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MAP CALLS FOR FULL TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE 2027 NATIONAL BUDGET

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The Management Association of the Philippines (MAP) calls on the Executive, Legislative, and all government agencies involved in the preparation, approval, and implementation of the 2027 National Budget to uphold the highest standards of transparency, integrity, and accountability in the use of public funds.

The 2027 Budget comes at a time when public trust in government has been seriously damaged by allegations and revelations of corruption, questionable projects, irregularities in public spending, and the misuse of government resources. These concerns cannot be dismissed as part of the normal political cycle. They strike at the credibility of our institutions and at the confidence of citizens and businesses in government's ability to manage the resources entrusted to it.

The National Budget is not government money. It is the people's money. It comes from taxes paid by Filipino workers, consumers, and businesses, as well as from debt that will ultimately be borne by present and future generations. The government therefore has an obligation to account for how every peso is allocated, spent, and translated into actual benefits for the Filipino people.

The MAP believes that there must be zero tolerance for hidden insertions, questionable appropriations, favored contractors, ghost or substandard projects, unexplained realignments, and the use of public funds for political accommodation or personal gain. These practices have no place in a government that claims to uphold good governance and fiscal responsibility.

Transparency must begin during the budget process itself. Material amendments and insertions introduced during congressional deliberations and the bicameral conference should be fully disclosed, together with their proponents, amounts and purposes. The complexity of the budget process must never become a shield against public scrutiny or accountability.

Transparency must also continue long after the General Appropriations Act is signed. Filipinos should be able to follow public money from appropriation and release to procurement, award, implementation, completion, and audit. For major infrastructure and government projects, the public should be able to determine how much was appropriated, who received the contract, how much was actually disbursed, what was delivered, and whether the project achieved what taxpayers were promised.

The MAP therefore strongly supports the principles embodied in the Citizen Access and Disclosure of Expenditures for National Accountability (CADENA) and similar reforms that use technology to make government expenditures transparent, traceable, and tamper-resistant. We urge the government to institutionalize end-to-end digital transparency across the budget process and eventually make it possible for citizens to trace public expenditures from appropriation to actual implementation. The technology to do this already exists. What is required is the political will to make transparency the rule rather than the exception.

Corruption in public spending is not only a governance issue. It is an economic issue. Every peso lost to corruption is a peso taken away from classrooms, hospitals, infrastructure, agriculture, social services, and programs that could create jobs and improve the lives of Filipinos. Persistent questions about the integrity of public spending also weaken investor confidence, increase perceptions of country risk, undermine institutions, and ultimately constrain economic growth.

The 2027 National Budget gives President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., his Administration, and the 20th Congress an opportunity to demonstrate that they are prepared to confront these concerns decisively. Commitments to transparency and good governance, however, cannot be fulfilled by statements of intent alone. They must be demonstrated by opening the budget process to scrutiny, disclosing how public funds are allocated and spent, investigating irregularities, prosecuting wrongdoing where evidence warrants it, and putting in place permanent safeguards against future abuse.

The MAP believes that accountability must apply equally, regardless of political affiliation, position, or influence. No official entrusted with public resources should be beyond scrutiny, and no expenditure involving taxpayers' money should be beyond reasonable public examination. Public office is a public trust, and those entrusted with the national budget carry an obligation to demonstrate that the interests of the Filipino people come before political or personal interests.

The 2027 National Budget should mark a decisive break from opacity and business as usual. The MAP calls for a budget process in which every peso can be accounted for, every major expenditure can withstand public scrutiny, and those who misuse public funds are held accountable.