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HFEP budget restoration elates JV

Reelectionist Sen. Joseph Victor Ejercito said President Rodrigo Duterte's restoration of the budget for health facilities enhancement program (HFEP) clearly shows his deep concern to the welfare of the Filipino people.

Ejercito, chair of the Senate Committee on Health and Demography, said the restoration of P15 billion allocation for the Department of Health's (DoH) HFEP will ensure the completion and furnishing of medical facilities throughout the country.

"With the HFEP funds, I am optimistic that all these will be finished, complete with equipment. I am happy that after the impasse, we now have a budget that ensures that our people will get better health services from the government," said Ejercito, who earned the moniker "Mr. Healthcare" for fighting for the passage of the Universal Health Care Law.

Ejercito managed to restore the P15 billion HFEP funds in the budget bill, which had been removed earlier by the budget department.

He said the HFEP funds would be used to modernize and expand health facilities being operated by the DoH and local government units, and provide these health infrastructure with the necessary equipment to better serve the people, especially those who live in far-flung areas that rely only on community health centers or barangay health units for their health needs.

Currently, there are 900 completely-constructed health facilities, 93 facilities are 90 percent completed, 235 are 80 percent completed, and 88 are 70 percent completed.

"I was certain all along that the funds which I had proposed to be included in the budget for the improvement and expansion of health facilities, and also for the provision of medical equipment, wouldn't be vetoed by the President," said Ejercito.

President Duterte recently signed the P3.757 trillion 2019 national appropriations, but vetoed some P95.3 billion worth of programs and projects under the Department of Public Works and Highways.