

QC mayor urges companies to conduct testing

Belmonte cites parallel efforts by city government to examine residents

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Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte on Thursday urged businesses to come up with a testing program for their employees who will return to work under the more relaxed general quarantine.

“We recognize that the DOH [Department of Health] has said that employees don’t have to be tested to be able to return to work, but if businesses are capable of testing then it’s welcome,” said Belmonte.

“It would be helpful for them to have testing programs, isolation rooms and partner institutions to work with, and we also required them to submit their new normal plans,” she added.

The city government received 4,800 rapid antibody-based test kits from Project Ark, a private sector-led initiative aiming for 30,000 tests per day.

Results pending

Quezon City has administered 4,141 rapid tests and 8,000 polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests, Belmonte said. But for the PCR tests, she said on Thursday that they have yet to receive the results for 60 percent of those tests.

“We cannot rely solely on our national laboratory which is already overburdened, so we have partnered with hospitals and laboratories to speed up the turnaround time to two, three days,” she said.

Presidential adviser for entrepreneurship Joey Concepcion

said some companies have started doing their own testing depending on their risk profile.

“The first thing we have to do is regularly test our employees, [which may include] rapid test every two weeks just to increase the level of accuracy until we find a cure for the virus,” said Concepcion.

Test kits allocation

Belmonte said the city government has allocated the rapid test kits to communities with high attack rates, which are mostly dense, urban poor neighborhoods.

The city’s chief epidemiologist, Dr. Rolly Cruz, in an earlier statement said that they will still rely on PCR tests for confirmation, which he said are considered the gold standard worldwide.

He explained that those who tested positive for IGM and those negative for IGG and IGM antibodies but have symptoms of COVID-19 were automatically subjected to a PCR test.

To maximize its resources, the city government is currently implementing two modes of virus containment: special concern lockdown for special areas with COVID-19 clustering and the extreme enhanced community quarantine on barangays with high attack rates.

“In QC, our biggest barangay alone has more than 200,000 residents, so it’s very impractical to lock down an entire barangay,” said Belmonte.

So far, 13 areas in six barangays are under the special concern lockdown, where 2,646 tests have already been administered.

Belmonte said they aim to finish rapid testing in these areas by Friday.

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