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# CEBU BUSINESS WEEK

May 3, 2020

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## SPECIAL EDITION

# NO MASS TEST SANS COUNCIL

*Councilors yet to discuss P30M for program slated to start May 4*

A member of the Cebu City council has urged the Department of Health (DOH) and the Cebu City Government to suspend the implementation of the rapid mass testing for the coronavirus disease or Covid-19.

Cebu City Councilor Antonio “Tony” Cuenco, a former congressman of Cebu City South and past deputy speaker of the House of Representatives, said the rapid mass testing will become inutile and a waste of government funds if the DOH and Cebu City Government will implement it haphazardly.

The Cebu City Government under Mayor Edgardo Labella has appropriated P30 million to buy rapid mass testing kits supposedly for mass testing that starts May 4, 2020.

However, Vice Mayor Michael “Mike” Rama said the City Council was not informed about it as several councilors raised issues during their special session last week.

Cuenco warned DOH and Cebu City officials that they are bound to lose the

trust and confidence of the people if they proceed with the rapid mass testing without first enlightening the Cebu City Council about it.

In an interview with DYRC radio (648 KHz) that was broadcasted worldwide through DYRC Aksyon Radyo Cebu live streaming, Cuenco said DOH 7, Cebu City Health Department and the Cebu City Government executive department must attend the Cebu City Council special session tomorrow, May 4, 2020 and explain about the mechanics of this speedy mass testing.

Cuenco said the Cebuanos have the right to be apprised of the following:

- Where they (DOH and Cebu City Government) purchased these testing kits?
- Are these testing kits reliable and accurate?
- How much does each testing kit cost? and
- Is the price reasonable?

There are only six testing kits manufacturers in the world--- Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Australia, United States and China.

The budget of P30 mil-



COUNCILOR ANTONIO CUENCO

lion is a huge sum of money, that’s why reliability, accuracy and reasonable price are important. The DOH and Cebu City officials must take note of that.

Another issue is on the determination of who will compose the ten percent of the barangay population to be tested.

“Kinsay nagbuot ana? Unsay ilang sukaranan? How about the 90 percent who will not be tested? What if some of them are the ones positive of Covid-19?” a con-

fused Cuenco asked.

Cuenco expressed apprehension as he pointed out that the DOH and City Government must assure the Cebuanos that the personnel assigned to conduct the rapid tests are indeed well-trained, experienced and capable of the task at hand.

Any incompetence will subject the people to unwanted public health risk and would instigate mass protest.

“We invited the DOH, Cebu City Health Department, and Cebu City executive department officials to attend the Cebu City Council special session last week to thoroughly discuss how to respond to the unprecedented rose of COVID cases, but our invite fell on deaf ears. Why are they ignoring our issues?” Cuenco lamented.

He said he was worried that should this the testing turned out to be unreliable, it would backlash on the city administration...

Cuenco said City Councilor Eduardo Rama suggested conducting speedy testing first in the depressed areas of

Mambaling, Pasil, Suba and Sawang Calero. But nothing happened until now.

The good councilor emphasized the importance of identifying DOH and Cebu City officials involved in the transaction of this speedy testing.

The DOH must unravel who determined and approved the testing kits’ reliability and accuracy.

The Cebu City government must disclose the officials who approved the release of the money and the payment thereof to the manufacturers.

“It’s not enough that you will say that these testing kits are approved by DOH. Who were the officials who approved it? Who were the city officials who involved? In that way, we can hold them responsible if something goes wrong,” Cuenco said.

“Kinsa may naghukom nga ang testing kits nga gipalit maoy labing accurate, ug ang mga tawong tahasan sa paghimo sa speedy testing kamao? Ayaw ninyo limbonga ang katawhan. Tell the truth,” Cuenco declared. **ELIAS O. BAQUERO**