

**Office of the Press Secretary
Presidential News Desk**

**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT FERDINAND ROMUALDEZ MARCOS JR. AT THE 100TH
ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF THE PHILIPPINE NURSES ASSOCIATION, INC. (PNA)**

[Delivered at The Manila Hotel in the City of Manila | 01 September 2022]

Thank you very much for your introduction Secretary Cruz. *[Please take your seats.]*

The Philippine Nurses Association Chairperson Leticia Puguon; PNA National President Melvin Miranda — ‘yung five minutes lang namin na nakikinig sa inyo marami na kaming ginawang plano para sa ating mga nars *[applause and cheers]*; Programs and Development Vice President Alfon Guillen Daga; officials and members of the PNA; other distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen; and idadagdag ko my heroes, ang ating mga nars *[applause]* na hindi lamang tumulong sa mga naging pasyente ng COVID dito sa Pilipinas kundi rin pinaganda niyo pa ang pangalan ng Pilipinas dahil sa serbisyo ninyo sa buong mundo. *[applause and cheers]*

It is my honor to join — it really — naka-speech lang ito pero ito talagang totoo — it is my honor to join all of you today *[applause]* in celebrating this significant milestone, the 100th Anniversary of the Philippine Nurses Association and the 65th Nurses Week. It is in the context — in the situation that we are in right now, this is especially meaningful and it is a special occasion not only for the nurses but also for me. Because as you know — as what’s mentioned — my father 50 years ago joined you in celebrating this organization’s golden anniversary. *[applause]*

It is my pleasure then to stand before you today as my father did 50 years ago to celebrate this momentous occasion. Now more than ever, with all the challenges that you have hurdled during the pandemic, I see before me a strong and capable nursing force that is at the forefront of quality and excellent care, not only here in the country but around the world.

Indeed, I think I am correct when I say: no other country can boast of such strong and capable nurses who are known, not just for competence and dedication to this very noble calling of healthcare, but for their compassion and kindness. *[applause]* Diyan naiba talaga ang ating mga nurse. Marami namang magaling diyan, marami namang ano ngunit ang ating... Kahit ‘yung mga foreigner hinahanap nila, mas gusto nila na ang nag-aalaga sa kanila mga Pilipino na nurse. At hindi naman kataka-taka dahil kapag inalagaan ka ng Pilipino na nurse, gagaling ka talaga. *[applause]*

I know — and I speak from personal experience kasi natamaan ako ng COVID-19 at maaga akong tinamaan noong Marso pa ng 2020, wala pa tayong alam noon. Kaya’t medyo mabigat ‘yung naging epekto sa akin. At siguro kung nagkamali ‘yung treatment sa akin baka delikado ako.

But during my fight against COVID-19, I benefited from the able and healing hands of competent Filipino nurses. *[applause and cheers]* Because of you — and this I cannot stress more — because of you and the sacrifices that you made knowing that there was a risk involved but because of that sacrifice, because of that compassion, because of that professionalism, our nation has survived the most difficult moments of this pandemic.

Let me take this opportunity, along with the rest of our kababayans, not only for me but for all of those — ‘yung mga pasyente na gumaling, ‘yung mga pamilya ng mga pasyente na nakitang gumaling ang kanilang mga kamag-anak, ‘yung mga inalagaan ninyo. At kahit na alam natin very risky pa noon, hindi natin nga alam Alpha pa noon eh, hindi pa natin alam kung ano ba talaga ang mga dangers, sige lang ang mga nars natin, sige lang. At kahit na ‘yung mga ER nurse pumupunta sa COVID ward, kahit ‘yung mga nasa pediatric pumupunta sa COVID ward. Lahat kayo, everybody put in your sacrifices.

And because of that myself, as your President, and in the name of all our kababayans, I wish to thank you wholeheartedly [for] your sacrifices and your significant contributions to society.
[applause]

So we can ensure that our people will always lean on and benefit from your exceptional care, your government will continue to pursue the programs and support the continuous development of Filipino nurses.

Among these is the Nursing Certification Program which strengthens and certifies our nurses’ competencies in various specialty areas.

We also have the Primary Care Workers’ Certification Program that provides eligibility requirements, standard competencies, training mechanisms, and certification processes that ensure competent and quality staffing for our healthcare system.

It is also this government’s position to support the leadership development courses for public health nurses which aims to capacitate nurses to provide quality health services and become skilled leaders and managers.

The government also offers the in-service post-graduate scholarship program to continually enhance our nurses’ competencies through formal education.

There is also the e-learning program which provides access to free continuing professional development, accredited courses in many, many disciplines of study.

Certainly, we will not stop with just providing programs that improve your capacity as nurses. We will continue to provide you with the benefits that you deserve as healthcare workers.
[applause]

As of 19 August of this year, the government has disbursed a total of 25.82 billion pesos worth of benefits to our healthcare workers, especially our nurses. *[applause]* These include: hazard duty pay; COVID-19 sickness and death compensation; Meals, Accommodation, and Transportation Allowances; life insurance; Special Risk Allowance; and the One COVID-19 Allowance. *[applause]*

Please know... Sa palagay ko kulang pa ‘yan eh. *[cheers and applause]* Medyo hrap tayo sa pondo ngayon kaya’t sa ngayon ganyan lang muna. Pero palagay ko — binubuhay niyo ‘yung may sakit eh. Ibang usapan ‘yan. Walang — mahirap lagyan ng balor, ng dolyar, ng piso ‘yung trabahong ginagawa ninyo.

Dahil ‘yung sakripisyo ninyo hindi lamang kayo nag-aalaga ng mga pasyente, kung hindi noong panahon — noong kabigatan ng COVID noong 2020, 2021, eh kayo’y pumapasok pa rin kahit alam ninyo na high risk ang inyong trabaho, sige pa rin. *[applause]*

At marami sa inyo ay talagang tinamaan. Marami sa healthcare workers ay nawala dahil nga hindi — hindi na nga umuuwi sa bahay para hindi madala ‘yung sakit sa kanilang mga pamilya. *[applause]*

Please know that we understand this, that we know what you have done. We know the value of your work. And this is something that we know not only because of our personal experiences, but because of the experiences of everybody around the world, na kahit ‘yung mga prime minister, kahit ‘yung mga presidente ng mga ibang bansa ay pinupuri ang mga nurse na Pilipino na sinasabi “sila ang nagbuhay sa amin kahit dito sa aming bansa, hindi lamang sa Pilipinas.” *[applause]*

So the government recognizes and acknowledges your hard work and sacrifice, including risking your own health and lives to care for others. As your President, you may rest assured that my office is always open for meaningful dialogue to address the issues concerning our nurses and allied healthcare professionals. *[applause]*

In fact, I have taken special note of the clamor to address issues in the nursing profession by the passage of the new Philippine Nursing Practice Act. *[applause and cheers]*

This Executive department, together with Congress, will work with you to achieve these goals. As part of our goal to raise the profile and improve the working condition of nurses, we seek to address the disparity in salaries between nurses in government hospitals with those in the private sector. *[applause]*

Also, we must address the uneven distribution of nurses in different areas around the country. In order to do that, we have to address issues related to health facilities, benefits, and security of tenure. As we work hard to improve the state of our healthcare system at home, let us join hands to maintain our country’s position as the gold standard when it comes to providing healthcare workers to hospitals and health facilities globally.

We will open more slots for the deployment of nurses abroad while striving to improve opportunities domestically. With the PNA, boasting a 40,000-strong membership, I believe that together we have the ability, we have the strength to improve our nurses’ welfare and build on the Filipino distinction of excellence and competitiveness in the global health community.

As we look to the future with great hope and optimism, I call on you to join us in government and let us strive to build a stronger community of nurses. One that is not only inspired by the legacy of nurturing care that has been left us and that you have created, but is also forward-looking, dynamic, and ready to take on the challenges of the future and the challenges that the future will bring.

Muli, sa ating dakilang mga nars ng bayan, maraming, maraming salamat. *[applause]*

Parang pagka ako’y nagpapasalamat sa inyo, parang napakakulang ang salita, kaya’t maghahanap tayo ng maraming paraan para ipakita at iparamdam ang salamat sa inyo. *[cheers and applause]* Mabuhay kayong lahat! Mabuhay ang mga nurse ng Pilipinas! Mabuhay ang PNA! Maraming salamat po at magandang umaga po sa inyong lahat. *[applause]*

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