RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND COMMITTEE ON WELFARE OF CHILDREN OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE REPORTED INCREASE IN ONLINE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN IN THE COUNTRY DURING THE COVID-19 ENHANCED COMMUNITY QUARANTINE

WHEREAS, according to the Department of Justice (DoJ) Office of Cybercrime (OOC), the reports of online sexual exploitation of children tripled during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic or an increase of 264.63%:

WHEREAS, parts of the country were placed under enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) on March 16, 2020 until May 31, 2020, due to the rise of COVID-19 infections while other parts of the country are still in place-specific lockdowns as COVID-19 cases still surge;

WHEREAS, the country's lockdown has left more children vulnerable to exploitation by human traffickers and cash strapped relatives while the strict home quarantine rules are observed and internet use increases in households;

WHEREAS, the DoJ said that there were 279,166 cases of online child sex abuse in the Philippines from March 1 to May 24, 2020 using data from the U.S.-based National Center for Missing and Exploited Children as opposed to 76,561 cases during the same time in 2019.
WHEREAS, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) estimates 1.8 million children are sex trafficked every year— but this figure does not include victims of cybersex trafficking.

WHEREAS, Europe’s policing agency, Europol recently stated its concern with the rise in pedophile activities, with EU law enforcement observing more searches for illegal websites and shutting more platforms for the exchange of child sex material.

WHEREAS, internet service providers have not been able to curb the exploitation due to inability to install technology to block both access to and distribution of child abuse imagery and the ECQ posed a barrier to detection because children have almost no access to teachers or community members to whom they may disclose abuse or display signs of abuse.

WHEREAS, the spread of cheap, high-speed internet and the rise in mobile phone ownership had fueled a live stream of child abuse and exploitation.

WHEREAS, it is necessary for the House of Representatives to look into this matter to protect Filipino children from all forms of violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the House of Representatives Committee on Justice and Committee on Welfare of Children to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the reported increase in online sexual exploitation of children in the country during the COVID-19 enhanced community quarantine.

Adopted, June 25, 2020:

[Signature]

JUAN FIDEL FELIPE F. NOGRALES
Representative, Second District of Rizal