

For the Senate Committees on Health and Demography, Social Justice, Welfare and Rural Development, and Finance

LPP POSITION PAPER ON:

- **S.B. No. 398 & S.B. No. 662, Introduced by SEN. CHRISTOPHER LAWRENCE “BONG” T. GO and SEN. RAMON BONG REVILLA, JR. respectively, entitled:**

AN ACT EXPANDING THE COVERAGE OF THE MANDATORY BASIC IMMUNIZATION PROGRAM AND PROVIDING A SYSTEM IN THE DETERMINATION OF OTHER TYPES OF VACCINE-PREVENTABLE DISEASES, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE R.A. NO. 10152, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE “MANDATORY INFANTS AND CHILDREN HEALTH IMMUNIZATION ACT OF 2011”

LPP COMMENTS:

The League of Provinces is in full support of the intent of Congress to look into the national immunization program in order to ensure that government provides the appropriate response for emerging diseases that can be prevented or suppressed through timely and efficacious interventions.

With the advancement of science as well, harnessed with technology, a number of new diseases as well as new strains of old diseases have been discovered. Notwithstanding, the same science and technology have also been key in discovering ways and means to either combat these diseases or reduce the likely debilitating or even life-threatening effects of the same.

One of these means is through proper immunization.

Thus, Senate Bill No. 398, introduced by Sen. Christopher “Bong” Go, and Senate Bill No. 662, introduced by Sen. Ramon “Bong” Revilla Jr., is a very timely measure toward ensuring that Filipino children of this and future generations are fully protected from vaccine-preventable diseases through an expanded immunization program.

With the reported two new cases of polio very recently, the Philippines may have well lost its 19-year polio-free status, as declared by the World Health Organization. Polio, although a debilitating disease, is fully preventable by immunization. However, reports indicate that oral polio vaccination has been steadily declining.

Apart from strengthening the immunization program, it is vital for the Department of Health to strengthen its information and communications strategy in order to actively campaign for massive and regular immunization.

Toward this end, it is vital for the Department of Health to be working closely with the local government units, in ensuring that adequate and effective vaccines are immediately available, on a year-round basis, and not just for an occasional national

vaccination day. The role of LGUs and its community-based public health workers to reach out to every Filipino family to ensure that every child is fully immunized.

Inasmuch as prevention will always be far better than cure, government investments in immunization of children against preventable diseases should be given higher priority. Thus, the need for a year-round, localized, LGU-based immunization campaign.

With the implementation of the Universal Health Care by 2020, it is necessary for the DOH to closely coordinate and work with provincial and highly-urbanized city governments to immediately set-up the Local Health Boards, which shall be the legally-effective bodies to plan out, monitor and ensure the proper implementation of the national health strategy at the local and community levels.

- **S.B. NO. 697, Introduced by Sen. Aquilino “Koko” Pimentel III, entitled:**

AN ACT PROHIBITING THE WITHHOLDING OF MUSLIM CADAVERS IN THE CUSTODY OF ANY HOSPITAL, MEDICAL CLINIC, FUNERAL PARLOR, MORGUE, OR OTHER SIMILAR FACILITIES ON GROUNDS OF NON-PAYMENT OF HOSPITAL BILLS, MEDICAL EXPENSES, OR OTHER FEES, PROVIDING PENALTIES THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES; and

- **S.B. NO. 166, Introduced by Senator Pia Hontiveros, entitled:**

AN ACT INCREASING THE PENALTIES FOR THE DETENTION OF PATIENTS AND CADAVERS IN HOSPITALS, MEDICAL CLINICS, OR ANY OTHER SIMILAR FACILITIES ON GROUNDS OF NON-PAYMENT OF HOSPITAL BILLS OR MEDICAL EXPENSES AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE R.A. 9439 ENTITLED ‘AN ACT PROHIBITING THE DETENTION OF PATIENTS IN HOSPITALS AND MEDICAL CLINICS ON GROUNDS OF NONPAYMENT OF HOSPITAL BILLS OR MEDICAL EXPENSES.

LPP COMMENTS:

The League fully supports both measures amending R.A. 9439. While the law already prohibits the withholding of cadavers and detention of patients in hospitals, medical clinics or other similar facilities, it is necessary to update and increase the penalties for such crimes.

Indeed, it is sufficient that in lieu of a mortgage or guarantee by a co-maker, as currently required by these health facilities, we concur that the submission of a promissory note from either of the government agencies enumerated herein, i.e. SSS, GSIS, PhilHealth, or DSWD shall suffice. This policy bodes well with the implementation of the Universal Health Care law. Should this merit the concurrence of the August body and be passed into law, we will help ensure its implementation at the LGU level.

Respectfully submitted.

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