Senate health panel urges PhilHealth, PHAPi to settle differences

By Mario Casayuran

The Senate health committee asked on Wednesday the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) and the Private Hospitals Association of the Philippines, Inc. (PHAPi) to sit down and find a common ground on the threat of PHAPi members to unilaterally withdraw their accreditation from PhilHealth.

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The reason put forward by PHAPi is that PhilHealth has yet to reimburse its members of their expenses in the hundreds of millions of pesos in attending to the medical problems of PhilHealth members.

Senator Christopher Lawrence “Bong” Go, committee chairman, said failure of the two groups to settle their differences might force him to call them to appear before the committee and explain their sides in a public hearing.

Go said he had called PhilHealth President retired General Ricardo Morales to settle the financial claims of private hospitals.

“Sabi nya aasikasuhin nila ang claims, wala pong katotohanan na magpupull out ang private hospitals. And last month ako ang nag arrange ng meeting between Rustico Jimenez (PHAPi president) and
General Morales at nagkasundo na aayusin ang dapat ayusin babayaran ang dapat bayaran,’’ Go said. (Morales said he would settle the payment claims of hospitals. There is no truth to reports that PHAPi members would pull out of PhilHealth).

“Kung kelangan sila ipatawag at ipatatawag ko sila to address this, importante walang fraudulent claims ghost claims at ayaw natin may masayang na pera,’’ he added. (If there are grounds for my committee to conduct a public hearing, I will. What is important is that there should be no fraudulent claims, ghost claims because we don’t want the people’s money go to waste.)

Go said patients cannot wait for the dispute to be settled.

“Ako na mismo nananwagan sa PhilHealth officials at private hospitals, di makakaantay ang mga pasyente, importante po yan,’’ he added. (I am asking PhilHealth and private hospitals to resolve the reimbursement issues. Patients cannot wait, that is important.)

Go said he is willing to become the go-between of PhilHealth and PHAPi.

As the Senate is scheduled to resume regular session on November 4, Go said he is completing his committee report on the proposed 2020 budget of the Department of Health (DOH).

He said he is scrutinizing the DOH budget whether there are priority expenditures to be given to some offices or agencies and under spending of some offices.

The Senate leadership wants its version of the proposed 2020 P4.2 trillion to be approved in early December and both Houses of the Legislative Branch approve their bicameral conference committee reports and send the fine-tuned budget to Malacanang before their Christmas break.