

**HONORABLE RISA HONTIVEROS**

Chairperson

Committee on Children, Women, Family Relations and Gender Equality

Senate of the Philippines

Pasay City

**ATTENTION: MS. GEMMA GENOVEVA TANPIENGCO**  
Committee Secretary

Dear **Senator Hontiveros**,

This refers to your request for comments and recommendations on the following legislations:

<b>Senate Bill No. (SBN)</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>
<b>SBN 2232</b>	AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT 11313, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS SAFE SPACES ACT, PROVIDING PENALTIES FOR GENDER-BASED SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING INSTITUTIONS AND THE WORKPLACE	Sen. Cynthia Villar
<b>SBN 2293</b>	AN ACT DEFINING ELECTRONIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN, PROVIDING PROTECTIVE MEASURES, AND PRESCRIBING PENALTIES FOR VIOLATIONS THEREOF, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9262, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ANTI-VIOLENCE AGAINST	Sen. Mark Villar



	WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN ACT OF 2004	
<b>SBN 2529</b>	AN ACT REORGANIZING THE COUNCIL FOR THE WELFARE OF CHILDREN INTO THE PHILIPPINE COMMISSION ON CHILDREN, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES	Sen. Risa Hontiveros

**On SBN 2232**

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) fully supports the proposed amendments to Republic Act No. 11313 (Safe Spaces Act), as detailed in SBN 2232. The Department concurs with the bill's recognition that current penalties for gender-based sexual harassment are insufficient to deter such acts and reflect the gravity of the harm inflicted on victims. The DSWD applauds the proposed revisions that aim to strengthen penalties for gender-based sexual harassment. These amendments hold the potential to effectively combat this pervasive issue and create a safer environment for all especially to those who are vulnerable in these situations.

As the primary government agency responsible for promoting the welfare and protection of vulnerable individuals, the DSWD is committed to supporting initiatives that uphold the rights and dignity of all persons. By endorsing the amendments to the Safe Spaces Act, the DSWD reaffirms its dedication to ensuring a society where gender equality is upheld, and where all individuals are treated with respect and dignity.

**On SBN 2293**

The DSWD stands in full support of SBN 2293 which seeks to amend Republic Act 9262 (Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004). This proposed bill aims to define and address electronic violence against women and their children, providing protective measures and prescribing penalties for violations thereof in the digital age. The DSWD recognizes the critical need to update existing legislation to effectively combat the emerging forms of violence facilitated by technology and online platforms. SBN 2293 aligns with the Department's mission to protect and promote the





welfare of vulnerable individuals, particularly women and children who are at risk of electronic violence.

Since the bill intends to amend R.A. 9262, the Department sees this opportunity to provide the Inter-Agency Council on Violence Against Women and their Children (IACVAWC) a strengthened legal basis through a provision in this bill clarifying the structure of the Council Secretariat and an appropriate budget allocation which will cover the Council Secretariat's staffing and regular activities such as council meetings.

Moreover, the Department would like to emphasize the importance of a mechanism that will immediately cater to and respond to e-VAWC cases, which can be lodged to the existing Barangay VAW Desks and other existing reporting and referral pathways on VAWC. Given this vital role of local mechanisms, the Department recommends adding a provision or clause indicating the Terms of Reference or minimum competency of Barangay VAW Desk Officers that will ensure the quality management of e-VAWC cases as well as a specific provision on the budget allocations to employ professionals, preferably Social Workers, that will operationalize the Barangay VAW Desks. This is in order to prevent frequent changes of officers, who are usually co-terminus with the Barangay Chairperson, which might disrupt the continuity of the good practices.

In relation to the services and programs of the DSWD, the Department is committed to provide support to individuals affected by electronic violence, including counseling and psychosocial services. The DSWD plays a critical role in providing holistic support and services to women and their children affected by electronic violence, emphasizing their safety, well-being, and recovery from traumatic experiences. The proposed amendments in SBN 2293 complement the Department's efforts to address the evolving needs of women and children in the digital age and align with its mandate to promote social protection and well-being.

### **On SBN 2529**

The DSWD acknowledges and supports the intent behind SBN 2529, which seeks to reorganize the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) into the Philippine Commission on Children. The DSWD commends the CWC, the designated inter-agency body of the government attached to the Department, for its steadfast leadership in fostering a child-centered and child-protective society where the full realization of every child's rights is prioritized.



While the DSWD fully endorses the objectives and functions outlined in the bill, we propose that the Commission be supervised under the DSWD. As an attached agency of the DSWD, the Commission can benefit from the Department's expertise, resources, and established network in the field of social welfare and child protection. Retaining the Commission's status as an attached agency of the Department will ensure continuous coordination, alignment, and harmonization with existing DSWD programs specifically focused on children's well-being. This close affiliation will facilitate the integration of child welfare initiatives, streamline service delivery, and maximize the impact of interventions aimed at improving the lives of children across the country. Furthermore, by supervising the Commission, the DSWD can leverage its established infrastructure, partnerships, and best practices to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of child welfare efforts at the national level.

For the Chairperson's consideration.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,

**REX GATCHALIAN**

Secretary

Date: 25 APR 2024