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ADVISORY

TO : **ALL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, PRIVATE BUSINESSES, AND THE PUBLIC**

SUBJECT : Clarification on PhilID security and verification features and the non-inclusion of handwritten signatures

DATE : 23 August 2021

This advisory is being issued to enlighten relying parties and the public on the non-inclusion of a registrant's handwritten signature in the physical Philippine Identification (PhilID) card.

Through Republic Act No. 11055 and its technical design, the Philippine Identification System (PhilSys) aims to accelerate the Philippines' transition to a digital economy, society, and government by allowing Filipinos to do paperless, cashless, and presenceless transactions.

Achieving this goal entails building the PhilSys as a digital and interoperable platform which enables public and private sector service providers to transform their systems and processes into more modern and digital approaches for identity verification and completion of forms. Traditional processes depend on paper forms, photocopies of IDs, and wet signatures, which are prone to inefficiency and fraud. Handwritten signatures are easily forged and cannot be easily verified. Furthermore, there are some Filipinos who cannot make handwritten signatures, which is why some forms offer an alternative of a thumbmark.

The non-inclusion of a handwritten signature as part of the PhilID was deliberate and aligns with other national ID systems, such as in India, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam, among others. It intends to:

1. Promote greater security in transactions through stronger methods of verification and lower risks of forgery;
2. Incentivize the use of digital technologies and more modern approaches for identity verification; and



3. Ensure the PhilID remains universally accessible and usable for all Filipinos.

For the highest levels of assurance and security, the PhilSys will offer the following online and offline methods of identity authentication:

- **PhilID physical security features.** The anti-tamper features of the PhilID card, such as the ghost image of the bearer, guilloche design and the diffractive optically variable image device, are some of the most sophisticated and secure in the Philippines.
- **QR code digital verification.** This is the scanning of the QR code through the PhilSys app and website and using asymmetric key cryptography to validate whether the client's demographic information is correct and has not been tampered with.
- **Biometric verification.** This is the automated and real time online matching of a fingerprint, facial, or iris against what is contained in the client's record in the PhilSys Registry.
- **SMS one-time password (OTP).** This is the automated online matching using the mobile number in the client's record in the PhilSys, as provided during Step 2 Registration.

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) acknowledges that there will be challenges and inertia as service providers transition from traditional practice to the digital method of identity verification enabled by the PhilSys. PhilSys allows both offline and online means of authenticating one's identity in accordance with Section 5 of the Act and the Section 12 of the Revised Implementing Rules and Regulations of the Act. While the QR code, biometric, and SMS OTP authentication methods are yet to be fully operational, service providers or individual staff may still consider doing traditional methods of identity verification and may inadvertently request an ID with a handwritten signature. However, service providers can immediately begin using the physical security features, which are superior to a handwritten signature, for their offline verification.

On the PSA's part, the QR code, biometric, and SMS OTP verification systems are currently being developed and tested to ensure maximum security, scalability, and functionality. The QR code verification system is expected to be launched before the end of 2021. The biometric and SMS OTP verification systems will be piloted in 2021 and scaled up throughout 2022.

In addition, the PSA is continuing its efforts on the following: (1) to collaborate with regulators such as the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas to urge

all service providers to accept the PhilID without requiring the presentation of other IDs, and (2) to campaign and educate stakeholders on the security features and other specifications of the PhilID for easier visual inspection.

For your information and guidance.

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