

## State guidelines restrict mayors from carrying out COVID policies suited for their localities – Belmonte

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Guidelines set by the national government have prevented local chief executives from implementing policies necessary in their localities to prevent the further spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) amid the current surge of cases in Metro Manila.

Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte on Thursday,

March 11, said there were times they were “forced to follow” guidelines that were different from what they expected, and sometimes, their hands are tied in making decisions.

“Minsan, hinihingi ang payo namin. Pero the next day, iba naman ang i-impose na mga guidelines (They would ask for our advice, but the next day, they would impose different guidelines),” Belmonte said over DZBB interview.

“And then, we are forced to follow those guidelines. So, ito siguro yung sana i-clarify ng national government (and this is what the national government has to clarify),” she added.

Belmonte revealed this after some quarantine hotels in Metro Manila turned out to be also accepting regular guests, which the mayor said, she already opposed.

“Ang dami talagang (nare-report sa amin), mga naka-quarantine tapos lumalabas pa, namimili sa 7/11, sa mga tindahan. So, hindi talaga yan pwede talaga (We received a lot of reports that some quarantined individuals would still go outside which is not allowed),” she said.

“Kahit yung dining facilities doon, hindi nga pwedeng bukas. Kasi, that would prevent the quarantined OFWs (overseas Filipino workers) from going down. Kaya bang bantayan ng hotel yan? (Even the dining facilities of quarantine hotels should not be allowed to operate to prevent OFWs from going down. Otherwise, can these hotels monitor them?),” she added.

As much as she wants to stop the practice, she said, she cannot because the national government has a different policy.

“I really oppose that. But that’s the policy of the national government. Hindi naman natin pwedeng i-oppose talaga (we cannot oppose it),” she said.

“Supposedly, meron po (kaming autonomy as local government unit) kaya lang...kasi lagi nilang (hotels) citi-cite yung guidelines ng national government, na pinapayagan kami ng national government, eh (We’re supposed to have autonomy as LGU but whenever we would talk to the hotels, they would always cite the guidelines of the national government, in which they were allowed to do things we oppose),” she added.

Belmonte also said that “sometimes,” mayors were “scolded” whenever they would not follow what they were “asked to do.”

“I would like to clarify this kasi minsan, sinasabi kayo ang bahala. Minsan naman, napapagalitan kami kasi hindi kami sumusunod sa lahat ng inuutos sa amin (They would tell us that we should take charge but sometimes, we get scolded because we didn’t follow what we were told to do) she said.

Amid the alarming COVID-19 situation that Quezon City is currently experiencing, Belmonte said what they can do is to “just have to find ways to protect our people,” including seeking assistance

from the police.

“At kung papayagan ako ng (If I will be allowed by the) national government to go against (its policy of allowing quarantine hotels to accept regular guests), I will gladly oppose,” she said.