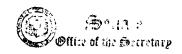
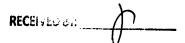
SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Second Regular Session)



'18 APR 26 P1:59

SENATE

P. S. Res. No. 715



Introduced by SENATOR LEILA M. DE LIMA

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE
TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION, IN AID OF LEGISLATION,
ON THE ADMINISTRATION'S ORDER
TO CLOSE OFF BORACAY ISLAND FOR SIX MONTHS,
AND TO INQUIRE INTO THE GOVERNMENT MEASURES, IF ANY, TO
ADDRESS THE EFFECTS OF THE CLOSURE TO THE PHILIPPINE
ECONOMY AND THE FILIPINO PEOPLE

WHEREAS, Article II, Section 9 of the Constitution provides that it is the policy of the State to "... promote a just and dynamic social order that will ensure the prosperity and independence of the nation and free the people from poverty through policies that provide adequate social services, promote full employment, a rising standard of living, and an improved quality of life for all";

WHEREAS, Boracay Island, the world famous tourism haven boasting of powdery white sand beaches and pristine waters located at the northwestern tip of the Panay region, serves as one of the poster destinations of Philippine tourism;

WHEREAS, as the country's premier tourist destination, it has attracted more than two (2) million domestic and international tourists and generated revenues of \$\mathbb{P}\$56 billion in 2017 alone;

WHEREAS, with only a land area of 1,032 hectares, operations on the island contribute twenty (20%) percent of the total income generated by the tourism sector, which is the third-biggest sector in terms of share in the country's gross domestic product (GDP);

WHEREAS, due to the rapid and massive influx of tourists in Boracay, coupled with the unchecked activities therein over a long period of time, studies have shown that the coral reefs on Boracay have been damaged, its ecosystem has been threatened

by unregulated commercial development, and water quality on the island has deteriorated due to the direct discharge of untreated waste water near the shoreline;

WHEREAS, last 04 April 2018, roughly two (2) months after calling the island a "cesspool", President Rodrigo Duterte hastily approved the proposal to close the island from tourists for six (6) months starting on 26 April without proper consultation from the stakeholders that will be affected most – the local residents and the workers;

WHEREAS, the shutdown is still pushing through amidst pleas from affected sectors, with the Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Board going as far as issuing a resolution asking the President to reconsider the planned closure, pleading that the matter "... should be studied for the sake of the 17,735 workers and their families [who] would be undergoing economic deprivation if the closure will push through";

WHEREAS, in spite of the necessity to rehabilitate the island, the only thing we heard from administration officials are vague, inconsistent, and ultimately empty plan of action on how to go about the island's rehabilitation;

WHEREAS, the seemingly inadequate plan to provide economic support for the residents of Boracay show how little thought, regard, empathy and care were afforded to those who will be most affected;

WHEREAS, according to a Rappler report published on 10 April 2018, the President admitted during a press conference last 09 April 2018 that he does not have a master plan yet for the affected individuals bluntly stating, "Master plan? Wala akong master plan diyan. Linisin ko muna 'yan kasi agricultural 'yan." (But master plan, I don't have a master plan for that. I will first clean it up because it's agricultural land)²;

WHEREAS, in a Manila Standard report posted last 06 April 2018, the impending closure of Boracay during its lean months will cost the economy \$\mathbb{P}\$20 billion

¹ Pascual-Dormido, Y. ABS-CBN News. (2018, February 28), *Planned Boracay closure endangers* 17,000 jobs: labor rep. Retrieved 22 February 2018, from http://news.abs-cbn.com/business/02/28/18/planned-boracay-closure-endangers-17000-jobs-labor-rep

² Esmaquel II, P. Rappler. (2018, April 10), *TRANSCRIPT: Duterte admits he has no master plan for Boracay*. Retrieved 22 February 2018, from https://www.rappler.com/nation/199956-duterte-boracay-closure-no-master-plan

of foregone revenue, affecting the livelihood of 73,522 residents, 17,735 registered workers and 9,365 belonging to the informal economy ³;

WHEREAS, in a Manila Times article posted last 16 April 2018 entitled "Boracay closure: More harm than help", it was reported that the social and economic repercussions of the closure will not just be contained within the island, alone as it will definitely affect the suppliers, contractors, including those in the auxiliary industries that provide goods and services like food and souvenir production, land, air, and sea transportation and touring services;

WHEREAS, starting 26 April 2018, several airlines such as Cebu Pacific, Air Asia and Philippine Airlines will cease to offer direct flights to and from Caticlan airport, projecting a revenue loss between \$3 million and \$5 million per airline because of the six-month closure 4;

WHEREAS, according to a Philippine Star article published last 18 March 2018 entitled "Boracay closure to hit entire tourism industry", contrary to the claims made by the Department of Tourism (DOT) that the closure will have a minimal impact on Philippine tourism, Jojo Clemente of the Tourism Congress of the Philippines stresses that one cannot separate Boracay from the entire tourism industry since the island, as the staple destination for tour packages offered by international travel agencies, is a big factor in convincing tourists to choose the Philippines in the first place;

WHEREAS, according to Mr. Clemente, the stakeholders of Boracay asked for a six-month lead time in order to prepare for the impending closure and that they have always been willing to cooperate with the rehabilitation of the island, emphasizing that the tourism industry would be amenable if the rehabilitation will be done on a phase-by-phase basis thus avoiding a total closure for the island;

WHEREAS, the same article avers that the Trade Department recommended and prefers to address the issue in phases, with then Senior Deputy Executive Secretary (now, Department of Justice Secretary) Menardo Guevarra stating that, "[t]he Department of Trade and Industry has submitted a separate memorandum to

³ Barcelo, V., Ramos-Araneta M., Zurbano J., and Amojelar, D., Manila Standard. (2018, April 06), *Tourism, airlines take a hit; P20-billion loss feared*. Retrieved 22 April 2018 from, http://manilastandard.net/news/top-stories/262497/tourism-airlines-take-a-hit-p20-billion-loss-feared.html

⁴ Amojelar, D., Manila Standard. (2018, April 06), *CEB stands to lose \$5-million from closure of Boracay*. Retrieved 22 April 2018 from, http://manilastandard.net/business/transport-tourism/262538/ceb-stands-to-lose-5-million-from-closure-of-boracay.html

us saying that maybe this closure can be done in phases because of the effect on businesses and livelihood in the area";

WHEREAS, in an interview with CNN Philippines, Annabella Wisniewski, the President of Raintree Hospitality Group which manages hotels and restaurants on the island claimed that, "[the government] never included... the private sector in the planning. Nakakasama ng loob kasi hindi nila in-involve yung mga tao na maapektuhan, hindi yung mga taong naghahanap-buhay doon, yung nagtatrabaho." (There are hard feelings because they didn't involve those who will be affected, those working and earning a livelihood there);

WHEREAS, having been given only a three-week allowance to prepare for their imminent six (6) months of joblessness, these affected Filipinos are being robbed of their ability to plan for themselves and have control of their lives – with the very people tasked to protect them stripping them off their means of livelihood, leaving them dazed, clueless, and extremely disadvantaged moving forward;

WHEREAS, on an 07 April 2018 news article from CNN Philippines entitled, "Three week notice of Boracay closure unfair — stakeholders", it was revealed that Budget Secretary Ben Diokno believed that the closure was done too soon, stating that the government should "[d]o it at the off-peak period and then maybe gradually. Before doing that, you have to have a plan already [that] is implementation-ready";

WHEREAS, the government should have exercised due diligence and encouraged people's participation through public consultations — listening, understanding, and giving the local residents their right to be heard most especially since it is their land, livelihood and future in jeopardy;

WHEREAS, as supposed advocates of federalism, decentralization and devolution, this Administration is ironically exhibiting clear signs of autocratic rule as it relies on the powers and prerogatives of the central government to impose sanctions and enforce policies from the top irrespective of the multi-faceted realities on the ground and regardless of the actual needs of the people and the environment;

WHEREAS, Secretary Benjamin Diokno of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) has assured the public that the government will be using calamity funds to help affected workers cope with the unexpected but supposedly temporary loss of jobs and income, setting aside \$\mathbb{P}\$2 billion to cushion the impact expected to be

felt by the estimated 36,000 workers in Boracay, but excluding those to be affected in mainland Aklan and Panay 5;

WHEREAS, given the tremendous government resources that will be poured into the project, transparency and accountability measures should be in place. Under its guidelines, however, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) requires that "[j]ournalists [would] need permission to cover [the rehabilitation process]. Media will be allowed entry subject to prior approval from the Department of Tourism, with a definite duration and limited movement"⁶;

WHEREAS, according to an article published last 17 January 2018 in the Philippine Information Agency (PIA) website, with an allotted budget of ₱851,460,348.75, significant repairs on the water supply and sewerage system of the island have been supposedly underway after the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA) Board of Directors approved the three-year implementation of the Phase II of the Boracay Drainage Improvement Project 7;

WHEREAS, it is imperative for the Senate to conduct an investigation into whether the closure of Boracay Island was the most sound, rational and appropriate course of action to address the pressing economic, zoning, and environmental issues in the island, and whether better options are available to confront them, along with the other myriad challenges that beset the island and the various stakeholders;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE, to direct the appropriate Senate committee to conduct an investigation, in aid of legislation, on the administration's order to close off Boracay island for six (6) months, and to inquire into the government measures, if any, to address the various effects and implications of the closure to the Philippine economy and the welfare of the Filipino people.

Adopted,

felladefor LEILAM, DE LIMA

⁵ Stinus-Cabugon, M. The Manila Times. (2018, April 16), *Boracay closure: More harm than help*. Retrieved 21 April 2018, from http://www.manilatimes.net/boracay-closure-more-harm-than-help/392870/

⁶ Talabong, R. Rappler. (2018, April 12), *LIST: New Boracay rules during 6-month closure*. Retrieved 21 April 2018, from https://www.rappler.com/nation/200122-list-new-rules-boracay-closure

⁷ Philippine Information Agency. (2018, January 18), *TIEZA approves completion of Boracay Drainage Project*. Retrieved 22 April 2018, from http://pia.gov.ph/news/articles/1004107