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SENATE
P.S. Resolution No. 350

RECEIVED BY:

Introduced by Senator Cynthia A. Villar

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE STATE OF THE OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS (OFWs) CONTRIBUTIONS AND MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS IN THE NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM THROUGH PHILHEALTH, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

WHEREAS, it is mandatory for every overseas Filipino worker to be a member of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) by virtue of Republic Act No. 7875, which established the National Health Insurance Program in 2013;

WHEREAS, in 2014, OFWs paid P1,773,875,550 in premium contributions to PhilHealth, showing the positive effect and implementation of the law;

WHEREAS, this amount of contributions, however, started to decline in 2015 with OFW premium contributions at P1,283,327,400 and dropped even more with only P823,462,800 in OFW premium contributions in 2016;

WHEREAS, this means that PhilHealth OFW contributions significantly dropped by P490-million from 2015 to 2016;

WHEREAS, these figures are alarming considering that the country continues to deploy more than a million OFWs each year, who are entitled to PhilHealth memberships, to ensure affordable health care for their dependents while they are away;

WHEREAS, membership in PhilHealth also provides an OFW the added benefit of being able to reimburse hospitalization expenses while overseas;

WHEREAS, a contributing factor to the decline in OFW contributions to PhilHealth was the decision of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) in April 1, 2015 to segregate PhilHealth and Pag-IBIG Fund from POEA's OEC-issuance system;

WHEREAS, the POEA decision was warmly received by OFWs who felt unjustly burdened by too many mandatory payments to government institutions but led to a steady decrease in OFW contributions for PhilHealth;

WHEREAS, by comparison, the Pag-IBIG Fund did not suffer a tremendous loss in OFW membership premiums despite also being delinked from the POEA system in 2015;

WHEREAS, the Pag-IBIG Fund collected P2.14-billion from OFWs in 2014, which even increased in 2015 to P2.165-billion and P2.204-billion in 2016;

WHEREAS, given the country's aspiration for universal health care, it is important to revisit the law creating the National Health Insurance Program and its implementation specifically for the benefit of overseas Filipino workers;

WHEREAS, the falling OFW contributions to PhilHealth deserves no less than a Senate inquiry considering that there may be more to this than meets the eye, and the sentiments of our OFWs that are the ultimate beneficiaries of RA No. 7875 must also be taken into consideration;

WHEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, as it is hereby resolved by the Senate of the Philippines to direct the appropriate Senate committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, into the state of OFW contributions and membership benefits in the National Health Insurance Program through PhilHealth, and for other purposes.

Adopted,


CYNTHIA A. VILLAR