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Cebu

Gwen: Vax cards not required for government transactions





Cebu Governor Gwendolyn Garcia (File photo)

January 19, 2022

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CEBU Gov. Gwendolyn Garcia issued a memorandum on Wednesday, Jan. 19, 2022, reminding all mayors in Cebu Province to refrain from “requiring the presentation of a vaccination card for any educational, employment, and other similar government transaction purposes.”

On the same day, Garcia also voiced her disapproval of the “No vaccination, no ride” as well as the “No vaccination, no entry” policies implemented by other local government units.

The governor’s issuance of Memorandum 3-2022 is in line with Section 12 of Republic Act (RA) 11525 or the Covid-19 Vaccination Program Act of 2021.

A portion of Section 12 (g) of RA 11525 states that “vaccine cards shall not be considered as an additional mandatory requirement for educational, employment, and other similar government transaction purposes.”

Cebu Province’s jurisdiction covers 44 municipalities and six component cities. Not under the Provincial Government are the highly urbanized cities of Cebu, Mandaue and Lapu-Lapu.

The governor’s memorandum came after the Department of Transportation (DOTr), under Department Order 2022-001 dated Jan. 11, 2022, implemented the “no vax, no ride” policy in the National Capital Region (NCR) while it is under Alert Level 3 or higher.

This policy does not cover Cebu even if the whole Cebu is also under Alert Level 3.

In December last year, the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases required unvaccinated employees to provide a negative reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) test result before they would be permitted to work on-site.

Unvaccinated workers are required to submit a negative RT-PCR result every two weeks, according to the IATF memo relayed by IATF chief implementer for the Visayas Melquiades Feliciano to Councilor Joel Garganera, deputy chief implementer of the Emergency Operations Center in Cebu City.

‘No vax, no ride’

Also on Wednesday, Garcia said she would not implement the “No vaccine, no ride” policy in the province. The governor called the policy “anti-poor.”

Garcia said the vaccination card should not be made a requirement for the commuting public.

The “no vaccine, no ride” policy has been implemented in the NCR since Jan. 17, 2022 due to the surge in Covid-19 cases there.

Garcia called on fully vaccinated individuals not to discriminate against those who are not yet vaccinated.

The Land Transportation Office’s implementing guidelines for the enforcement of the DOTr’s Department Order 2022-001 provides exceptions on the “no vaccination, no ride” policy for (a) persons with medical conditions that prevent full Covid-19 vaccination, as evidenced by a medical certificate, and (b) persons procuring essential goods and services like food, water, medicine, medical devices, public utilities, energy, work and medical and dental necessities, as evidenced by a barangay health pass or other proof to justify such travel.

‘No vax, no entry’

Garcia said she was also against the implementation of the ‘no vaccine, no entry’ policy in some business establishments in Cebu City as required by the city government starting Jan. 19.

“I think the law is very clear. How else can we interpret it other than saying that there shall be no mandatory requirement of vaccine card so that people may enter establishments? May enter schools? May go to work or may enter government buildings or avail of government services?” the governor said.

“So I cannot understand why this movement towards now discriminating against the unvaccinated by refusing even their boarding of public buses, airplanes and other means of transportation as well as insisting—as a mayor now has complained—that teachers should show their vax cards before they can enter their own schools,” she added.

Border control

Despite the province being placed under the Alert Level 3 status from Jan. 16 to 31 due to the rising number of Covid cases, Garcia clarified that there was no border control going on in the province except for border checkpoints manned by the police to ensure that drivers follow the health protocols such as the 70 percent maximum passenger capacity.

Garcia advised bus drivers to continue wearing their masks and necklace air purifiers as well as open the bus windows to get rid of the virus.

She encouraged the public to boost their immune system to avoid getting infected with the coronavirus that causes Covid-19. (KAL, ANV, TPT)



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