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Cebu solons want LGUs to manage COVID-19 response instead of IATF

By CNN Philippines Staff (/cnn-website/search/?queryStr=CNN Philippines Staff)

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Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, June 6) – Eight Cebuano congressmen want local government units to manage the COVID-19 response in the province instead of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases.

"As we inch back towards normalcy, it is high time for local government units who handled the pandemic well to return to the driver's seat and be given full confidence to manage the COVID-19 situation within their respective jurisdictions free of any intrusion by the IATF," reads the manifesto signed by the solons on Sunday.

The signatories of the manifesto include all congressmen in Cebu province, which are First District Rep. Eduardo Gullas, 2nd District Rep. Wilfredo Caminero, 3rd District Rep. Pablo John Garcia, 4th District Rep. Janice Salimbangon, 5th District Rep. Duke Frasco, 6th District Rep. Emarie Ouano-Dizon, and 7th District Rep. Peter John Calderon.

Ako Bisaya party-list Rep. Sonny Lagon, who is a Cebuano, also signed the manifesto.

The manifesto supported the Cebu provincial government's policies in curbing the spread of COVID-19 in the province, particularly the "swab-upon-arrival-policy" in Cebu which allows returning Filipino migrant workers to be swabbed immediately upon their arrival.

"A significant proportion of our constituent OFWs and ROFs (Returning Overseas Filipinos) come back to Cebu due to deaths in the family and other family emergencies where it is critical for them to immediately return home. This, notwithstanding the limitation of time their work abroad permits them to stay in Cebu," the congressmen said.

The Swab-Upon-Arrival Policy provincial ordinance also allows Filipino overseas workers to return to their homes after the release of their negative RT-PCR test results, where they can continue the remainder of their quarantine under the supervision of barangay health workers.

On the other hand, the IATF through its Resolution No. 116 wanted OFWs and ROFs quarantined for fourteen days upon their arrival, where the first ten days are to be spent in an accredited quarantine facility. An RT-PCR test shall be conducted on the seventh day from arrival.

Because of such conflict and the limited number of hotel rooms in Cebu, the Palace decided to divert all incoming international flights bound for Mactan-Cebu International Airport to the Ninoy Aquino International Airport in Manila.

"Worse, such actuations by the IATF are an encroachment upon the local autonomy enjoyed by the Province of Cebu as enshrined in the Philippine Constitution and under Republic Act No. 7160," the congressmen's manifesto added.

They claimed that Cebu province having been under a modified general community quarantine classification status for more than ten months reflects "the efficacy of the provincial government's sound and practical policies."



representatives of the people, we can no longer sit idle while our constituent OFWs and ROFs are further burdened by unsound and impractical policies that greatly affect their own personal and financial circumstances," the solons said.

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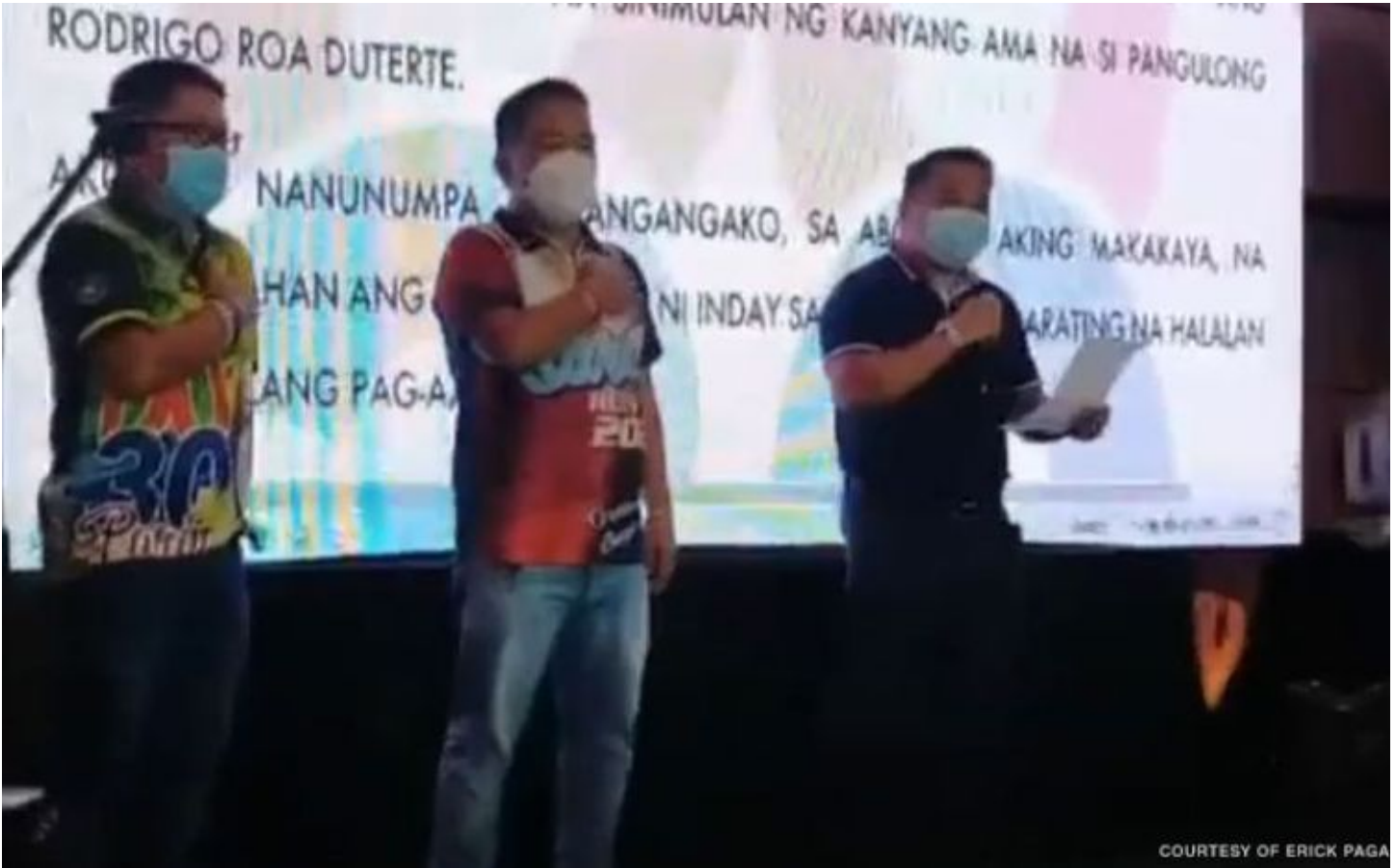
Cebu Governor Gwen Garcia previously said (https://cnnphilippines.com/regional/2021/5/4/cebu-gwen-garcia-testing.html) the IATF's rule of testing OFWs six days after their return was repressive and would strain their finances as they come home to Cebu.

Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque said on May 28 (https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2021/5/28/Palace-Cebu-govt-protocols-returning-Filipinos.html) that Malacañang sees no "defiance" regarding Garcia's protocols for Filipinos arriving in Cebu province amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

CNN Philippines Cebu Correspondent Dale Israel contributed to this report.

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