



19 January 2022

The Honorable Chairman and Commissioners
Commission on Elections (COMELEC) Manila

Dear Honorable Commissioners:

On behalf of our respective members representing various business and citizens' sectors, we wish to express certain concerns pertaining to the forthcoming national and local elections, particularly in light of the continuing health crisis brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and the imperatives of implementing a credible and orderly process in order to have clean and honest elections.

Four months before the holding of the elections on May 9, 2022, various areas of country are still on heightened alert and classified as being at high risk in view of the record-high number of coronavirus infections. We are concerned that the massive wave and surge of Covid-19 infections in the three most populous regions of the country could eventually spread throughout the country, if such are not contained effectively through a combination of stricter quarantine and enforcement of health protocols.

Considering the above, there is a huge cloud of uncertainty over the likely health scenario during the period immediately preceding Election Day. No national election in recent memory has been held during a national health emergency.

While the plebiscite held in Palawan in March 2021 was held under pandemic conditions, and by all accounts, was conducted in an orderly manner, the national elections, because of its sheer scale, necessarily requires a more comprehensive preparation. The mock elections conducted by this Honorable Commission in several

pilot sites nationwide last December 29, 2021 were also held in an orderly manner, but these happened before the sudden and swift upsurge that has escalated health risk levels.

In view of the foregoing, we undersigned business and citizens' groups earnestly request for a dialogue with this Honorable Commission, mainly to discuss with you the contingency measures for holding elections under more severe conditions. In general, we would like to know (a) the contingency measures that will be implemented for the holding of the national and local elections under extreme health emergency conditions similar to the current situation in NCR-Plus will be introduced; and (b) the provision of vital processes to ensure fair and honest elections.

In particular, we would like to know the following:

1. Will there be special voting arrangements, such as extending voting hours, considering that the voting may take more time because of the observance of health protocols, such as the observance of social distancing and limitation of number of people inside the polling areas?
2. Is there a possibility of holding the elections beyond one day?
3. Will there be special arrangements for some nine million senior citizens (who are at heightened risk) comprising about 14 percent of all voters?

Another vital concern that has been raised in the past is the delivery of election equipment and supplies to the polling centers which, according to this Honorable Commission, will be witnessed and monitored closely by stakeholders of the logistics process. We trust that, as in the printing of ballots and all other salient election processes, this Honorable Commission shall ensure that adequate safeguards and provisions for verification in the spirit of transparency and public accountability are put in place.

We understand that the complexity of the health situation in light of the ongoing COVID-19 health crisis, as well as the impact of the success of this political exercise on the economic and business stability of our country, has given this Honorable Commission the gargantuan task of ensuring not only a clean and honest elections, but also an efficient one. In this regard, we would like to assist and support this Honorable Commission, in whatever way we can, to achieve these objectives.

We believe that this Honorable Commission's continued transparency on arrangements and engagement with pollwatch groups in addressing election-related contingencies and risks will reinforce public confidence in the integrity of our elections.

In view of the above, please let us know of the convenient time and date during which we can meet with you and your colleagues to discuss the foregoing. Considering that time is of the essence, we would request that we can have this meeting with you before the campaign period begins.

Thank you so much for your kind attention.

Very truly yours,

ACI PHILIPPINES
CEBU BUSINESS CLUB (CBC)
CEBU LEADS FOUNDATION (CLF)
CHAMBER OF THRIFT BANKS
CIBI FOUNDATION, INC.
FEDERATION OF INDIAN CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE INC.
FINANCIAL EXECUTIVES INSTITUTE OF THE PHILIPPINES (FINEX)
FINEX CEBU
FINTECH ALLIANCE PH
GUILD OF REAL ESTATE ENTREPRENEURS AND PROFESSIONALS, INC. (GREENPRO)
INSTITUTE FOR SOLIDARITY IN ASIA, INC. (ISA)
INSTITUTE OF INTERNAL AUDITORS PHILIPPINES
INTEGRITY INITIATIVE, INC.
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES (IPAP)
JUDICIAL REFORM INITIATIVE
MAKATI BUSINESS CLUB (MBC)
MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES (MAP)
MONEY MARKET ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES (MART)
MOVEMENT FOR RESTORATION OF PEACE AND ORDER (MRPO)
PHILIPPINE FINANCE ASSOCIATION
PHILIPPINE FRANCHISE ASSOCIATION (PFA)
SHAREHOLDERS' ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES (SHAREPHIL)
TAX MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES (TMAP)