringing up and threshing up the issues of our education system, I think it is a good time to raise a suggestion coming from one of my most favorite books, written in 2012, entitled: "Why Nations Fail." In that book, may I briefly read in part where it states that, "The low education level of poor countries is caused by economic institutions that failed to create incentives for parents to educate their children, and by political institutions that failed to induce the government to build, finance and support schools and the wishes of parents and children."

I think we also have to go back to what incentivizes parents to continue or to engage their children to improve the level of education, not only in schools but also at home.

Dapat po sigurong lakihan lalo natin ang pondo ng ating mag-aaral at Department of Education. Children who have no access to schools, children who are hungry going to schools, underpaid teachers, corruption at the department, corruption in government—these are broad problems that we have to address in Congress since the money used for children, teachers and schools come from legislation.

I hope that this will be a challenge where we can exercise our oversight even more when it comes to the utilization of funds in the education sector.

Mr. Speaker, will the Sponsor agree that the level of education is tied with the free exercise of democracy?

REP. ROMULO. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DEFENSOR. That is right, Mr. Speaker. The more educated our children and our people are, the better the choices they make in choosing leaders who will run this country.

REP. ROMULO. That is correct, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DEFENSOR. Does the Sponsor agree with me?

REP. ROMULO. That is correct, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Gentleman.

REP. DEFENSOR. Thank you. I am happy to have this small discussion with the honorable Sponsor, my favorite Chairman in the House of Representatives.

It brings to light my thrust for better education. I wrote an article for the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* last 2020, entitled: "Literacy for democracy," and I hope we can find a way—many ways to improve our ranking, not only in the PISA, but improve the total quality of education for our children, and it begins with reading and writing.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor.

REP. ROMULO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, distinguished Gentleman.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). Thank you, Congressman Defensor. Majority Leader.

REP. ZAMORA (Y.M.). Mr. Speaker, there being no further interpellators, I move that the speech of Rep. Roman Romulo be referred to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) Hearing none, the motion is approved.

Thank you and congratulations to the Chairman of the Committee on Basic Education, Rep. Roman Romulo, and I am with you in making sure that our educational system will improve in this country because the resource of the country is the people themselves.

REP. ROMULO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Majority Leader. Thank you, distinguished colleagues. (*Applause*)

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). Majority Leader.

REP. ZAMORA (Y.M.). Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Rep. France Castro for her privilege speech.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). The ACT TEACHERS Party-List Representative, Hon. France Castro, is again recognized.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH
OF REP. CASTRO (F.)

REP. CASTRO (F.). Maraming salamat, G. Speaker.

Magandang araw, G. Speaker, sa mga kapwa ko Kinatawan, at sa ating taong-bayan.

Noong nakaraang linggo ay naganap ang konsultasyon sa pagitan ng Department of

Education at iba't ibang education stakeholders upang pag-usapan ang pagbabalik ng pasukan sa Hunyo at sa adjustment ng schedule para sa School Year 2023 to 2024. To be exact, ito po ay naganap noong January 17, na dinaluhan ng mga teachers' organization, students, parents and, of course, the private school organizations.

Bago pa magsimula ang School Year 2023 to 2024, naipanawagan na po ng Kinatawang ito ang hinaing ng mga guro at estudyante na maibalik ang school year sa Hunyo dahil nakaranas sila ng hirap ng may summer classes. Marami ang nagkasakit, nahimatay, at hindi maka-focus sa pagtuturo o pag-aaral dahil sa tindi ng init ng panahon. Meron nga mga classroom, may anim na electric fan na, Mr. Speaker, ay talagang hindi kakayanin iyong init ng panahon; idadagdag pa rito iyong dami ng class size. May 50 to 60 students per class kung saan siksikan na ang mga bata sa maliit na classroom. Ang naging tugon lamang ng DepEd ay asynchronous classes, ngunit kulang o walang available na learning materials o online classes. Ang problema pa nga dito, hindi naman talagang nagiging solusyon din iyong blended learning dahil marami sa ating mga estudyante ay walang internet access. Madalas, wala rin namang ibinibigay na pang-online sa ating mga estudyante or sa ating mga teacher.

Ngayong taon lang tumugon ang DepEd sa mga hinaing kaso hindi rin kagyat na maibabalik ang pasok sa Hunyo. Tinataya pa na sa School Year 2025 to 2026 pa ito tuluyang maibabalik. Bagaman dalawang school years pa tayo makakabalik sa isang June to March na school calendar, pero sa wakas ay nakinig din ang ahensiya sa hinaing ng mga guro, estudyante, at mga magulang. Napaaga rin ang timeline ng DepEd mula sa naunang iskedyul nitong early-June school opening within four to five school years o sa School Year 2027 to 2028 or sa School Year 2028 to 2029 pa.

Kung tutuusin, noong nagbukas ang klase noong Agosto ay suspended na agad ito dahil sa bagyo. Dahil sa pag-aaral at sa nakita natin sa karanasan, Mr. Speaker, Agosto hanggang Nobyembre, doon naman dumarating talaga ang mga matitinding bagyo na nagdudulot ng

matinding pagbaha.

Ayaw na nating maulit ang paghihirap ng mga guro at estudyante sa panahon ng tag-init kung kaya't dapat ay hayaan na makabalik sa Hunyo ang pasukan at sa lalong madaling panahon, at huwag ng harangan pa. Ngayong taon din ito magkakaroon ng tinatawag na "El Niño phenomenon" na mas magpapainit pa sa panahon.

Sa gitna ng planong pagbabalik sa isang June to May school calendar, mariin din namang ipinapanawagan na huwag magkaroon ng diminution of benefits ang public school teachers. Okay. Sa lahat ng mga government employees, ang mga guro natin ay walang sick leave and vacation leave. Kaya madalas maririnig sa mga guro natin, sa buong school year, bawal silang magkasakit. Ang inaasahan na lamang nilang period for rest and recuperation ay ang at least 60 days o dalawang buwan na walang pasok pero may tinatawag na Proportional Vacation Pay (PVP). Panawagan natin sa DepEd na anumang adjustment ng school calendar patungo sa June class opening, hindi dapat mabawasan ang dalawang buwang pahinga, at hindi dapat mabawasan ang dalawang buwang benepisyo.

Hindi bago ang sakripisyo sa public school teachers, at batay sa mga konsultasyon namin sa ground, handa silang magsakripisyo para lang makabalik sa June ang class opening at hindi na maulit muli ang naranasan nila noong nakaraang mga taon. Ngunit hindi sila sang-ayon na bawasan ang kanilang PVP. Ibig sabihin, kung mag-trabaho man sila sa panahon na dapat ay bakasyon nila, may premium na dapat ibayad o ibigay para sa kanilang serbisyo maging ito man ay service credits or overtime pay. Kaugnay nito, dapat na ring agarang baguhin ng DepEd ang mga panuntunan nito ukol sa service credits. Huwag lang ilimita sa 15 days na service credits sa isang taon ang teachers dahil napakasipag po ng ating mga teacher, nagvo-volunteer po iyan sa mga gawain na related doon sa kanilang pagtuturo.

Muli, nananawagan ang ACT TEACHERS Party-List na sa lalong madaling panahon, dapat maglabas na ang DepEd ng order para rebisahan o magkaroon ng rebisyon ng kasalukuyang school calendar, upang unti-unti ay maibalik na sa Hunyo ang mga

susunod na mga school calendars.

Muli, magandang hapon, G. Speaker, at sa ating mga kapwa Kinatawan.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano).
Thank you, Cong. France Castro.
Majority Leader.

REP. ZAMORA (Y.M.). Mr. Speaker, there being no interpellator, I move that the privilege speech of Rep. France Castro be referred to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano).
Is there any objection? Hearing none, the motion is approved.
Majority Leader.

REP. ZAMORA (Y.M.). Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Rep. Arlene Brosas for her privilege speech.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano).
The GABRIELA Party-List Representative, Hon. Arlene Brosas, is hereby recognized.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. BROSAS

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
Mr. Speaker, bagong taon, panibagong dagsa ng dagdag na pasakit at pasanin sa taong-bayan. Pagpasok ng taong 2024, sinalubong ang mamamayang Pilipino ng katakot-takot na taas-singil at taas-presyo ng iba't ibang batayang serbisyo at produkto.

Ngayong Enero, nagpatupad ang Meralco ng P0.08 kada kilowatt-hour pagtaas ng singil sa koryente. Tinatayang aabot sa P11.34 kada kilowatt-hour ang overall electricity rate ng isang pamilya. Mula ito sa P11.25 kada kilowatt-hour noong nakaraang taon. Ibig sabihin, P17 ang dagdag bayarin ng isang pamilya na kumukonsumo ng 200 kilowatt-hour, habang P25 naman ang dagdag sa kumukonsumo ng P300 kilowatt-hour.

Inaprubahan din ng Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System or MWSS noong nakaraang taon ang taas-singil ng mga

water concessionaires na Maynilad at Manila Water para ngayong Enero. Ang Manila Water ay magtataas ng P6.41 per cubic meter. Kaya naman, mula sa dating singil na P35.86 per cubic meter noong 2023, magiging P42.27 per cubic meter na kinakailangang bayaran ng mga konsyumer ngayong Enero. Manila Water ang nagsu-supply ng tubig sa 25 na lungsod at munisipalidad sa Metro Manila at Rizal.

Sa P7.87 per cubic meter naman ang dagdag-singil ng Maynilad sa mga konsyumer nito sa west zone ng Metro Manila at ilang lugar sa Cavite. Mula sa P39.70 per cubic meter na singil ng Maynilad noong 2023, magiging P47.57 per cubic meter na ang babayaran.

Ang pagtataas ng singil ng dalawang water concessionaires ay bahagi ng ikalawang tranche ng rate rebasing at para rin umano sa ginagawang proyekto para sa darating na El Niño.

Lagpas P800 na ang presyo ng LPG ngunit maaaring umabot na ito sa P1,000 ngayong Enero dahil sa dagdag na singil na aabot ng P3.45 kada kilogram o P37.95 kada 11 kilogram na tangke ang itataas ng singil sa LPG. Magre-resulta ang pagtaas na ito ng pagtaas din ng presyo ng mga pagkain sa karinderya.

Bukod pa rito, magtataas din ang pamasaha ng Metro Rail Transit Line 3 (MRT-3) ngayong 2024. Tinatayang P2.29 ang pagtaas sa boarding fee at P0.21 na dagdag bawat kilometro. Magre-resulta ito sa pagtaas ng minimum na pamasaha mula sa P13 tungong P16. Tataas naman mula P28 tungong P34 ang end-to-end trip o mula North Avenue hanggang Taft Avenue station.

Ayon sa Department of Transportation, ang dagdag pasahe ay itinatapat lamang sa pangangailangan sa maintenance at operations, at layunin na mabawasan ang ibinibigay na subsidize ng gobyerno para sa MRT.

Dagdag pasakit din lalo na sa manggagawa ang pagtaas ng kontribusyon sa PhilHealth at Pag-IBIG. Ang kontribusyon ng mga miyembro ng PhilHealth premium ay magiging 5 percent mula sa dating 4 percent. Magiging P200 kada buwan naman mula sa dating P100 kada buwan ang kontribusyon sa Pag-IBIG. Barya man sa iilan ang dagdag singil sa PhilHealth at Pag-IBIG, malaking kabawasan ito para sa mga manggagawang napakaliit lamang ng kinikita.

Mr. Speaker, sa gitna ng maraming bilang ng Pilipino ang walang trabaho at napakababang sahod, napakahirap balikatin ang ganitong taas-singil sa iba't ibang batayang serbisyo at produkto. Sinabi mismo ng Department of Labor and Employment na walang wage increase ngayong taon. Dahil sa taas ng presyo ng mga serbisyo at mga bilihan, nalusaw na ang kakarampot na umento sa sahod na natanggap ng mga manggagawa noong nakaraang taon.

Ang taas-singil at taas-presyo ay nag-uugat sa mga neoliberal na patakaran na pinapasa ng gobyerno. Pinaubaya ang batayang pangangailangan ng mamamayang Pilipino tulad ng koryente, tubig, langis, kalusugan, pabahay, at transportasyon sa mga pribadong ahensiya. Pumapasok ang gobyerno sa pribatisasyon at ginagawang negosyo ang pangunahing serbisyo, kontrolado ng mga pribadong entidad na ang pangunahing interes ay kumita at ipasa ang kanilang mga gastusin sa mga konsyumer sa pamamagitan ng taas-singil.

Mas higit na lalala ang ganitong kalagayan sa pagtutulak ng gobyerno ng Charter change o Cha-cha na magpapahintulot sa pagpasok ng dayuhang pagmamay-ari sa mga mahahalagang programa at serbisyo tulad ng edukasyon, media, at mga pampublikong yutilidad. Sa madaling salita, lalong bubuksan ng Cha-cha ang ekonomiya ng Pilipinas para sa dayuhang negosyo. Hindi rin nito tutugunan ang pangunahing pangangailangan ng mamamayan tulad ng pagtaas ng sahod at pagbaba ng presyo ng bilihan at singil sa serbisyo.

Kaya, Mr. Speaker, sobrang pasakit ang ganitong sitwasyon, kabi-kabilang pasanin ang binabalikat ng mga mamamayan. Mga Pilipinong nabubuhay na puro kahig at wala na halos tuka para lamang makapagbayad sa sobrang mahal na mga yutilidad at serbisyo. Tumitindig ang kababaihan na dapat ay wala sa pribado o dayuhang pag-aari ang mga pampublikong serbisyo.

Maraming salamat, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano).
Thank you, Rep. Arlene Brosas.
Majority Leader.

REP. SANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I move that we refer the speech of Hon. Arlene Brosas to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). Are there any objections? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

Majority Leader.

REP. SANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I now move that we recognize the Gentleman from the Second District of Pangasinan, Hon. Mark Cojuangco, to avail the Privilege Hour.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). The Gentleman from the Second District of Pangasinan, the Chairperson of the Special Committee on Nuclear Energy, Cong. Mark Cojuangco, is hereby recognized.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH
OF REP. COJUANGCO (M.)

REP. COJUANGCO (M.). Mr. Speaker, it is late and I was hoping for a bigger audience so that my colleagues could question my privilege speech. However, let me proceed.

Mr. Speaker, esteemed colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, I rise today on a matter of personal and collective privilege. My speech is centered on the COP28 or the 28th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

This Representation has made several privilege speeches in this House, emphasizing and highlighting the important role that nuclear energy plays in alleviating poverty and providing comprehensive economic advancement for the Philippines. It is my earnest desire to alleviate mass poverty through cheaper electricity that will attract investments, both local and foreign, generate massive employment opportunities, and contribute to national progress.

It remains a mystery why the Department of Energy appears oblivious to the increasingly evident benefits of nuclear power now recognized worldwide. It bears stressing that the DOE is overlooking a significant opportunity to make this a centerpiece

program of the government in alleviating poverty in the country.

The COP28 or the 28th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was held in Dubai, the UAE, last December 2023. You can see the photo there at the back and you can read the caption on the stage which calls for a tripling of nuclear power in the world.

It was the first COP where major countries around the world – maybe I should state the countries, there were Sweden, the United Kingdom, France, the USA, Korea, and the UAE, supported by, at that time, 18 other countries for a total of 22 countries. Now, there are already 25 countries supporting these declarations.

Major countries around the world officially recognized nuclear as an essential tool in addressing global warming and climate change.

Number one, by declaring that the catchphrase “Net Zero by 2050” is impossible without at least some (defined as approximately 1/3) nuclear;

Number two, declaring their support for the tripling of world nuclear capacity by 2050; and

Number three, to achieve this, a third declaration from these countries that they will work towards making cheap financing for nuclear amounting to around US \$9.3 trillion, available for nuclear new build.

It is not surprising, therefore, why Korea, which is the most qualified to commission our 100 percent complete yet mothballed nuclear power plant, has offered the Philippines to undertake a full economic feasibility study, costing at least US\$4 million, for free without requiring a commitment to proceed on our part even if the study produces positive results.

If such an economic feasibility study is being objected to by our DOE on the ground that it is being done by a vendor, then, the counterargument is that it can be vetted by independent nuclear consulting companies in the United States, of which there are several. We, the Philippines, could ask the assistance of the US government to also provide these studies for free, funded by either the United

States Agency for International Development (USAID) or the United States International Development Finance Corporation (US IDFC), or other appropriate US government entities, given that the EPIRA Law prohibitions on local funding.

It boggles the mind that this study, which the majority of the Nuclear Energy Program Inter-Agency Committee, or the NEPIAC, agree should be done, has been gathering dust at the desk of those who are in charge at the DOE for close to six months now. So much so, that the risk of losing Korean funding authority for this is real and imminent.

What a waste of a golden opportunity to determine, once and for all, and definitively, the economic feasibility of our very own fully paid and very well-built Philippine Nuclear Power Plant No. 1.

May I reiterate to this Chamber that the only reason that would justify nuclear power in the Philippines is that it can give vastly cheaper electricity and saves us billions of US dollars annually in foreign exchange during operations.

Nuclear power, because of its unmatched energy density, is truly magical in this regard, requiring infinitesimally less fuel versus coal or LNG. Energy density is also the reason why nuclear enhances national security. Just in time, coal or gas delivery by ships means fuel inventory is always en route on ships to coal or gas plants, unlike nuclear where 18 months of fuel inventory is physically present inside the reactor without the need for physical delivery whatsoever.

To give an example of the much lower price of nuclear versus fossil fuels, I present the following:

Coal is 19 times more expensive than nuclear while LNG is 27 times more expensive than nuclear. Sample computation: Say, let us take US dollars to US\$30 million times 27 is approximately US\$515 million worth of LNG. Ang laki po ng diperensiya.

FIT-All. In the news, they are now allowing FIT-All to be collected again for RE, to the tune of 3.64 centavos per kilowatt hour. For context, my distinguished colleagues from the Committee on Energy were balking at the P0.01 per kilowatt hour request to fund the PhilATOM. They approved only half a

centavo per kilowatt hour and here we have a newly instituted 3.64 centavos per kilowatt hour for RE. Who is complaining? Are we complaining in this august Chamber?

Our economic consultant who has 12 years of experience in doing financial studies for generating companies and has worked for the National Power Corporation (NAPOCOR) and Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management (PSALM), has come up with some numbers on the PNPP-1 commissioning costs.

We have the chart there showing this cost and if you will note, there is a number for one-and-a-half billion-dollar investment in PNPP-1, and a US\$2.2 billion investment number for PNPP-1. In those numbers, the prices of electricity to be sold by PNPP-1 range from P2.50 all the way to P4.00. The average, the middle line is less than P3.50 per kilowatt hour.

I want you to compare that to the recent auction by MERALCO for coal electricity which is close to P7 per kilowatt hour. It is clear that nuclear electricity is cheaper and will half or lower than half the price of our power generation.

As per our calculations, PNPP-1 could deliver an electricity price between P2.50 per kilowatt hour and P3.56 per kilowatt hour depending on the total investment needed. This assumes a recovery of 20 years and has a cost of equity of around 15 percent and a cost of debt of 3 percent. It should be of note that the Korea Eximbank is currently giving financing at 0.05 percent interest rate with a 40-year payback period and a 20-year grace period. So, distinguished colleagues, mura talaga ang nuclear.

The implication of all of these, which I have told you this afternoon, especially the events which happened at COP28, the declarations of these major countries is that after the first OPEC oil crisis in 1973, when gas lines were long and we had a crisis in electricity prices and supply, then Pres. Ferdinand Marcos Sr. decided that the way out for the Philippines was to embark on a nuclear energy program.

What has transpired at COP28, 37 years after the events at EDSA, is the strongest evidence so far that Marcos Sr. was prescient and correct in his decision to pursue nuclear power in the Philippines.

This correctness has manifested itself most strongly in the 2022 National Elections when the phenomenon of PBBM's landslide win was a direct result of pushback from the people who were sick and tired of the unfulfilled post-EDSA promises, among which was the lower price of energy and electricity. The high prices since then has paralyzed the Philippine economy and made us an avoided investment destination in Southeast Asia, so much so that we were economically left behind by our neighbors. Now is our chance to learn from the past and take a new direction with the only technology which our fossil fuel poor country has yet to try.

Our DOE must take cognizance of this. It must inform all agencies about the benefits of nuclear power, including for the environment, but most especially for electricity prices and huge foreign exchange savings.

Distinguished colleagues: "Where is the energy at the Department of Energy?"

Ang dami pong nagsasarang malalaking offshore wind projects sa Amerika at Europa, kahit sa Mindoro na-cancel na po. Nagbubulag-bulagan ba o kulang sa kaalaman ang ating DOE? Bakit po tuloy ang sulong natin sa isang talunan na teknolohiya na tinatalikuran na ng iba? Nahihiya ba ang DOE na magmungkahi sa ating Pangulo tungkol sa isang solusyon na dapat ipaglaban? I am talking about nuclear.

Bakit ba sa napakalaking projection ng ating NEDA na dapat doblehin o triplehin ang ating kapasidad sa paglikha ng koryente, from 22,000 to 44,000 to 66,000 megawatts per year by 2040, 2,500 megawatts lang by 2050 ang pinaplano ng ating DOE for nuclear?

Hindi po tayo seseryosohin ng mga nuclear vendor kung ganyan po ang ating deklaradong policy sa nuclear power.

Malaki ang espasyo para sa 16,000 hanggang 32,000 megawatts ng nuclear at marami pa ring lugar para sa wind and solar. Hindi pa iyan ginagalaw ng kasalukuyang itinatayong 16,500 megawatts na fossil fuel generating capacity ng Pilipinas.

Hindi po tayo seseryosohin ng nuclear vendors ng mundo kung binibiro lang natin sila sa 2,500 megawatts by 2050. Siguro nagiging maliwanag po na ang totoong balak ng ating DOE ay hindi magtagumpay ang nuclear sa Pilipinas.

Why, distinguished colleagues? Are they protecting vested interest? Is it their direction to make us ultra-dependent on imported LNG which the rich countries are all trying to buy and compete for? Kaya ba nating kalabanin ang mayayamang mga bansa sa pakikipag-agawan sa napakakaunting commodity?

Kawawa naman ang mga mahihirap. Kawawa ang mga negosyante. Kawawa ang industriya. Paano natin malilikha ang milyong-milyong trabaho na kailangan natin? Kawawa ang pamilyang Pilipino.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, dear colleagues, for misleading our President, I call for the immediate replacement of the Energy Secretary. Let us then focus on delivering our aggregate mandate to improve the lives of every Filipino.

Maraming salamat po. Magandang gabi po sa inyong lahat.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). Thank you, Rep. Mark Cojuangco.

Majority Leader.

REP. SANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Gentleman from APEC Party-List, the Honorable Dagooc, for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). Congressman Dagooc of APEC Party-List is hereby recognized.

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

Would the Chairman of the Special Committee on Nuclear Energy yield to some clarificatory question?

REP. COJUANGCO (M.). With pleasure, Mr. Speaker.

REP. DAGOOC. Mr. Speaker, one of the contents of the Gentleman's privilege speech is the fora in Davos. Am I correct, Mr. Speaker?

REP. COJUANGCO (M.). Yes po. Alam ninyo po, nadismaya po ako roon sa Davos kasi po 22 na mahahalagang bansa, malalaki at maimpluwensiyang mga bansa ang nag-

attend po ng deklarasyon. Kahit 10 na government officials ng 290 delegation ng Pilipinas, wala pong pumunta kahit isa. Ako lang po ang nag-iisang nandoon. Wala po ang DOE. Wala po ang DENR. Wala po iyong mga ibang ahensiya. Walang nakinig kung ano po ang mga binitawang salita roon sa deklarasyon.

REP. DAGOOC. Actually, Mr. Speaker, that is supposed to be my question. However, having said that, can I ask the opinion or view of the Gentleman with regard to the non-appearance or non-participation of our Department of Energy on that particular fora?

REP. COJUANGCO (M.). May nagsabi po sa akin na inimbata sila. Hindi ko po alam kung totoo o hindi, so hindi ko po masisi pa hanggang hindi ko malaman ang puno at dulo kung naimbata ba talaga sila or maaari rin pong binabalewala nila ang nuclear kaya hindi po sila dumating dahil may bias po sila against nuclear.

Nabanggit ko po rito sa aking privilege speech na may offer po ang Korea. Ang Office of the President ng Korea went out of its way to find the funding and authorize it so that KHNP could do a free feasibility study with no strings attached. Meaning, kahit gaano kaganda ang feasibility study, wala pong requirement na ituloy natin iyan.

Para sa akin, no brainer po iyan. Dapat sana tinanggap po natin, six months na po na pasa-pasa. Pumunta po iyan sa DFA, sabi ko po roon sa DFA Secretary, "Mag-ingat po kayo riyan dahil ginagamit po kayong excuse sa delay, e sila naman ang lead agency hindi po kayo. Bakit sa inyo itinapon?" Ganoon po ang pangyayari riyan, pasa-pasa po.

As recently as this afternoon, I have been in a text communication with Secretary Popo--hindi po ako kontento sa mga sagot na aking nakuha tungkol sa kung bakit unilaterally, we cancelled the signing this January. Hindi niya po ako mabigyan ng sagot kung kailan naka-schedule ulit o pababayaan na lang ba na mag-lapse ito.

REP. DAGOOC. Mr. Speaker, sa palagay po ba ng kagalang-galang na Chairman ng ating Special Committee on Nuclear Energy, bakit po ba nandoon iyong 22 na bansa sa

pagtitipon na iyon? Gaano po ba kahalaga sa kanila iyong pagtitipon na iyon, sa kanyang palagay, Mr. Speaker?

REP. COJUANGCO (M.). Malaki po ang kahalagahan sa kanila kasi marami po riyan may balak na mag-nuclear na.

Basahin ko po ang 22 countries: Ukraine, Sweden, Slovenia, Slovakia, Poland, Netherlands, Morocco, Mongolia, Moldova, Hungary, Ghana, Finland, Czech Republic, Canada, Bulgaria, Japan, South Korea, France, United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates, at United States po.

Ngayon, 25 na po ito. Hindi ko po alam kung sino iyong nadagdag dito ngunit lahat po ng bansang ito ay anxious na magkaroon ng karagdagan o bagong nuclear capacity sa kanilang mga bansa.

REP. DAGOOC. Mr. Speaker, knowing the importance of this technology to save the stability and reliability of our power system—I think, last December and this January, Panay and Negros Island experienced a four-day blackout, and per the NGCP, there are power plants which are in forced outage so there is a lack of power supply—with the information being divulged by the Gentleman, as Chairperson of the Special Committee on Nuclear Energy, how can you maximize the Davos fora attended by those countries to convince even the President to have an urgent look at this nuclear technology for our power supply portfolio?

Paano po natin mama-maximize ang paggamit niyan, Mr. Speaker, para makumbinsi iyong ating Pangulo na mabigyan ng kahalagahan, as urgent as possible, ang usaping ito, Mr. Speaker?

REP. COJUANGCO (M.). Mr. Speaker, maganda po ang tanong. Tayo po ay sinusuwerte dahil po sa deklarasyon doon sa COP28, in-announce din na there will be a Nuclear Summit sa March 21 to 22, 2024, sa Brussels, Belgium. Imbitado po ang lahat ng Head of State doon. Sana po puntahan ng ating Pangulo dahil doon niya po makikita ang commitment nitong 25 bansa na talagang

itutulak na ang nuclear power mula ngayon. So, dapat niya rin na siguro madinig sa bibig mismo ng ibang leaders dito kung bakit nila medyo tinatalikuran ang wind and solar. Ang number one po na reason niyan ay iyong intermittency, na hindi naaasahan lagi, lalong-lalo na kapag kailangan.

Ang isang malaking dahilan po sa Panay ay iyong napakalaking solar installation sa Bacolod, kung saan po kapag bumaba na ang araw o nagkaroon po ng kulimlim ay bagsak po ang generating capacity. Ang problema po kulang ang spinning reserve to assure stability of the grid. Kanino pong kasalanan iyan? For me, ang tingin ko po riyan ay medyo may pagkukulang ang pagplano ng ating DOE kung ano ba talaga ang dapat na mga reserve capacity sa bawat grid po natin. Bakit po napapayagang ganiyan iyan at kung sino-sino na lang ang sinisisi tuwing magkakaroon po ng krisis? Dapat po tingnan ng Committee on Energy, hindi po iyong Committee natin, Committee on Energy, ano ba ang status ng spinning reserve capacities natin sa lahat po ng sektor ng ating grid? At talagang usisain po nang mabuti, ano ba ang katotohanan, ano ba ang puno at dulo sa unreliability ng ating grid? Para sa akin, hindi dapat tratuhin ang DOE as a sacred cow na hindi puwedeng i-criticize. Tingnan po natin ang katotohanan.

REP. DAGOOC. Mr. Speaker, I fully agree with the Gentleman that—I am not, for the record, against renewable energy but I fully agree and I keep on saying that if you have bigger power plants from solar or wind, you also need the same capacity of that power plant. Actually, it is regulating reserve because every time intermittency will occur, you need to regulate the frequency because it is the frequency of the grid that goes down, so you need a regulating reserve equivalent to that capacity.

On the part of the Special Committee on Nuclear Energy, Mr. Speaker, I urge the Gentleman to maximize the Davos fora, as well as, with the information that he has with another incoming fora to entice or convince the leadership that we really need to look at this nuclear technology to solve our power supply problem.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

REP. COJUANGCO (M.). Mr. Speaker, I just like to convey to everybody here and my distinguished colleague, Congressman Dagooc, that on Wednesday, at 1:00 p.m., we have a meeting in the Special Committee on Nuclear Energy. Your suggestions po, I hope you will say it there and expound on it so that we could come to an action by the Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to our distinguished Gentleman.

REP. DAGOOC. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). Thank you, Cong. Sergio Dagooc. Majority Leader.

REP. SANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I move that we extend the Privilege Hour for 30 more minutes.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) Hearing none, the extension is hereby approved. Majority Leader.

REP. SANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I move that we refer the speech of Hon. Mark Cojuangco of the Second District of Pangasinan and the interpellation of our Party-List APEC Representative Dagooc to the Committee on Rules.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). Are there any objections? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The speech is hereby referred to the Committee on Rules.

Majority Leader.

REP. SANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I wish to reiterate, in connection with the privilege speech of Honorable Romulo, that the manifestation and the interpellation thereto would be referred to the Committee on Rules.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). I think that was agreed upon a while ago. Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair

hears none; the motion is then reiterated and approved.

Majority Leader.

REP. SANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I now move that we recognize the Gentleman from KABATAAN Party-List, Rep. Raoul Manuel, to avail of the Privilege Hour.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). The Congressman from the Party-List KABATAAN, Rep. Raoul Danniel A. Manuel, is hereby recognized.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. MANUEL

REP. MANUEL. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Magandang hapon. Welcome back sa mga kapwa natin mambabatas. Happy New Year. Mainit na pagbati din po sa mga commuter na Pilipino at mga bisita nating drayber at operator.

Mga kababayan, nanalo na naman po tayo. Noong isang araw, ibinalita na nanguna sa international rankings ang mahal nating Pilipinas, #PinoyPride. Mula sa 387 na siyudad na nasa 55 na bansa, lumabas ang Metro Manila ranked number one sa may pinamakasahol na traffic sa isang metro area.

On a serious note, deka-dekada nang suliranin ang problema sa trapiko at krisis sa transportasyon, pero hanggang ngayon ay wala pang maayos na polisiya na tumutugon dito. Maski ang bandang Coldplay na pinanood ng Pangulo sa Philippine Arena, alam at naramdaman kung gaano kalala ang traffic sa Pilipinas. Nagpapakahirap sa biyahe ang mga manggagawa papunta at pauwi mula sa trabaho, at kailangang tiisin ng ordinaryong mamamayan ang bulok na moda ng transportasyon dahil wala silang malaking travel budget at wala silang access sa pera ng bayan para mag-chopper at dumalo ng concert. Di naman dinaranas ng namumuno ang karanasan ng masang Pilipino kaya hindi nakakapagtaka, na nakakalungkot sabihin, pero napakamanhid pagdating sa mga isyu sa public transport.

Malaking porsiyento ng ating national budget ay napupunta sa big-ticket infrastructure projects para sa mga pribadong sasakyan, ngunit hindi naman nito nasosolusyunan

ang malalang traffic sa bansa. Nandiyan ang mga expressway at skyway na may mataas na singil ng toll sa mga sasakyan. Limited na nga ang ating railways, congested o siksikan pa ang mga tren para sa mga pasahero. Kung may ipinapatayo man na mga dagdag na railway at tren, ginagarantiya muna ang kita ng mga kapartner na bilyonaryo at pinapasa sa mga komyuter ang mga gastusin sa pamamagitan ng pagpapataas ng pamasahe.

Gaano man karami ang dambuhalang proyekto na ipapatayo, hindi nito maikukubli ang katotohan na sa ngayon ay car-centric talaga ang transport system ng bansa. Dama ito ng mga bumibiyaha through active transport; bihira silang makadaan sa ligtas na bike lanes. Naghihirap din ang pedestrians dahil sa palpak na urban planning na hindi nagtitiyak ng pagiging walkable ng maraming siyudad. Taliwas sa sinabi ng DOTr o Department of Transportation na marami daw na other modes of transport available, paano kung ngayon pa lang ay limitado na at bulok ang lahat ng mga nabanggit?

Wala pong ligtas sa krisis sa transportasyon. Hindi lang ang mga manggagawa at komyuter na sumasakay sa mga jeepney, UV express, minibus, at bus ang nakakaranas ng kabulukan ng sistema. Kawawa rin ang mismong mga drayber at operator dahil sa mga korporasyong nagmantsa sa konsepto ng kooperatiba at nagsilbing mga huwad na kooperatiba, hindi demokratiko, ginagawang alila ang mga drayber, naniningil ng mga hindi napagkasunduang butaw at bayarin.

Matagal nang nariyan ang mga ugat ng krisis sa transportasyon at lalo nating na-realize ito sa mga nagdaang asembliya ng ating opisina at mga balangay ng KABATAAN Party-List sa buong bansa kung saan napakinggan natin ang iba't ibang kuwento.

Isa dito si Ka Jess, isang tsuper sa linyang Project 6-SM North. Noong pandemya pa lang naging biktima na siya ng pagkatay ng kanyang ruta dahil sa Revised Quarantine Route Plan. Dahil tinanggal ang kanyang ruta at hindi makapasada, natulak siyang kumuha ng kabuhayan bilang isang basurero na hindi kaugnay ng kanyang naunang trabaho.

Si Nanay Edna naman ay isang labandera na suki ng mga jeep sa Alabang. Kumikita siya

ng P50 to P100 lamang kada araw. Gumagastos siya para sa kanyang gamot at nahihirapan na rin sa kasalukuyang base-fare sa jeep na P13. Nangangamba siya na hindi na niya kayang bayaran ang posibleng mas mataas na pamasaha sa darating na mga taon bunga ng paghahabol ng mga korporasyon na mabawi ang kapital nila. Malaking kaltas sa kita ni Nanay Edna ang anumang fare hike. Gaya ng serye ng mga fare hike, matapos ipasa ng malalaking kompanya ang kanilang mga ginagastos sa mga commuter noong sila na ang nagpatakbo ng MRT at LRT 2.

Ilang kuwento lamang ito ngunit hindi kaiba sa pinagdadaan ng milyon-milyong commuters. Kaya kahit pa sabihin ng DOTr at ng LTFRB na kumikiling sila sa commuters, hindi ito felt ng mayorya ng mga Pilipino, sa makadayuhan at makakorporasyong moda ng public transport. In fact, tiba-tiba ngayon ang malalaking dambuhala at dayuhang korporasyon. Kung hindi man tayo nag-aangkat mula sa ibang bansa, may mga locally-assembled vehicle na nabubuo lamang kapag nag-aangkat din mga parte at materyales. Nasa interes ng mga dayuhang auto manufacturer na maibenta at magamit ang kanilang mga makina at sasakyan na surplus at di na mabenta sa kanilang bansa.

Liban diyan, nakikinabang ang mga lokal na malalaking banko na nagpapautang. May papel din ang multilateral institutions gaya ng Asian Development Bank o ADB na nagtutulak ng mga makakorporasyon at makadayuhang programa sa transportasyon pati sa ibang serbisyong panlipunan. Kapalit ng mga pautang ng ADB, inaasahan nila na magpapatupad ang gobyerno ng mga programang nakaayon sa kanilang balangkas na ipasa sa big business ang pangangasiwa ng mga serbisyo.

Halimbawa po noong July 2023, nagpautang ang ADB ng US\$1 billion o katumbas ng nasa P55 billion sa Davao City, para sa pinagmamayabang na unang electric bus fleet system sa bansa na sa hindi kalaunan ay magdudulot ng pagbabawal sa mga jeep doon, kaya lumalabag ito sa prinsipyo ng just transition o makataong pagtugon sa climate change. Alam ng ADB, ng LGU ng Davao City, at maging ng Malacañang ang magiging masamang epekto nito sa kabuhayan ng mga

driver at operator. Pero itinuloy ang pagpirma sa loan agreement at tutulongan na lang di umano na maghanap ng ibang trabaho ang mga maapektuhan.

Matapos ang maraming taong dumaan na naglalaan ng pera para sa transportasyon mula sa buwis ng mamamayan at nangungutang pa mula sa ibang bansa o dayuhang bangko, hindi lubos na gumanda ang kalidad ng transport system natin. Pero tiyak na nakinabang ang mga kroni at malalaking korporasyon na nagnenegosyo sa impraestruktura at transportasyon, at kumikita bilang may-ari o may kontrata sa gobyernong nagpapalawak ng public-private partnerships at build-lease agreements.

Bilang Kinatawan ng kabataan, nakikita natin na posible namang magkaroon ng sistema ng transportasyon na hindi nakasandig sa mga dayuhan at malalaking korporasyon, at hindi perhuwisyo sa mga kababayan natin. Mayroon tayong alternatiba, transportasyon na makamasa at nakabatay sa pambansang industriya.

Kapag makamasa ang transportasyon, nakabatay ang mga programa sa tamang transport hierarchy. Priority ang espasyo para sa mga pedestrian, mga nagbibisikleta at iba pang moda ng aktibong transportasyon. Pagdating sa mass public transit, ituturing itong serbisyo at hindi negosyo. Papaunlarin ito at gagastos ang gobyerno para magdagdag ng mga bus, tren at iba pang moda ng transportasyon, hindi para may iilang kikita, pero para maayos na makabiyahe ang mga tao papunta sa kani-kanilang destinasyon at makagampan ng kani-kanilang papel sa lipunan.

Mayroong sapat na supply ng mga public utility vehicle at magiging episyente ang mga ruta dahil kasama ang mga tsuper at operator sa pagbubuo ng mga plano para sa mga ruta. Maaasahan ng mga komyuter ang naturang sistema; hindi na ito magiging sanhi ng stress, at hindi magiging buwis-buhay ang pagsakay sa mga PUV at ang pagpunta at pag-alis sa mga terminal. Maniningil ng abot-kayang pamasaha ang mga pampublikong sasakyan.

Sa ilalim ng makamasang sistema ng transportasyon, tinatrato bilang katuwang ang mga tsuper at operator. Kaalinsabay

ng pagpapataas ng supply ng mga public utility vehicle, lilikha tayo ng trabaho dahil dadami ang kakailanganing drayber at iba pang may kinalaman sa pampublikong transportasyon. Malayang makakapagbuo ng mga asosasyon at kooperatiba ang mga drayber. Sa progresibong mga asosasyon at kooperatiba, kikilalanin ang demokratikong karapatan na magpahayag. Para sa mga manggagawa sa transportasyon, hahayaan silang bumuo ng unyon at lumahok sa negosasyon para sa sahod, benepisyo at iba pa.

Kapag nakabatay sa pambansang industriya ang sistema ng transportasyon, tatangkilikin natin ang bago at matibay na gawang Pilipino. Maglalaan ng subsidyo mula sa pambansang budget para suportahan at palakihin ang lokal na manupaktura ng sasakyan, at gawing mura ang rehabilitasyon at overhaul ng public vehicle units. Papatibayin din ang kaakibat na mga lokal na industriya para sa mas murang fabrication, parts, and raw materials. Hindi tayo aasa sa pautang ng malalaking lokal at multilateral na mga bangko. Kaysa hayaan ang paglobo ng travel expenses ng opisina ng Pangulo mula P671 million noong 2023 patungong P1.15 billion ngayong taon, nananawagan tayo sa Pangulo na isuko ang pondong iyon at ilaan bilang dagdag-pantustos sa rehabilitation ng mga jeep at subsidyo sa local vehicle manufacturing.

Bilang panghuli, ganito ang nais natin para sa sistema ng transportasyon. This is our alternative vision. Muli, transportasyon na makamasa at nakabatay sa pambansang industriya. Katulad din nito ang gusto natin, ng mga kabataan at ng mamamayan, para sa iba pang serbisyong dapat pinagsusumikapan ng gobyerno na maging abot-kamay para sa mga Pilipino. Nakatuntong ang mga ito sa pagtaguyod ng isang ekonomiyang nakakatindig sa sarili at sa isang bansang hindi nakaasa sa dayuhan at tunay na malaya.

Iyon lamang, Mr. Speaker. Maraming salamat. Magandang gabi.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). Thank you, the debonair Representative from the KABATAAN Party-List, Hon. Raoul Manuel, for your privilege speech.

Majority Leader.

REP. SANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I move that we refer the speech of Rep. Raoul Manuel to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). Are there any objections? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The privilege speech is referred to the Committee on Rules.

Majority Leader.

REP. SANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I move that we close the Privilege Hour.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). Are there any objections? (*Silence*) Hearing none, the motion is approved.

The Privilege Hour is hereby closed.

Majority Leader.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. SANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I move that we suspend the session for a few minutes.

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

It was 7:19 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 7:20 p.m., the session was resumed.

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

The Hon. Mannix Dalipe, the Majority Leader, is hereby recognized.

ELECTION OF REP. SUAREZ AS DEPUTY SPEAKER

REP. DALIPE. Mr. Speaker, on the part of the Majority, we move to elect as Deputy Speaker, Rep. David "Jay-Jay" Suarez vice Ralph G. Recto. I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). Are there any objections? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; congratulations, the motion is approved.

REP. ACIDRE. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano).
Majority Leader.

DESIGNATION OF REP. BRIONES TO THE
CONF. CTTEE. ON H.B. NOS. 9284 AND
3917, AND S.B. NO. 2432

REP. ACIDRE. Mr. Speaker, I move to designate Rep. Nicanor M. Briones as additional member to the Conference Committee to reconcile the disagreeing provisions of House Bill Nos. 9284 and 3917, and Senate Bill No. 2432, on the amendment of the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

Majority Leader.

DESIGNATION OF
SPEAKER ROMUALDEZ
AS LEGISLATIVE CARETAKER
OF THE SIXTH DISTRICT OF BATANGAS

REP. ACIDRE. Mr. Speaker, in the interest of the people in the Sixth District of Batangas, in view of the appointment

of their Representative, the Hon. Ralph Recto, as the Secretary of the Department of Finance, I move that we designate Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez as the legislative caretaker of the Sixth District of Batangas.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion to have Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez as the caretaker of the Sixth Legislative District of Batangas, in view of the appointment of Sec. Ralph Recto as Finance Secretary, is hereby approved.

Majority Leader.

ADJOURNMENT OF SESSION

REP. ACIDRE. Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn the session until tomorrow, Tuesday, January 23, 2024, at three o'clock in the afternoon.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Albano). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) Hearing none, the Chair declares the session adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, January 23, 2024, at three o'clock in the afternoon.

It was 7:22 p.m.