

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Second Regular Session)

SENATE

P. S. RES. NO. 630

Introduced by **SENATOR LEILA M. DE LIMA**

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE FAILURE OF THE GOVERNMENT TO EFFICIENTLY UTILIZE DONATIONS INTENDED TO ASSIST THE GOVERNMENT IN EFFECTIVELY COMBATING THE DRUG PROBLEM THROUGH THE PROPER TREATMENT OF DRUG ADDICTION, WHICH FAILURE LED TO THE EXTREMELY UNDER-UTILIZED MEGA-DRUG REHABILITATION FACILITY IN NUEVA ECIJA, AND INTO PROPRIETY OF FURTHER PLANS TO CONSTRUCT OTHER SIMILAR MEGA-DRUG REHABILITATION FACILITIES IN LIGHT OF THE FAILURE OF THE FIRST ONE

WHEREAS, the Constitution, Art. II, Section 15 provides:

SEC. 15. The State shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them.

WHEREAS, in late 2016, the government, through the Department of Health, received ₱1.4 billion pesos from a certain Chinese national Huang Rulun for the construction of a 10,000-bed mega-drug rehabilitation facility in Nueva Ecija;

WHEREAS, the facility was inaugurated by Pres. Rodrigo Duterte himself, along with controversial donor Huang Rulun, on 29 November 2016;¹

WHEREAS, as early as April 2017, questions arose as to the practicality of having mega-drug rehabilitation facilities, with Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Undersecretary John Catricones quoted as saying, “What we noticed is that if we are going to concentrate big rehabilitation centers in one region, there would be some difficulties”;²

¹ Ranada, Pia. Duterte, Chinese tycoon inaugurate ‘mega’ drug rehab center (29 November 2016). Rappler. Retrieved from: <https://www.rappler.com/nation/153995-duterte-huang-rulun-inauguration-mega-drug-rehabilitation-center>

² Geronimo, Jee. No more ‘mega’ drug rehab centers after Nueva Ecija facility? (8 April 2017) Rappler. Retrieved from: <https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/in-depth/165791-mega-drug-rehabilitation-centers>

WHEREAS, Department of Health (DOH) Assistant Secretary Eric Tayag was also reported to have considered the facility in Nueva Ecija as impractical since it would make it difficult for families to visit the patients from Mindanao;³

WHEREAS, *The Philippine Daily Inquirer* reported that Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) Chairman, Dionisio Santiago, was allegedly asked to resign by President Rodrigo Duterte barely a few days after he reportedly said the establishment of the mega-drug rehabilitation facility in Nueva Ecija was a “mistake”;⁴

WHEREAS, *Philippine Star* quoted Santiago as describing the idea for the mega drug rehabilitation drug facility as: “Impractical. That was a mistake. *Ang problema naging excited si president pero yung ginasta dun pwedeng ginamit sa mga community-based rehab yan na maliliit*, which can accommodate only between 150 to 200 (The president might have been excited, but the money could have spent to finance community-based rehabilitation programs that can accommodate only between 150 to 200 people)”;⁵

WHEREAS, ABS-CBN likewise reported that Santiago, who was also a former head of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA), admitted drug dependents to the treatment center must have been difficult because of its distance;⁶

WHEREAS, Santiago reportedly added that drug dependents need the support of their family, to wit, “*Saan mo panggagalingan yun? Yung iba taga-Batangas. Eh sa rehab, kailangan mo ng family support. Paano ka pupunta dun kung pamasahelang sa loved ones mo, wala ka?*”;⁷

WHEREAS, the difficulty arising from the center’s distance from the drug dependent’s family is counterproductive to the intended purpose of the rehabilitation center, considering that, as reported by *Rappler*, citing Myra Dee Lopez-Roces, in-house psychiatrist of Roads and Bridges to Recovery, “Family is very important because it provides emotional, psychological, and well, financial support. A lot of our trainees [or patients] are dependent on their families. So when taken out of the equation, [patients] feel like they’re paralyzed”;⁸

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Corrales, Nestor. *Dionisio Santiago quits as DDB chief – report* (7 November 2017). *Inquirer.net*. Retrieved from: <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/943631/dionisio-santiago-quits-as-ddb-chief-report-ddb-dionisio-santiago-resign-rodrico-duterte-drugs>

⁵ Morallo, Audrey. *DDB chief: Nueva Ecija drug rehab facility a 'mistake,' 'impractical'* (1 November 2017). *Philstar.com*. Retrieved from: <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2017/11/01/1754597/ddb-chief-nueva-ecija-drug-rehab-facility-mistake-impractical>

⁶ Billiones, Trishia. *Mega drug rehab center in N. Ecija a 'mistake': DDB chief* (1 November 2017). *ABS-CBN News*. Retrieved from: <http://news.abs-cbn.com/news/11/01/17/mega-drug-rehab-center-in-n-ecija-a-mistake-ddb-chief>.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Geronimo, Jee Y. *War on drugs: Rehabilitation must be more than a knee-jerk reaction* (18 August 2016). *Rappler.com*. Retrieved from: <https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/in-depth/143462-drug-addiction-brain-mental-health>

WHEREAS, in the same article, psychiatrist Benita Sta. Ana-Ponio, a member of the Department of Health (DOH) and the World Health Organization's task force on drug rehabilitation, is quoted as saying that relapses can be minimized by giving the drug dependent "the right intervention at a drug rehabilitation center", which, in turn, requires involvement by both the patient's family and community;⁹

WHEREAS, Senate President Pro Tempore Ralph Recto agreed with Santiago's observation that there may have been a miscalculation in the building of the 10,000-bed mega rehabilitation center in Nueva Ecija, commenting that "[t]en-thousand-bed capacity, 400 lang [nandoon]? Eh di parang may mali nga ... Sa tingin ko kung 400 lang, hindi nagagamit nang tama";¹⁰

WHEREAS, Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque had also gone on the record to state that he agrees with the statement of Santiago that smaller rehabilitation centers are more effective in addressing the problem;¹¹

WHEREAS, Pres. Duterte nonetheless said that Santiago's statement was very "incongruous" and that he was "offended";¹²

WHEREAS, the President, who asked Santiago to resign, was also reported to claim that the latter's criticisms were prompted by his desire to ride the bandwagon of "popular" sentiment about the President's drug war;¹³

WHEREAS, in the wake of the resignation of Santiago, *The Philippine Daily Inquirer* reported that the "Department of Health (DOH) is looking into the possibility of reconfiguring the mega drug rehabilitation center in Nueva Ecija to cater to 'more difficult' cases of drug addiction";¹⁴

WHEREAS, Senate Majority Leader Vicente Sotto III likewise pitched the idea that it could be converted to another use, such as "the country's mega drug enforcement academy," which PDEA could oversee;¹⁵

WHEREAS, Presidential Spokesperson Roque said, "[f]rom the beginning, we, particularly our health officials, do not envision this to be a permanent structure. Our

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Alvarez, Kathrina Charmaine. *Recto agrees with Santiago, says too many beds at mega drug rehab center* (8 November 2017). GMA News Online. Retrieved from: www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/632398/recto-agrees-with-santiago-says-too-many-beds-at-mega-drug-rehab-center/story/

¹¹ Romero, Alexis. *Mega rehab a miscalculation, Palace admits* (6 November 2017). Philstar.com. Retrieved from: <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2017/11/06/1756188/mega-rehab-miscalculation-palace-admits>

¹² Ranada, Pia. *Duterte 'offended' by Santiago's criticism of drug rehab approach* (8 November 2017). Rappler. Retrieved from: <https://www.rappler.com/nation/187760-duterte-offended-sacked-dionisio-santiago>

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Avendano, Christine and Tina Santos. *DOH wants mega drug rehab center 'reconfigured'* (9 November 2017). Inquirer.net. Retrieved from: <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/944075/doh-wants-mega-drug-rehab-center-reconfigured>

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

long-term vision is once the drug problem has been resolved, this can be turned over to the military who owns the land or other agencies of government that can utilize, manage and optimize the facility”;¹⁶

WHEREAS, on 12 January 2018, the Chinese Embassy in Manila and the DOH broke ground on a grant-aid Dangerous Drug Abuse Treatment and Rehabilitation Center in Mindanao;¹⁷

WHEREAS, according to the Chinese Embassy, the construction of two rehabilitation centers in Sarangani and Agusan del Sur is the first Chinese grant-aid construction project in the Philippines;¹⁸

WHEREAS, on 17 January 2018, Palace Communications Secretary Martin Andanar said that the government is drawing plans with philanthropists for the construction of two new mega-drug rehabilitation facilities in Mindanao and Davao;¹⁹

WHEREAS, ABS-CBN News reports that a certain billionaire named Xu Ming Liang, who is also known as Jose Kho in the Philippines, met with President Rodrigo Duterte at Malacañang Palace with a pledge to shoulder costs for building drug rehab centers in Visayas and Mindanao;²⁰

WHEREAS, the conflicting opinions of government officials on how mega-rehabilitation facilities should be used appears to betray a disturbing lack of a clear, nation-wide and scientific-based direction on the part of the government as to the health, rehabilitative and social aspects of the ongoing War on Drugs;

WHEREAS, without a clear policy behind the utilization of these mega-facilities, we might end up having all these structures that our government maintains without achieving any defined and lasting goals, thereby wasting funds which would have been better appropriated elsewhere;

WHEREAS, although on paper it seems that these facilities are purely funded by donations from foreign donors, in reality, the expenses that have to be incurred to operationalize them do not stop at simply building them, as it would require millions of pesos in taxpayers’ money to staff, supply, and maintain such facilities every single day thereafter;

¹⁶ Gita. Ruth Abbey. *Palace: Mega drug rehab center in Nueva Ecija not permanent* (9 November 2017). Sunstar Online. Retrieved from: <http://www.sunstar.com.ph/manila/local-news/2017/11/09/palace-mega-drug-rehab-center-nueva-ecija-not-permanent-573829>

¹⁷ *PH, China start construction of 2 mega drug rehab centers in Mindanao* (13 January 2018). PTVNews.ph. Retrieved from: <https://ptvnews.ph/ph-china-start-construction-2-mega-drug-rehab-centers-mindanao/>

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Coming soon: Mega drug rehabs in Visayas, Mindanao* (18 January 2018). ABS-CBN News. Retrieved from: <http://news.abs-cbn.com/focus/01/18/17/coming-soon-mega-drug-rehabs-in-visayas-mindanao>

²⁰ *Ibid.*

WHEREAS, this means that there is a need for Congress to look closely at these projects, considering that it would be Congress that would have to appropriate money in order to fund the operations of these mega rehab facilities, and there is, therefore, a need to ensure that the government would not be pouring millions of public funds down the drain with nothing to show for it due to a poorly thought-out rehabilitation program that is merely edifice-centric, rather than people- and community-centric;

WHEREAS, being a social problem, it is imperative that the government realize that people are not commodities and that, therefore, rehabilitation facilities are not like the manufacturing industry that benefits from the principle of economies of scale, where the greater the scale, the better the outcome;

WHEREAS, there is a need to focus on the human, health and social elements of the problem, because the cost-effectiveness of the endeavor can only be truly measured by ensuring that these facilities are part of a holistic program that takes into consideration the support system that the patients need to ensure that they are successfully rehabilitated and integrated back to the community, with minimal risks of relapsing;

WHEREAS, at the very least, in order to justify the building of these multiple mega-rehabilitation facilities in the locations chosen, it is the responsibility of the government to present empirical, scientific and authoritative data showing the demand for such large and long-term rehabilitation centers in such locations across the country;

WHEREAS, there is likewise a need to define the exact utilization plan for these mega-facilities in order to establish that their construction is in accordance with existing laws and clear government policies, including social welfare and fiscal policies;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, to direct the appropriate Senate Committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, into the failure of the government to efficiently utilize donations intended to assist the government in effectively combating the drug problem through the proper treatment of drug addiction, which failure led to the extremely under-utilized mega-drug rehabilitation facility in Nueva Ecija, and into the propriety of further plans to construct other similar mega-drug rehabilitation facilities in light of the failure of the first one.

Adopted,


LEILA M. DE LIMA
