



29 December 2025

**HIS EXCELLENCY FERDINAND R. MARCOS, JR.**

President of the Republic of the Philippines

Malacañan Palace, JP Laurel Street, San Miguel, Manila

**RE: Line Items in the 2026 National Budget recommended for Veto,  
For Conditional Implementation, For Later Release, or Citizen Monitoring**

**President Marcos:**

We write this letter jointly as the **Roundtable for Inclusive Development**, a group of concerned citizens from the church, business, academe, and civil society; and the **People's Budget Coalition**, a multisectoral group of civil society organizations advocating for a transparent, participatory, and accountable budget process.

If our nation is a body, then corruption is a cancer that has spread to every part. We must admit we have this illness, surgically remove our tumors, and get treatment. We must strengthen our immune system: civil society antibodies who can detect cancer early. While some tumors were removed, many have metastasized and endanger the life of our nation.

**First, we thank the President and Congress for listening to civil society's recommendations to improve the substance and process of the national budget.** In the livestreamed readout of the bicameral conference committee, the education and agriculture budgets were increased to more than a trillion pesos, putting our country in a better position to address our malnutrition and learning crises. Project NOAH was funded, improving our country's capability for science-based disaster resilience and nature-based flood management. The public works budget was cut as the DPWH attempts to restore public trust under new leadership. We especially recognize the efforts of the Senate panel led by Senator Win Gatchalian to reduce the risk of repeat and overpriced projects in the DPWH by around P110 billion. We also acknowledge the leadership of the PhilGEPS and Procurement Service for working with us to proactively disclose awarded contracts since the year 2000, and the DPWH for a good start by publishing their infrastructure transparency portal with more documents.

**Second, we recommend that the President take action on more than P633 billion worth of projects at risk of corruption and patronage in the bicam version of the budget.** For

clarity, we use three terms. Hard pork refers to infrastructure projects—such as roads, bridges, and flood control—inserted or reshaped through political discretion rather than sound planning. Soft pork refers to cash assistance, subsidies, and social programs that are expanded or implemented through discretionary, politician-mediated processes rather than clear, rights-based rules. Shadow pork refers to funds—most notably unprogrammed appropriations—that sit outside the regular budget framework and can be released with minimal transparency or legislative scrutiny. While these differ in form, all three enable patronage and undermine accountability.

We recommend that the President (1) veto shadow pork in the form of unprogrammed appropriations worth P243 billion, (2) minimize patronage in soft pork worth P210 billion by issuing an executive order for rules-based and rights-based guidelines to ayuda programs and confidential and intelligence funds, or otherwise putting these projects for conditional implementation and for later release, and (3) cutting the fat in hard pork by focusing citizen monitoring on P180 billion projects at risk of being repeat or overpriced projects and by issuing an executive order for a science-based and nature-based update of DPWH manuals that influence around P600 billion in infrastructure projects.

We detail our observations and recommendations below:

**1. Recommendation for shadow pork: Veto all line items in the unprogrammed appropriations of the national budget worth P243 billion.**

- a. Shadow pork in the form of unprogrammed appropriations had been used in previous years to divert funds from government corporations into risky infrastructure projects like flood control.
- b. While the Senate and then the bicam removed the P43 billion SAGIP program that had previously been used to fund anomalous flood control projects, the remaining unprogrammed appropriations remain risky because:
  - i. Special provisions on unprogrammed appropriations had violated specific provisions in the PDAF ruling of the Supreme Court, which said that UA can be released only if the *WHOLE*<sup>1</sup> revenue program is exceeded, not just

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<sup>1</sup> *Maria Carolina P. Araullo v. Benigno Simeon C. Aquino III*, G.R. No. 209287, 1 July 2014. “The revenue targets stated in the BESF were intended to address the funding requirements of the proposed programmed appropriations. In contrast, the unprogrammed funds, as standby appropriations, were to be released only when there were revenues in excess of what the programmed appropriations required. As such, the revenue targets should be considered as a whole, not individually; otherwise, we would be dealing with artificial revenue surpluses. The requirement that revenue collections must exceed revenue target should be understood to mean that the revenue collections must exceed the total of the revenue targets stated in the BESF”

cherry-picked line items in non-tax revenues such as dividends from government corporations.

- ii. The constitutionality of unprogrammed appropriations itself<sup>2</sup> is an issue, as Congress artificially increases the budget ceiling set by the President, required under the Constitution; it also violates separation of powers and non-delegability of the legislative power of the purse.

- 2. **Recommendation for soft pork: Issue an executive order to transform more than P210 billion worth of patronage-driven ayuda programs into rights-based and rules-based programs, in consultation with allied health professionals and social protection experts;** including P11 billion worth of confidential and intelligence funds (CIF) that must be used for legitimate surveillance and intelligence activities with stringent transparency and accountability requirements for release. We support the calls of universal health care advocates to reallocate P51 billion in MAIFIP to PhilHealth so that the government complies with provisions of the universal health care law. If such a revised executive order cannot be produced by the time the President signs the budget, then these projects can be tagged **For Conditional Implementation** and **For Later Release** to ensure safeguards in their implementation. Politicians must be excluded from the process of selecting beneficiaries, prevalent under the inhumane and unconstitutional guarantee letter system that encourages post-enactment intervention by legislators in the budget. These must be implemented strictly.

**We are alarmed that the bicameral conference committee nearly tripled soft pork to P210 billion compared to the President's proposed budget.** The House and the Senate even increased their own budgets amid the flood control scandal. **Soft pork** is composed of ayuda programs at risk of political patronage that reduce our citizenry to begging from politicians, as opposed to rights-based and rules-based programs which citizens deserve with dignity; and also confidential and intelligence funds other than legitimate surveillance and intelligence activities at risk of dubious purposes that exacerbate political patronage. CIF should be allocated only to agencies involved in maintaining public safety and internal and national security in accordance with [COA-DBM-DILG-GCG-DND Joint Circular No. 2015-1](#).

Under this category of soft pork projects are:

- a. **Health and social protection programs at risk of patronage**

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<sup>2</sup> *Edcel Lagman v. Congress*. G.R. No. 271059, 15 January 2024.

- i. DOH Medical Assistance to Indigent and Financially Incapacitated Patients (MAIFIP) worth P51 billion
    - ii. DSWD Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS) or "Protective services for individuals and families in difficult circumstances" worth P63 billion
    - iii. DOLE Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa ating Disadvantaged at Displaced Workers (TUPAD) worth P25 billion
    - iv. DA Presidential Assistance to Farmers and Fisherfolk (PAFF) worth P10 billion
    - v. CHED Tulong Dunong (TD) worth P2 billion
  - b. **Local government infrastructure programs at risk of patronage**
    - i. ALGU Financial Assistance to Local Government Units (FALGU) worth P37 billion
    - ii. ALGU Growth and Equity Fund (GEF) worth P11 billion
  - c. **Opaque funds**
    - i. Support to the Barangay Development Program of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) worth P8 billion
    - ii. Confidential and Intelligence Funds (CIF) worth P11 billion
3. **Recommendation for hard pork:** Issue an executive order putting more than P600 billion in infrastructure projects under a multisectoral citizen monitoring initiative funded by government-funded or internationally-funded independent research programs. Require the DPWH to update their highway, bridge, and flood control design manuals to ensure these are science-based interventions that focus on nature-based, integrated water resource management, road and commuter safety, and consistent with the President's pronouncements of the "end of car-centric development".
- a. We thank Senator Gatchalian for his leadership as Senate finance committee chair for inviting us to study more than 17,000 projects in the infrastructure annexes of the budget. We recognize the efforts of the Senate panel led by Senator Win Gatchalian to reduce the risk of repeat and overpriced projects in the DPWH by around P110 billion, by requiring agencies to provide locations and station data for these projects. The Senate panel during the bicam also wanted to ensure that cost assumptions in these projects were correct.
  - b. **A special focus of monitoring can include more than P180 billion in infrastructure projects we initially flagged at risk of being repeated or**

**overpriced.** A model for such a citizen monitoring effort can be the **Bisto Proyekto** partnership between the Department of Public Works and Highways, Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, TAPAT, Mayors for Good Governance, and [BetterGov.PH](http://BetterGov.PH).

**4. We also reiterate our call for systemic reforms to restore trust in the budget cycle:**

- a. Co-create among civil society, the legislature, and the executive an Open Budget Transparency Server by setting standards for machine readable files that can be accessed by citizens and media. We have attempted a pilot for citizens and media to monitor the budget via [2026-budget.bettergov.ph](http://2026-budget.bettergov.ph) and [transparency.bettergov.ph](http://transparency.bettergov.ph).
- b. Include multisectoral committees with scientists and civil society to review the 2027 budget early as the budget preparation stage, even before the National Expenditure Plan is finalized, to ensure outcomes-based and science-based planning and budgeting. This can help allay the public's fears that more of the corruption has moved from legislative "insertions" into executive "allocables".
- c. Certify as urgent the following bills in Congress to address the structural issues in the 2027 budget.
  - i. Cadena Act for Budget Transparency, now passed on third reading in the Senate
  - ii. Freedom of Information Law
  - iii. Public Financial Management or Budget Modernization Bill, with provisions for People's Participation in the Budget Process
  - iv. Independent People's Commission bill, now passed on third reading in the Senate; or the ICAIC in the House
  - v. Political Party Reforms, such as the Anti-Dynasty Law, Campaign Finance Reforms, Party List Reforms, Party Development Reforms

As citizens, we remain committed to working with you to monitor the budget process so that every taxpayer peso benefits our nation:

*Buwis natin ito. Budget natin ito.*

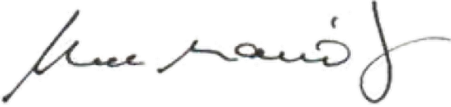
Sincerely,



**PABLO VIRGILIO CARDINAL DAVID**

Bishop of Kalookan

Co-Convenor, Roundtable for Inclusive Development



**RAMON R. DEL ROSARIO, JR.**

Co-Convenor, Roundtable for Inclusive Development



**KENNETH ISAIAH IBASCO ABANTE**

Co-Convenor, People's Budget Coalition

Member, Roundtable for Inclusive Development



**REYCEL HYACINTH NACARIO BENDAÑA**

Co-Convenor, People's Budget Coalition

Member, Roundtable for Inclusive Development

**ANNEXES:**

1. Tracker on Systemic Reforms to Restore Trust in the National Budget Process
2. [Presentation on the 2026 Budget Bicam by the People's Budget Coalition](#)
3. [People's Budget Tracker 2026](#) (Spreadsheet): NEP vs. H-GAB vs. S-GAB vs. Bicam
4. Open Budget Transparency Server Pilot: [2026-budget.bettergov.ph/citizens-report](https://2026-budget.bettergov.ph/citizens-report)

**COPY FURNISHED:**

1. **HON. VICENTE "TITO" SOTTO III**, Senate President
2. **HON. FAUSTINO "BOJIE" DY III**, Speaker of the House
3. **HON. SHERWIN GATCHALIAN**, Chair of the Senate Committee on Finance
4. **HON. MIKAELA SUANSING**, Chair of the House Committee on Appropriations
5. **HON. RALPH G. RECTO**, Acting Executive Secretary
6. **HON. ROLANDO U. TOLEDO**, Acting Secretary of Budget and Management
7. **HON. FREDERICK D. GO**, Acting Secretary of Finance


## Annex 1. Systemic Reforms to Restore Trust in the National Budget Process

Tracker as of 28 December 2025:

● Good progress, ● Some progress, ● Way behind

**To restore trust and prevent another flood control scandal, we need to build an #OpenBudget movement**

Based on key principles of transparency, participation, and accountability




**● A. Preparation**

● > ● A1. Ensure there is a **science-based plan** vetted by a multisectoral body.

● A2. Update the DPWH road and bridge design and price manuals to reflect nature-based solutions

● A3. **Open the DBCC** (Development Budget Coordination Committee) and **DBM technical budget hearings**.




**● > ● B. Legislation**

● > ● B1. **Open the bicam.** End abusive practice of secret insertions.

● > ● B1. Treat civil society as **resource persons**, not just token observers.

● > ● B2. Create an **Open Budget Transparency Server** where media and civil society can easily report insertions. We have a pilot: we just need the files.

● B3. President to either vet or veto insertions beyond the professional plans.




**● C. Execution**

● C1. **Empower** civil society movement for **open contracting and project monitoring**:

● C2. Make **project monitoring documents** free and open, including programs of work, contractor data.

● > ● C3. Accelerate **beneficial ownership registry**, project data.

● C4. **Open Auyda** beneficiary lists for AKAP, MAIFIP, AICS, TUPAD, Tulong Dunong.



**● D. Accountability**

● > ● D1. **Empower the Independent Commission** with powers of contempt, subpoena, fiscal autonomy. Punish the corrupt.

● > ● D2. Create Special Division in the Sandiganbayan for corruption cases. **Judiciary to publish** online case tracker of corruption cases

● > ● D3. **Recover stolen assets. OSG civil forfeiture cases.** Dapat maibalik ang nakaw na pera.

● D4. **Push COA** to conduct **special audits** of flood control and pork.

**Foundations:**

● > ● Freedom of Information Act, ● Restorative Justice "courts" between violators and communities (apologies), ● Free and Proactive Disclosure of SEC documents, ● > ● Open SALN, ● Open SOCEs to detect conflicts of interest, ● Review of Local Govt Code

● > ● Anti-Political Dynasty Bill, ● Party List Reform, ● Party Development Reforms; Bigger conversation: ● Reimagining of Social Contract; ● Productive Development Policy for Better Jobs