



# Committee Daily Bulletin

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## COMMITTEE MEETINGS ON HOUSE MEASURES

COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Basic Education and Culture	HR 1334	Rep. Tutor	Congratulating and commending the students, teachers, and coaches of Candijay Municipal High School and Jagna High School for their outstanding performance in the 19 <sup>th</sup> Philippine Robotics Olympiad (PRO) 2020 1 <sup>st</sup> Virtual Robotics Challenge last October 22, 2020	The Committee, chaired by Pasig City Rep. Roman Romulo, adopted HR 1334.
	Substitute Bill to HBs 2075 & 2732	Rep. Sy-Alvarado and Deputy Speaker Rodriguez	Strengthening the promotion and delivery of mental health services in basic education through the recruitment, hiring, and training of mental health professionals, and appropriating funds therefor	<p>The Committee with deliberate further on the Substitute Bill to HBs 2075 to 2732.</p> <p>At the outset, Rep. Romulo recalled that in the previous meeting, the Substitute Bill was presented to the Committee. This version, he said, already addresses the two main issues discussed in earlier meetings of the Committee on the proposed law. These are the insufficient number of guidance counselors that could be hired by the Department of Education (DepEd) due to stringent qualifications for the practice of the profession; and the lack of incentives and no career progression for qualified guidance counselors, which discourage them to serve in DepEd schools.</p> <p>However, Rep. Romulo said that the DepEd opposed the proposal to create a Bureau of Health and Well-Being, which will provide mental health services, because it may distort the staffing pattern of other offices in the Department.</p> <p>DepEd officials explained that currently, there are already divisions in the DepEd that cater to the mental and emotional development of learners and teachers. However, these divisions are under two separate bureaus. They proposed that instead of a bureau, a unit under the Schools Division Office be created which will be in-charge of the mental health concerns for both learners and teachers.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Rufus Rodriguez (2<sup>nd</sup> District, Cagayan de Oro City), author of HB 2732, manifested that there should only be one bureau tasked to handle the mental health concerns of students and DepEd employees. This office, the Deputy Speaker said, may be an existing bureau in DepEd.</p> <p>Rep. France Castro (Party-List, ACT-TEACHERS) expressed support for the Substitute Bill. She maintained that a separate bureau should be created specifically for mental</p>

<p>Continuation... Basic Education and Culture</p>				<p>health wellness to ensure that such services will be made available to teaching and non-teaching personnel and learners.</p> <p>Rep. Stella Luz Quimbo (2<sup>nd</sup> District, Marikina City) emphasized the creation of a unit in DepEd dedicated solely to mental health concerns. She stated that RA 11036 or the Mental Health Act mandates the education and promotion of mental health in all educational institutions, workplaces, and communities, thus the Department must comply with the law.</p> <p>In reply to the query of Baguio City Rep. Mark Go, DepEd Bureau of Human Resource and Organizational Development (BHROD) Assistant Director Jennifer Lopez explained that a position equivalent to a supervisory level or Salary Grade (SG) 22 should be made available solely for guidance counselors in the division level provided that they comply with the professional standards for supervisors set by DepEd.</p> <p>Philippine Guidance and Counseling Association (PCGA) Public Relations Officer (PRO) Francis Ray Subong presented the current structure for guidance counsellors as against the setup being proposed in the measure. He underscored the need to create a separate unit for mental health services that will focus on the management and proper delineation of responsibilities up to the school level.</p> <p>The Committee requested DepEd to submit its proposal on how to address the concerns on lack of qualified guidance counsellors and lack of career progression for guidance counsellors in DepEd, without having to create a new bureau.</p>
	<p>HB 2648</p>	<p>Rep. De Venecia</p>	<p>Establishing the <i>Linangan ng Likhang-Bayan</i> (Institute for Living Traditions) to ensure the protection, promotion, and development of the country's communal traditions, amending for the purpose RA 10066 or the National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009</p>	<p>The Committee will deliberate further on HB 2648.</p> <p>Rep. Christopher de Venecia (4<sup>th</sup> District, Pangasinan), author of HB 2648, manifested that the explanatory note attached to his bill serves as his sponsorship speech.</p> <p>Rep. De Venecia said that the Committee is also currently deliberating on a bill seeking to institutionalize cultural mapping in the Philippines, with the end in view of creating an overall framework for the preservation of cultural heritage. He then asked if his proposal to establish the <i>Linangan ng Likhang Bayan</i> will still be relevant given the objective of this other bill.</p> <p>National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) Executive Director Al Ryan Alejandro answered in the affirmative and said that NCCA in fact supports Rep. De Venecia's bill.</p> <p>Also expressing their support for the proposed law were representatives from the DepEd,</p>

Continuation... Basic Education and Culture				<p>National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).</p> <p>The resource persons were requested to submit their position papers on the measure.</p>
	HBs 1493 & 3209	Reps. Tan (A.) and Olivarez	Establishing a Bureau of Private Schools and appropriating funds therefor	<p>The Committee will deliberate further on HBs 1493 and 3209.</p> <p>DepEd Undersecretary Jesus Mateo said that the DepEd has requested the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) for the creation of a Private Education Assistance Office and for additional staffing at the regional level, through a letter of Education Secretary Leonor Magtolis-Briones dated June 24.</p> <p>Mateo said that currently there is no bureau in DepEd that specifically attends to the concerns of private schools. Currently, the DepEd issues policies and guidelines concerning private schools for implementation by the Private Education Assistance Committee (PEAC).</p> <p>The PEAC is a five-member Committee constituted by virtue of Executive Order No. 156, series of 1968 to serve as trustee of the Fund for Assistance to Private Education (FAPE), a permanent and irrevocable trust fund from the US government. It is composed of the Secretary of Education as Chairperson and representatives from the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP), Association of Christian Schools, Colleges and Universities (ACSCU), and Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities (PACU), as members.</p> <p>Coordinating Council of Private Educational Associations (COCOPEA) and CEAP expressed their reservations on the bills.</p> <p>COCOPEA Managing Director Joseph Noel Estrada said that the private schools are pushing for reasonable regulation and not "control." He explained that the proposed law may result in regulations that will be too restrictive of the operations and management of private schools.</p> <p>Rep. Castro inquired on which division under DepEd addresses all the concerns of private schools. Mateo said that DepEd coordinates with PEAC for the implementation of policies and programs, such as the Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education (GASTPE) program. Legal issues including child abuse cases filed against private schools and their personnel are lodged with DepEd's Legal Division. On the other hand, DepEd regional offices process the issuance of recognition and permit to private schools.</p> <p>Rep. Castro said that the bills aim to create a bureau in DepEd that will effectively look into</p>

Continuation... Basic Education and Culture				<p>the concerns of private schools especially in this time of pandemic.</p> <p>The Committee requested the private schools' associations to submit their position paper on the proposed law.</p>
	HBs 220, 5391, 5861, 5927 & 6791	Reps. Castro (F.L.), Noel, Fortuno, Olivarez, and Tutor	Institutionalizing support mechanisms and protection for public school teachers and personnel on matters of student discipline for classroom management	<p>The Committee agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to consolidate the five bills.</p> <p>Rep. Eric Olivarez (1<sup>st</sup> District, Parañaque City) was designated as head of the TWG.</p> <p>Rep. Castro, author of HB 220, said that a bill with similar subject matter was approved by the House of Representatives on Third Reading during the 17<sup>th</sup> Congress but was not discussed in the Senate due to lack of material time.</p> <p>According to Rep. Castro, HB 220 aims to provide protection to the teachers and school personnel with regard to school discipline and classroom management. She underscored the need to amend RA 7610 or the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act to ensure that any act committed by the teacher or school staff pursuant to DepEd disciplinary rules and procedure shall not be deemed as child abuse.</p> <p>DepEd expressed its support for the proposed law.</p>
	HBs 374, 5194, 5816 & 6643	Reps. Olivarez, Noel, Vargas, and Cabochan	Integrating voter's education in the junior and senior high school curricula in both public and private schools	<p>The Committee agreed to create a TWG to consolidate the four bills.</p> <p>Rep. Macnell Lusotan (Party-List, MARINO) was designated as head of the TWG.</p> <p>Expressing support for the bills were representatives from DepEd, COCOPEA, and the Commission on Elections (COMELEC).</p> <p>DepEd Undersecretary Tonisito Umali, DepEd Bureau of Learning Delivery (BLD) Chief Lito Palomar, and DepEd Bureau of Curriculum Development (BCD) Director Jocelyn Andaya said that voter's education is already integrated in the school curricula in both public and private schools.</p> <p>Rep. Jocelyn Fortuno (5<sup>th</sup> District, Camarines Sur) requested DepEd to formulate a more effective program on voter's education. She said that students should know the significance of evaluating and choosing the right candidates and their consequent duty to maintain the sanctity of the ballots and the electoral process.</p>
	HBs 633, 2153 & 4511	Deputy Speaker Legarda, Reps. Dimaporo (A.) and Lagon	Establishing schools for the arts in the Provinces of Antique and Lanao del Norte and in Cebu City, respectively, and appropriating funds therefor	<p>The Committee will deliberate further on HBs 633, 2153 and 4511.</p> <p>The Secretariat was directed to collate all bills on the establishment of school for the arts and group them per region, province or city to facilitate the Committee's discussion of all these bills.</p>

**SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING ON HOUSE MEASURES**

COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
<b>Subcommittee on Police Administration</b> (Public Order and Safety)	Draft Substitute Bill to HBs 2242, 3639, 5340, 6635, 7520, 7639, 7960	Deputy Speaker Garcia, Reps. Tupas, Nieto, Cabochan Villafuerte, Tambunting, and Vargas	Lowering the minimum height requirement for applicants to the Philippine National Police (PNP), Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP), and Bureau of Corrections (BuCor), amending for the purpose RA 6975, as amended, RA 9263, and RA 10575	<p>The Subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Samier Tan (1<sup>st</sup> District, Sulu), approved the draft Substitute Bill to the seven measures. The bill will be presented to the mother Committee for its consideration and approval.</p> <p>Rep. Tan informed the body that the proposal to lower the minimum height requirement for applicants to the PNP, BFP, and Bucor was already discussed during the 15<sup>th</sup> Congress. He said that instead of the height requirement, what should be of paramount importance is the recruitment of the best and most qualified individuals to the service.</p> <p>Rep. Manuel Cabochan III (Party-List, MAGDALO), author of HB 6635, said that his bill seeks to lower the minimum height requirement as stipulated in RA 6975 since height is not a basis for determining the capacity of police officers to perform their duties. The bill also aims to encourage more Filipinos to join the uniformed services of the country.</p> <p>Representatives from the PNP, BJMP, and the Civil Service Commission prefer lowering the minimum height requirement for uniformed personnel instead of altogether removing the height requirement for applicants to the PNP, BFP, and BJMP as originally intended in some of the substituted bills.</p> <p>PNP Lieutenant Colonel Donna Villareal proposed that the minimum height requirements should be as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For male – one meter and 57 centimeters, or five feet and 2 inches;</li> <li>• For female – one meter and 52 centimeters, or five feet;</li> <li>• For indigenious or appointees to technical services: For male – one meter and 52 centimeters, or five feet; and for female – one meter and 47 centimeters, or four feet and 10 inches</li> </ul> <p>BuCor representative Neil Buot manifested his support for the proposed law. He likewise suggested that applicants who do not meet the minimum height requirement may still be hired but will be assigned instead to the technical services of the agency.</p> <p>Rep. Narciso Bravo Jr. (1<sup>st</sup> District, Masbate), the Chairperson of the Committee on Public Order and Safety, recommended that the suggestion of Buot may be reflected in the implementing rules and regulations of the proposed law.</p> <p>Reps. Gabriel Bordado Jr. (3<sup>rd</sup> District, Camarines Sur), Luisa Lloren Cuaresma (Nueva</p>

Continuation... Subcommittee on Police Administration (Public Order and Safety)				Vizcaya), and Diego Ty (1 <sup>st</sup> District, Misamis Occidental) expressed their support for the proposed law and manifested their intention to be co-authors of the bill.  The DILG and the National Police Commission also expressed support for the proposed law.
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TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP MEETING ON HOUSE MEASURES				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/ DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Energy jt. w/ Ecology and Transportation (Technical Working Group)	Substitute Bill to HBs 444, 738, 1432, 2020, 4075, 4179, 4356, 4366, 4391, 4962, 6604, 7298, 7299, 7317 & 7607	Reps. Revilla, Biazon, Campos, Vargas, Bernos, Cabochan, Deputy Speaker Santos-Recto, Reps. Go (E. C.), Garcia (J.E.), Deputy Speakers Legarda and Romero, Reps. Garin (S.), and Gatchalian	Providing the national energy policy and regulatory framework for the use, development, and promotion of electric vehicles, hybrid electric vehicles, and alternative fuel vehicles	<p>The joint technical working group (TWG) chaired by Rep. Jose Enrique "Joel" Garcia III (2<sup>nd</sup> District, Bataan), Vice Chair of the Committee on Energy, will schedule another meeting to present the final substitute bill to the authors and stakeholders, taking into consideration the comments and suggestions of the resource persons during the meeting.</p> <p>In today's meeting, the TWG discussed all the sections of the substitute bill and noted the comments and recommendations of the resource persons from the Departments of Energy (DOE), Transportation (DOTr) Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Interior and Local Government (DILG), Trade and Industry (DTI), and Finance (DOF), Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC), Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB), Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA), Manila Electric Company (MERALCO), Electric Vehicle Association of the Philippines (EVAP), Association of Mindanao Rural Electric Cooperatives (AMRECO) Inc., and the Pinagkaisang Samahan ng mga Tsuper at Operators Nationwide (Piston).</p> <p>Among the points agreed upon during the meeting that will be incorporated in the substitute bill were the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define the terms "low emission vehicles" and "zero emission vehicles";</li> <li>• Provide battery swapping facilities in electric vehicle (EV) charging stations;</li> <li>• Clarify the role of the ERC in unbundling the rates of EVs; and</li> <li>• Include the DPWH, Department of Budget and Management (DBM), and the Climate Change Commission in the Inter Agency Committee on Green Vehicles (IACGV) that will be formed under Section 5 of the bill.</li> </ul> <p>With regard to the objection of the DOF on the proposed grant of tax exemptions or fiscal incentives to owners, manufacturers/assemblers, and importers of EVs, Rep. Garcia asked the DOF to reconsider</p>

Continuation... Energy jt. w/ Ecology and Transportation (Technical Working Group)				<p>its position given the long-term benefits of the use of EVs to the economy and the environment.</p> <p>The resource persons said that they will submit their recommendations on the appropriate language of some of the provisions of the substitute bill.</p>
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DISCUSSION WITH AGENCIES/ENTITIES		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
<b>Information and Communications Technology</b>	Discussion with the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) on the current status of the network infrastructure in the country	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Victor Yap (2<sup>nd</sup> District, Tarlac), will continue its discussion on the status of the network infrastructure in the country in its next meeting.</p> <p>Rep. Yap spoke of the need to discuss the country's inadequate network infrastructure and the failure of telecommunications companies (telcos) to provide efficient internet services. He also said that this meeting will give the NTC the opportunity to respond to queries on these issues as well as other unresolved issues raised during the recent budget deliberations and to make its recommendations to the proposed legislative measures on digitalization and connectivity.</p> <p>During his presentation, NTC Commissioner Gamaliel Cordoba informed the body that it was only in 2012 that Globe Telecom, Inc. and Smart Communications, Inc. made changes in their system to introduce 3G and 4G networks as smart phones started dominating the information technology (IT) market. He said that the rolling out of the needed towers or cell sites in 2013 was hampered by red tape as numerous permits and fees were being required by the local government units (LGUs). Likewise, a number of homeowners' associations and barangays also objected to the construction of towers for aesthetic reasons and perceived health risks due to radiation emitted from the towers even without scientific basis, according to Cordoba.</p> <p>To address the delay in the rollout of the towers, the NTC implemented the following measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issued Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC) 1, series of 2020, together with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD), Department of Transportation (DOTr), Department of Health (DOH), Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA), to streamline the requirements and reduce procedural delays in the processing of permits and licenses for shared passive telecommunications tower infrastructure and fiber optic network;</li> <li>• Extended the deadlines for renewal and payment of permits;</li> <li>• Sent letters to building administrators, homeowners' associations, and LGUs to permit entry of telcos into their premises for the installation of internet connections;</li> <li>• Requested the DPWH to amend/revise its Department Order 73 particularly the provision which prohibits the installation of posts and towers of telephone and mobile service providers along national highways and requires telcos to secure their own right-of-way; and</li> <li>• Introduced DITO Telecommunity, the third major telco in the country, which will start operating in March 2021.</li> </ul>

Continuation...  
Information and  
Communications  
Technology

With regard to internet speed, Cordoba reported that broadband networks in the country started to improve in 2016. Based on the Ookla Speedtest Global Index, the average fixed internet download speed in 2016 of 7.91 mbps increased to 27.07 mbps as of October of this year or a 242.22% increase. During the same period, the mobile internet download speed of 7.44 mbps increased to 17.83 mbps or a 139.65% increase.

Cordoba added that based on the same internet global index, the Philippines is currently ranked 6<sup>th</sup> for fixed broadband and 8<sup>th</sup> for mobile broadband among the ASEAN countries.

Ookla is the global leader in internet testing, data, and analysis. Speedtest, the company's flagship product, is the most accurate way to measure internet performance and network diagnostics (*source: Ookla website*).

Cordoba explained that the reason for the higher internet speed of neighboring countries is because the governments of these countries (South Korea, Japan, China, Taiwan, and Thailand) invested billions of dollars to improve their internet services. In the Philippines, the internet industry is private sector-driven. However, he said, it was noted that Globe and Smart have considerably increased their capital expenditures (CAPEX) after the President compelled telcos to improve their services during his State of the Nation Address (SONA) this year.

Cordoba proposed to increase the DICT's budget for the National Broadband Program (NBP) and to pass the Open Access bill. The Open Access bill will liberalize the industry, allowing more players to build and operate broadband networks, promote infrastructure sharing and make spectrum management more transparent and fairer.

In addition, NTC Deputy Commissioner Edgardo Cabarios mentioned the need to update Act 3846, the legal framework for internet and telecom service, which is so restrictive and outdated given the current technological advancements.

With regard to the NBP, Atty. Elias Omar Sana of the DICT reported that its component, the Luzon Bypass Infrastructure (LBI) Project, is already being implemented. The LBI Project, which is the first of its kind in the country, involves the construction and operation of two submarine cable landing stations (one in Baler, Aurora and another in San Fernando, La Union) connected by a 250-kilometer long cable network corridor. The project is being undertaken through a joint agreement with Facebook and Google, which promise to deliver an annual internet capacity of at least 2 terabits per second (tbps) free of charge in exchange for using the submarine cable landing stations.

Submarine cables line the seabed around the globe. They are the unseen backbone of the world's internet traffic, carrying everything from emails to videos posted on social media.

Reacting to the DICT's report that about 3,000 permits for new towers will be issued by year-end, Engr. Pierre Galla, co-founder of Democracy.Net.Ph, commented that the figure is way below the country's target of 50,000 towers set five years ago. The inadequate number of towers at present is the reason for the very poor internet services in the country, especially in the rural areas. According to Galla, to be able to deliver the prescribed minimum speed nationwide, the country needs to construct 120,000 towers.

Replying to the query of Rep. Joy Myra Tambunting (2<sup>nd</sup> District, Parañaque City), Atty. Sana said that the original budget proposal of the DICT for the nationwide rollout of the NBP for 2021 was P18 billion, but the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) only approved a budget of P900 million. He apprised the body that an additional budget of P5.9 billion for the NBP is being proposed in the Senate.

<p>Continuation... Information and Communications Technology</p>		<p>Quirino Rep. Junie Cua urged the DICT and the NTC to come up with a concrete program to take advantage of the three-year regulatory relief on the issuance of permits provided under the Bayanihan to Recover as One Act (Bayanihan 2). He also asked the two agencies to conduct a summit on the problems affecting the installation of telecommunications facilities to be participated in by the DICT, NTC, Members of both Houses, and other stakeholders. He likewise requested NTC to review its circular on the use of spectrum users fee (SUF) that should be based on economic classification of municipalities.</p> <p>Rep. Virgilio Lacson (Party-List, MANILA TEACHERS) underscored the urgency of undertaking the necessary measures to improve internet connectivity in the country as many people are now relying on the internet for their daily transactions and activities. He said that the business and education sectors will greatly benefit from a much-improved internet service nationwide at this time of the pandemic.</p> <p>The Committee will invite in its next meeting the Secretary of the DICT and resource persons from the DPWH, NTC, National Electrification Administration (NEA), Globe, Smart, and DITO Telecommunity.</p>
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FORUM		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
<p><b>Women and Gender Equality jt. w/ Welfare of Children</b></p>	<p>Virtual Forum with the theme "Labanan ang Abuso sa Kababaihan at Bata" in commemoration of the National Consciousness Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Children and in celebration of the National Children's Month</p>	<p>The Committee on Women and Gender Equality and the Committee on Welfare of Children held a virtual forum in commemoration of the National Consciousness Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Children and in celebration of the National Children's Month. The forum with the theme "Labanan ang Abuso sa Kababaihan at Bata" was conducted in partnership with the Gabriella Women's Party and the Association of Women Legislators Foundation.</p> <p>Rep. Arlene Brosas (Party-List, GABRIELA), who served as the moderator during the forum, explained that this year's celebration of the two events on women and children is extraordinary considering the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the various natural disasters that hit the country. The series of calamities and the economic downturn have created greater challenges for women and children, she added. The forum aims not only to spread awareness but also to create stronger unities and solidify efforts to push forward pro-women, pro-children, and pro-poor policies.</p> <p>In her welcome remarks, Rep. Ma. Lourdes Acosta-Alba (1<sup>st</sup> District, Bukidnon), Chair of the Committee on Women and Gender Equality, spoke of the 18-day international campaign on the elimination of violence against women and children (VAWC) which brings people together and gives attention to the problems that threaten the welfare of women and children. She mentioned that alongside the COVID-19 pandemic is the "shadow pandemic" wherein all types of violence, particularly domestic violence, against women and girls have intensified. She emphasized that no women should live in fear and violence and that every girl should grow up knowing that she is safe so that she will have the best start in her life.</p> <p>The 18-Day Campaign to End VAW is observed annually from November 25 to December 12 as mandated under Proclamation 1172 s. 2006. By virtue of Republic Act 10398 or the law declaring November 25 of every year as the National Consciousness Day for the Elimination of VAWC, government agencies are mandated to raise awareness on the problem of violence and the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls.</p>

<p><i>Continuation...</i> Women and Gender Equality jt. w/ Welfare of Children</p>	<p>Rep. Brosas presented the situation of Filipino women amid the pandemic. She said that prolonged imposition of lockdown puts women and children at a greater risk of experiencing violence at home. Economic instability also contributes to household tensions and abusive behavior. There is also limited access to necessary care and support services like the clinical management of rape and mental health issues, medico-legal services, and counselling. There are also reports of sexual harassment on checkpoints, sexual bartering of essential goods, and harassment and illegal arrests of humanitarian workers.</p> <p>Rep. Yedda Marie Romualdez (Party-List, TINGOG SINIRANGAN), Chair of the Committee on Welfare of Children, said that violence knows no limits and is often directed at women and children especially in their own homes. Children are the most vulnerable sector in society, especially those belonging to underprivileged families or living in areas of dispute. Sadly, they are also disenfranchised and are unable to reach out to anyone for help. In the face of these circumstances where a child is left vulnerable, the State has the duty to intervene to protect the child.</p> <p>Rep. Romualdez said that legislators have a critical role to play in ending violence against children. During this pandemic, children experience a wide range of concerns and issues on food and nutrition, health and sanitation, online learning, and mental wellness. Clearly, she said, the socio-economic effects of the pandemic have caused a heavy impact on children. Therefore, it is very important to reshape a post-COVID world where full attention must be provided to children and focus be given towards correcting its adverse impact on their growth and ensuring their optimal development.</p> <p>Save the Children Child Rights Governance Officer Olivia Burgos presented the organization's research on the impact of COVID-19 on children's lives and the children's perspectives during the pandemic. She said that the pandemic impacts on all aspects of children's rights and most adversely affected are access to education, play and leisure, and civil rights. With regard to their studies, children do not feel assured of safe return to school and worry about their ability to access and learn from their online classes. Risks of early pregnancy and mental health issues were highlighted in the study but children have limited knowledge of the services that can help them avoid these. Burgos also noted that incidences of abuse and violence against children continue to happen in this time of pandemic, and the victims cannot seek help or report abuses because they are prohibited from going out of their house.</p> <p>In line with the anti-cyber child prostitution campaign, a poem entitled "May Mumu sa Loob ng Computer" was interpreted by Karen Nicole Piccio, Miss Philippines Earth Eco-Tourism 2019 and human rights advocate. The poem is for third graders and above and their guardians. It teaches how children can protect themselves from online abuse and exploitation.</p> <p>Delivering her closing remarks, Deputy Speaker Rose Marie "Baby" Arenas (3<sup>rd</sup> District, Pangasinan) stressed the need to continue to be on guard for the rights of women and children and to ensure their wellness and safety at all costs.</p>
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