

COMMITTEE ON URBAN PLANNING, HOUSING & RESETTLEMENT
Joint With
COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT
1st PUBLIC HEARING
Monday, March 14, 2005
Senator Geronima T. Pecson Room
2:02 P.M.

SENATORS PRESENT: SENATORS RODOLFO G. BIAZON, (*Chairman, Committee on Urban Planning, Housing and Resettlement*) and RAMON MAGSAYSAY, JR.

SENATORS REPRESENTED: SENATORS MANUEL "LITO" M. LAPID and JUAN PONCE ENRILE ESTRADA

GUESTS/RESOURCE PERSONS: Hon. Amado Bagatsing, Vice Chairman, Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC); Hon. Fidel B. Rancio, Commissioner, Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor (PCUP); Hon. Francis L. Dagñalan, Commissioner, Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board (HLURB); Ms. Florian Lazaro, Manager, Community Relation and Information Operations Department, National Housing Authority (NHA); Ms. Angelica Sanchez, Program Assistant, League of Provinces; Ms. Cherith A. Domingo, National President, Real Estate Brokers Association of the Philippines (REBAP); Mr. Bobby C. Sy, President, Philippine Association of Realtors Board (PAREB); Atty. Bercy G. Garcia, Secretary General, National Real Estate Association (NREA); Mr. Sonny Ducay, Executive Director, Subdivision and Housing Developers Association, Inc. (SHDA); Atty. Orlando Danao, Legal Counsel, Chamber of Real Estate Builders Association, Inc. (CREBA); Atty. Irish Aguilar, Staff Lawyer, Sentro ng Alternatibong Lingap Panlegal (SALIGAN); Ms. Tanya Gaurano, Research Assistant, Institute for Church and Social Issues (ICSI)

HIGHLIGHTS

At 2:02 p.m., Senator Biazon, Chairman of the Committee on Urban Planning, Housing and Resettlement called the public hearing to order.

In his opening statement, the Chair thanked all the guests and resource persons for giving their time to share their views and comments on Senate Bill No. 1295 or the "Local Housing Boards Act" to the Committee. He stressed that it has been thirteen (13) years since the time he first filed the proposed measure and hopes that this time the said measure may be enacted into law before he finishes his second term in 2010. He said that the creation of a Local Housing Board (Board) is a step towards the direction of providing the Filipino people adequate shelter. He also indicated that each locality has its own peculiarity and priority with regard to housing. He further stated that the housing needs of the people, being first and foremost a local responsibility, would be better analyzed and understood at the local level. He also hoped that with the inputs of the guests and resource persons, the said measure would further be improved.

The Chair raised two issues: 1. there should be a closer coordination between the officials of national agencies and the local executives because most of the times the former leave the implementation of the programs of national agencies problems to the latter, and; 2. the local executives might be the obstacles to a fast implementation of relocation programs of the national agencies. The Chair asked the guests and resource persons how the issues should be addressed and also their stand with regard to the bill.

PCUP Commissioner Fidel B. Rancio expressed support for the proposed measure and stated the following suggestions and comments:

1. they bow to the Senate's sound discretion and discretion for such transfer under Sections 9 and 10;
2. they suggest that an agency of national scope and capability undertake demolition clearinghouse functions that require an inter-LGU or national perspective and;
3. they further note that the foregoing clearinghouse functions do not adopt a pro-active approach in dealing with the human dimensions of such activities and does not add additional teeth to ensure compliance with Section 28 of the Urban Development and Housing Act of 1992 and the remedies mentioned in the proposed bill are merely remedies after the fact.

Atty. Irish Aguilar of SALIGAN expressed support for the bill adding that a representative from the national housing agencies should be included in the Board. She likewise recommended the creation of a local trust fund pursuant to Section 309 of the local Government Code.

HUDCC Vice Chair Bagatsing explained that with the passage of the proposed measure into law, the programs of the national agencies may be localized and that migration of informal settlers may be halted. He further indicated his support to the said measure and expressed his willingness to participate actively in the technical working group to be conducted by the Committee.

Atty. Bercy G. Garcia said that NREA fully supports the bill. He also cited the following advantages of creating a Local Housing Board, namely: 1. reduce the workload of the national housing agencies; 2. facilitate their processing or procedures because the local government units are in a better position to appreciate and evaluate local situations, and; 3. ejection of informal settlers can be facilitated by local officials.

Ms. Cherith A. Domingo declared REBAP's support for the proposed measure. She said that if the said measure be enacted into law, it will lessen bureaucratic red tapes, especially in the ejection of squatters. She also said that their organization will be able to monitor and guard their properties from illegal settlers. Furthermore, she said that they will be more effective in providing shelter to the people. She, however, expressed her concern about the composition of the Board being headed by local officials. She added that the local officials are busy attending to their work that they may not be able to effectively perform their local housing function. She suggested that the Board should also include developers or property owners as members.

At this juncture, Atty. Orlando Danao of CREBA stated the organization's support for the bill but reiterated the earlier suggestion that developers be included in the Board. However, he clarified to the body that if the HLURB has approved the comprehensive land use plan for every city or municipality and properly implemented by the local government units, then there will be no need for the creation of the said Board. He also said that they will submit their position paper to the Committee

Mr. Sonny Ducay of SHDA affirms his group's support for the proposed measure and suggested that at least one representative from the private business sector, particularly the housing developer, be included in the Board. He proposed that the Board should function as a planning and advisory body attached to the Office of the

Mayor. Furthermore, he proposed to amend Section 9 of the said measure as follows: 1. making the city/municipality mayor as chairman; 2. include the city/municipality planning and development coordinator as member; 3. include the city/municipality engineer as member; 4. include a private housing developer as member; 5. include representative of people's organization/non government organization operating within the city/municipality as member.

On the other hand, Mr. Bobby C. Sy of PAREB was not categorical on his stand about the bill. However, he said that the city/municipality planning and development coordinators can be considered as representatives of HUDCC because they are already deputized by HLURB. With regard to the quorum under the said bill, the city/municipality mayor or vice mayor, in their absence, may appoint representative/s, or the bill's provision on quorum may be amended.

Ms. Tanya Gaurano, ICSI representative, manifested support for the proposed measure, particularly the demolition clearinghouse provision. She, however, noted the absence of provision that would denote the function as a demolition clearinghouse.

Ms. Florian Lazaro of NHA said expressed support for the bill but added that not all cities or municipalities would actually need a Board. She suggested that a representative from the academe be included as a member. She, however, expressed doubts if the said Board will be having a full time job. She also noted that there is no permanent implementing machinery for local housing and suggested that there must be one unit or office created to do the said task.

Ms. Angelica Sanchez of the League of Provinces conveyed their support for the proposed measure and stated that the said measure will be beneficial to the local government units, especially in preventing the migration of their constituents outside of their jurisdiction. She also informed the Chair that Governor Aumentado will be discussing the said measure during their General Assembly.

Finally, HLURB Commissioner Francis L. Dagñalan expressed support for the bill, adding that said bill is timely and will strengthen and facilitate the approval of subdivision projects. He noted that it is unclear if the Board is a replacement or an addition to the function of the local sangguniang bayan. He reiterated the statement of Ms. Lazaro that not all local government units should have a mandatory Board because it may not be practical for some cities or municipalities. He further proposed that there must be time frame for the said Board to act on applications and also a provision on appeal.

Before adjournment, the Chair again thanked all the guests and resource persons for sharing their views and comments to the Committee. He also requested them to review the composition, powers and functions of the Board for more inputs for the consideration of the Committee.

The hearing was adjourned at 3:35 p.m.

*Prepared and submitted by Arthur Lawrence L. Acierto, Acting Legislative Committee Secretary,
Committee on Urban Planning, Housing and Resettlement*