

QC representative backs decentralization of vaccine procurement

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THE NATIONAL government should allow local government units (LGUs) to purchase coronavirus vaccines for their constituents, a lawmaker said over the weekend. “I hope the national government will decentralize the procurement and vaccination process to ensure a speedy and efficient roll-out, especially as some of our LGUs have expressed their readiness and have set aside their own funds for the purchase of vaccines for their constituents,” Quezon City 5th District Rep. Alfred D. Vargas said in a statement. The Quezon City government is setting aside at least P1 billion for the procurement of vaccines. Mr. Vargas cited other LGUs that have also allocated funds for vaccines, including the cities of Manila, Davao, and Iligan. He said LGUs should be given a more active role “given the magnitude of the government’s vaccination plan,” which creates a “logistical nightmare.” Congress has allotted P72.5 billion in the proposed 2021 national budget for the purchase of COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) vaccines next year. Mr. Vargas, however, pointed out that the allocation is “unprogrammed” or still subject to fund availability. “Given that we cannot guarantee its sources, the willingness of LGUs to buy will certainly be a huge boost,” he said. Meanwhile, Mr. Vargas appealed to Quezon City residents not to neglect health protocols during the holiday season, as COVID-19 cases continue to rise in the city. A recent study conducted by the OCTA Research Team showed that the city’s COVID-19 reproduction rate already went beyond the 1.00 threshold as it reached 1.15. — Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza