

January 23, 2020

Honorable **MARIA LOURDES ACOSTA-ALBA**  
Chairperson  
Committee on Women and Gender Equality  
RVM Bldg., House of Representatives  
Quezon City

*Revd by:  
Romeo Pastor  
1/28/2020*

Dear Representative Acosta-Alba:

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) supports House Bill Nos. 2810 and 3081 entitled: An Act Establishing Resource Development and Crisis Assistance Centers for Women and Children in Every Province and City of the Country, Amending for the Purpose Republic Act No. 8505, Otherwise Known as the "Rape Victim Assistance and Protection Act of 1998", introduced by Representatives Rufus Rodriguez and Irene Gay Saulog, respectively and House Bill No. 5826 or the "Young Women's Refuge Act", introduced by Rep. Alfred Vargas, which seeks to provide women and children with utmost support and assistance to protect their fundamental rights.

The DSWD believes that the direct management and supervision of the centers to be established, including the acceptance of donations to support their operation, should be with the Local Government Units (LGUs) in view of Republic Act No. 7160 or the "Local Government Code of 1991". As such, the role of the DSWD should focus on the provision of technical assistance to these LGUs on the establishment and operation of these centers.

We are pleased to inform the Chairperson that the other target clients of these centers as indicated in the bills are already being served by the Department thru its residential care facilities which cater to women and girl-children in especially difficult circumstances. These facilities, which provide a wide range of services that promote healing, recovery and reintegration of victim-survivors, include:

1. **Haven for Women:** Provides temporary shelter and protective custody to women 18-59 years old who are victim-survivors of involuntary or forced prostitution, illegal recruitment, physical/emotional/sexual abuse and armed conflict, among others;
2. **Marillac Hills:** Provides care and rehabilitation services to young girls 7-17 years old who are abused, exploited or are in conflict with the law;
3. **Home for Girls:** Provides care and rehabilitation services to abused and exploited girls below 18 years old; and
4. **Nayon ng Kabataan:** Provides alternative family care for abused, orphaned, abandoned, neglected and exploited children 7-17 years old.

To contribute to the bills' enhancement, we are recommending the following:

1. Consolidate the bills into one.
2. **On Sec. 3 - Resource Development and Crisis Assistance Centers**
  - 2.1 On the Composition and Functions of the Advisory Council: The Council should have a representative from the Council on the Welfare of Children (CWC). Also, its functions as a policy making body should focus more on overseeing the effective implementation of the Act rather than being involved in the centers' day-to-day operations; and
  - 2.2 Women in detention are covered by the mandate of the Department of Justice (DOJ) specifically the Correctional Institution for Women and not the DSWD.
3. **Other Comments:** The Committee may consider these criteria in identifying the priority provinces and cities where the centers will be established:
  - 3.1 High incidence of rape in the area.
  - 3.2 Full support from the local government unit (LGU) manifested through:
    - 3.2.1 A document indicating their willingness to cooperate and participate in the establishment and operation of the center through a signed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) and resolution appropriating funds for its operation; and
    - 3.2.2 Existing social welfare programs responding to the needs of the victim-survivors.
  - 3.3 Existing and functional community structures i.e. Local Councils for the Protection of Children (LCPCs).
  - 3.4 Presence of active groups / associations for women and children.
  - 3.5 Availability or access to residential care facilities within the area managed by the DSWD, LGU and/or licensed and accredited NGOs.

For the Committee's consideration.

Very truly yours,

  
ROLANDO JOSELITO D. BAUTISTA  
Secretary