

Headline	DOH chief asks Congress to pass resolution allowing continuing appropriations
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## DOH chief asks Congress to pass resolution allowing continuing appropriations

THE secretary of the Department of Health (DOH) on Monday said the agency has asked Congress to pass a resolution allowing it to use a continuing appropriations in proposing a budget.

During the oversight meeting of the House Committee on Health, DOH Secretary Francisco T. Duque III said authorization from Congress is needed for the DOH to finish the construction of government hospitals and other health infrastructure projects, and exempt them from the implementation of the cash-based budgeting system.

“We requested a resolution from both houses of Congress to authorize us to use continuing appropriations for priority projects, [including the Health Facilities Enhancement Program (HFEP)],” Duque said.

“We must do these [projects] in phases, and prioritization must be put in place,” he added.

The government has allotted P15 billion for HFEP in the 2019 national budget. Of the P15 billion, the House proposes P4.5 billion worth of health facility projects; the Senate, P2 billion; and the Department of Health (DOH) Central Office P8.5 billion.

According to Duque, the DOH has already asked the Department of Public Works and Highways, and a third party to assess how much time is needed to complete a Level 3 hospital.

“We will not be able to do it [construction of hospitals] in one year...several hospitals are still at 40 percent [completion] while the others are still at 20 percent. Paano natin ipagpipilitan yang [how can we insist on that] cash-based budgeting?” Duque added.

“Like the Dr. Fabella Maternity Hospital in Manila, they’ve been constructing it since 2014 but still [there is] more or less 7 percent left and we cannot pay them under a COA rule,” he added.

The 2019 national budget is cash-based as opposed to traditional, multiyear obligation-based budgeting, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) said.

The DBM has described the new system as the more efficient budgeting method since it limits incurring obligations and disbursing payments for goods delivered and services rendered, inspected and accepted within the fiscal year.

The traditional obligation-based budgeting, meanwhile, is common budgetary practice in the Philippines. It allows appropriations and obligations until the next fiscal year, extending the validity of funds to two years.