OFW group appeals for ban exemption

By Willie Casas

OVERSEAS Filipino workers from mainland China appealed before a Committee on Health meeting in Congress that they be excused from the travel ban.

The OFWs were accompanied by Migrante International Chairperson Joanna Concepcion and House Rep. Arlene Brosas of Gabriela Women’s Party-list.

Marjorie Reyes, an OFW who works as an Electronics Engineer in a factory in Zhuhai, China, was among the panelists who raised the group’s concerns to the Department of Health, represented by Secretary Francisco Duque III.

Reyes said that OFWs have already been asked by their companies to return to work. Reyes also said that there have been zero cases in the past few weeks in Zhuhai and the last two cases have already been discharged after their full recovery.

“There are no new recorded cases, and we’re not just talking about days of no new recorded cases. It’s [been] more than three weeks already...China is so big. We don’t need to generalize it to Wuhan,” Reyes said.

Department of Foreign Affairs-Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs Senior Special Assistant Olivia Palala stated that they will carefully study whatever information they will get from their posts in Mainland China and they will then raise it to the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque III said that the OFW group’s appeal will be discussed in his meeting with the Chinese Ambassador and President Rodrigo Duterte. The IATF-EID is scheduled to hold another meeting next week.

Deploring the poor state of health care and public services in the Philippines and the impact of COVID-19 to ordinary Filipinos, Brosas said, “It’s a bigger problem for us if the people will be deprived of their livelihood. No wealthy person will ever share even a bottle of alcohol...we are all seriously affected but most of all, the poor.”