



Republic of the Philippines
Supreme Court
Manila

FROM THE CHAMBERS OF:

Estela M. Perlas-Bernabe

ACTING CHIEF JUSTICE

***Re: Inclusion of Judiciary employees
in the Philippine National Deployment and Vaccination Plan for
COVID-19 Vaccines***

Dear co-workers and public servants in the Judiciary:

I am pleased to inform you that our request for inclusion in priority population group A4 (category A4)¹ of the Philippine National Deployment and Vaccination Plan for COVID-19 Vaccines has been granted by the National Task Force Against COVID-19 (NTF).

Pursuant to our continuing dialogue with the NTF, a letter-request dated March 31, 2021 was sent by my office to Hon. Secretary Carlito G. Galvez, Jr., as the NTF's Chief Implementer, in coordination with Hon. Secretary Vivencio B. Dizon, as Deputy Chief Implementer.

The letter-request states that justices, judges, and court personnel of the Philippine Judiciary (comprised of the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, Court of Tax Appeals, *Sandiganbayan*, and trial courts) are frontline government workers in the justice sector, whose functions are essential at all times, especially during the pandemic. Indeed, through its adjudicatory functions, the Judiciary is an essential institution in the justice sector that works hand-in-hand with the executive branch of government to effectively perform its task of maintaining peace and order and safeguarding public welfare in accordance with the rule of law. Truly, during this unsettling pandemic, upholding the rule of law assumes greater significance. Thus, access to judicial relief should be constant.

¹ Frontline personnel in essential sectors both in public and private sectors, including uniformed personnel, and those in working sectors identified by the IATF that are directly client facing and cannot dutifully meet minimum public health standards.

Also, the letter-request conveys that in light of our courts' role as one of the five (5) pillars of the criminal justice system, Judiciary employees should be considered as workers in an essential public sector who are likewise "directly client facing and cannot dutifully meet minimum public health standards," which circumstance is also accounted for under category A4.

Finally, the letter-request expresses that the Judiciary's continuing in-court operations despite the existence of community quarantines run the risk of exposing its employees/personnel to COVID-19 infections, who in turn, regularly interact with other stakeholders that already fall in the priority groups of the Philippine National Deployment and Vaccination Plan for COVID-19 Vaccines. Thus, for all these reasons, the inclusion of Judiciary employees in category A4 of the said Plan is truly fitting.

With the NTF's favorable action on our request, the details of implementation shall be immediately worked out in order to swiftly roll out the inoculation program soonest. At present, the NTF has communicated that vaccines arriving this April 2021 shall be partly allotted for the Judiciary. Rest assured, the Court is actively exploring all ways and means in order to ensure the safety and well-being of all Judiciary employees as we faithfully discharge our duty to the public in this time of unparalleled crisis.

April 5, 2021

Sincerely,



ESTELA M. PERLAS-BERNABE

Acting Chief Justice