

03 January 2017

SENATOR RISA HONTIVEROS

Chairperson
Committee on Health and Demography
Senate of the Philippines
Pasay City

Dear **Senator Hontiveros**:

The Department of Social Welfare and Development supports Senate Bill Nos 9, 415, 522, 657, 1155 and 1190 which aim to provide quality mental health care to Filipinos.

To contribute to the bills' enhancement, we recommend the following:

1. Consolidate the bills into one.
2. For a program of this importance, it is highly recommended that the source of funding be identified in the bill to ensure its sustainability. For example, funding for the bill may be explored to be a portion from the proceeds of the sin tax.
3. Under **Rights of Persons with Mental Health Needs**:
 - a. Include their right to be portrayed in non-discriminatory and non-derogatory ways in both media and film.
 - b. On confidentiality of Information about Persons with Mental Health Needs: Please consider the possible release of the information to DSWD licensed social workers especially for cases of patients whose children are placed under the custody of the Department for alternative family care.
4. Under **Duties and Responsibilities of Government Agencies**, that the listed agencies will be assured of funding for the personnel and operational requirements for the implementation of the program:
 - a. For the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD): Include the integration of mental health care in its centers.
 - b. For the Department of Health (DOH): Include the accreditation of mental health facilities and the establishment of a database of persons with mental health needs for policy and program development.

- c. For the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED): Ensure that immediate psychosocial services are made available in schools, state universities and private educational institutions.
5. Under the **Composition of the Philippine Mental Health Council**: Specify that the representatives from the government, private health sector, academe/research and professional organization should be involved in mental health issues.
6. Under **Local Mental Health Service**: Aside from establishing/strengthening local mental health facilities, bills should also encourage the development of a community-based mental health care system. This should employ a multidisciplinary, inter-agency approach, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
7. Take into account the special needs of vulnerable groups (children, women, senior citizens, indigenous peoples) in crafting the framework to address mental health issues.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,


JUDY M. TAGUIWALO
Secretary