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Use P5-B unspent fund, DoH prodded

Former President and current Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo recently urged the Department of Health (DoH) to make use of its P5 billion unobligated fund from the 2018 national budget to other health projects.

Arroyo made the call during the joint meeting of the House Committees on Health and Appropriations, during which she led the oversight on the budget spending to assess the agency's performance and discuss in advance its budget for next year.

Arroyo asked the DoH officials to enlighten the panel on their plans on the 2018 budget which was carried over to the current year, as passed by Congress and approved by President Rodrigo Duterte.

The agency's original proposed budget was slashed from P106 billion to P70 billion for fiscal year 2019.

DoH Secretary Francisco Duque reported that there is P97 billion obligated for 2018 but they still have P5 billion unobligated funds as of the moment.

"If you haven't obligated them, do you plan to obligate them or reallocate them somewhere else," Arroyo asked the health officials.

For his part, Health Undersecretary Mario Villaverde reported to the panel that the proposed budget under the 2019 National Expenditures Program will decrease by 34 percent decrease because of the shift to cash-based budgeting.

The agency's original proposed budget was slashed from P106 billion to P70 billion for fiscal year 2019.

Personal services budget increased from P34 billion last year to P38 billion for 2019 after the approval of the release of fourth tranche of the salary standardization.

The budget for maintenance and other operating expenses was cut from P41 billion in 2018 to P31 billion for 2019 due to the transfer of the DoH budget for the employment program to the miscellaneous personnel benefit fund.