

Health chief's appointment disapproved by the CA

The Commission on Appointments (CA), in its October 10 plenary session, presided by President of the Senate/Chairman of the Commission Aquilino “Koko” Pimentel III, disapproved the confirmation of the ad interim appointment of Department of Health (DOH) Secretary Paulyn Jean Buenaflor Rosell-Ubial.

Ubial, a medical doctor, native of Iloilo City and a staunch public servant having been in public office for almost 29 years, was appointed by President Rodrigo Duterte as DOH Secretary on July 1, 2016. Prior to her health portfolio, she was already serving the DOH with significant positions rising through the ranks from holding a Medical Specialist I position to becoming the department's Assistant Secretary.

She started her public health career as a rural health practice worker in Kidapawan, North Cotabato in 1988. She earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Zoology from the University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City, finished her Doctor of Medicine from the University of the East Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Medical Center and earned her Master's degree in Public Health from the University of the Philippines in 1997. A Career Executive Service Officer II (CESO II), she is also a recipient of various awards, namely, Ten Outstanding Young Women of Cotabato City; Outstanding Employee of the Year; Scholarship, College of Public Health, University of the Philippines; and Outstanding Alumni, UERMMC College of Medicine.

In three committee hearings, four oppositions were raised against Ubial's appointment. Kabayan Party-list Rep. Harry Roque; Lawyer Restituto Mendoza, Potenciano Malvar, Medical director of the General Miguel M. Malvar Medical Foundation; and PhilHealth employee Marie Fe Francisco all opposed Ubial's appointment for various reasons. Ubial denied all the allegations and accusations against her.

While she was able to respond to various issues hurled against her, Ubial, however, failed to convince the majority of the CA members on her competence and expertise that befit the position of the DOH Secretary. Sen. Gregorio B. Honasan II, Chairman of the Commission's Committee on Health, recommended for the disapproval of Ubial's ad interim appointment and, with no objections raised, Pimentel declared the motion approved.

Honasan, during the plenary session, said, “In the exercise of its mandate under the constitution, your Commission on Appointments' Committee on Health conducted three hearings to deliberate on the ad interim appointment of the appointee. After scrutinizing voluminous documents and hearing the testimonies of the appointee and the oppositors, your committee reached the difficult

decision and recommendation with at least 13 votes to withhold its consent to the ad interim appointment of the appointee.”

Ubial is the fifth Cabinet official appointed by the President whose appointment was disapproved by the Commission on Appointments. The President is set to appoint another official to the department.