DBM releases P9B allowance for 300K health workers

BY ANGELA CELIS

THE Department of Budget and Management (DBM) has released P9.02 billion to the Department of Health (DOH) to cover the payment of the special risk allowances (SRA) of public and private health workers directly catering to or in contact with patients with new coronavirus disease 2019.

But the DBM reminded the DOH that only has until Wednesday to complete the distribution of the maximum of P5,000 per month SRA of close to 300,000 health care workers before the Bayanihan 2 fund expires.

The DBM said in a statement over the weekend that it released the special allowance release order and the notice of cash allocation on

Fight goes on. Medical workers get ready for another day of giving jabs to residents and workers of Makati City at a vaccination center on May 6, 2021. (Photo by RHAY COBILLA)
The said amount, acting on the request received from DOH last June 23, has now been released. The funds cover the payment of the SRA to public and private health workers not exceeding P5,000 per month from Dec. 20, 2020 to June 30, 2021, pursuant to Administrative Order (AO) No. 42, dated June 1, 2021, as implemented thru BM-DOH Joint Circular No. 1 dated June 16, 2021.

"With the funds now made available to the DOH, qualified public and private health workers can expect the payment of the SRA not later than June 30, 2021," the DBM said.

"The DBM is committed to fulfill its mandate of promoting the efficient and effective management of the national budget to support its budget priorities while also ensuring that the needs of the Filipino people are met, especially of healthcare workers in this time of pandemic," the agency added.

The AO authorizes the continued grant of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) SRA to public and private health workers directly catering to or in contact with COVID-19 patients during the state of national emergency.

Budget assistant secretary Kim Robert de Leon, in an interview with the radio DzBB, said the fund for the SRA was sourced from the Bayanihan 2 fund and unless a new law extending the validity of Bayanihan 2 is passed, the fund for the SRA would only be valid until next week. The original SRA for health workers, which was sourced from Bayanihan 2, only covered until Dec. 30, 2020.

President Duterte on June 1 issued Administrative Order 42 that ordered the grant of SRA from December 20, 2020 to June 30, 2021.

De Leon said DBM had to wait for the official request from the DOH identifying the amount and number of beneficiaries for the latest SRA, before it could release the SARO and NCA.

Lawmakers have been urging government agencies to expedite the use of the Bayanihan 2 amid a DBM report that as of May 18, 2021, P60.9 billion of the P163.5-billion allocation has yet to be obligated by the implementing agencies. Unobligated funds by June 30 will be reverted back to the National Treasury.

Earlier this month, Budget Secretary Wendell Avisado said the DBM has released P660.5 billion to various agencies and departments as of end-May, to support the implementation of their respective COVID-19 pandemic response program.

Of the amount, 82.2 percent or P542.64 billion is already obligated, while P486.71 billion or 89.8 percent was disbursed by the agencies, Avisado said. - With Jesselyn Monterrey