

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session
HOUSE BILL NO. **5709**



INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVE ALFRED VARGAS

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Street children comprise about one to three percent of the children and youth population of the major cities in the Philippines. As of this writing, there are over 250,000 street children plying the streets of major urban centers.

Studies conducted by advocacy groups point to the following as the main causes for children to take the streets: (1) poverty; (2) unemployment or underemployment; (3) limited access to basic social services; and (4) breakdown of family structures. Street children are regularly denied the right to protection, health care, and education. Thus, they are exposed to the perils of society like hunger, sickness, abuse, and exploitation, and are often in conflict with the law.

To allow street children to break from the shackles of poverty and enjoy their right to a full and happy childhood, this bill seeks to establish centers for street children in every region of the country.

In view of the foregoing, the passage of this bill is earnestly sought.


ALFRED VARGAS

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AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A CRISIS CENTER FOR STREET CHILDREN IN EVERY REGION OF
THE PHILIPPINES, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES

Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. Title.– This Act shall be known as the “Street Children Crisis Center Act”.

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. – It is hereby declared as policy of the State to defend the right of children to assistance, including the proper care and nutrition, and to provide them with special protection against all forms of neglect, abuse, cruelty, exploitation and other conditions prejudicial to their development.

SECTION 3. Coverage. – This Act shall cover all persons below eighteen (18) years of age who are inadequately protected or supervised by adults and for whom the streets, including unoccupied dwellings and wasteland, have become their home and source of income.

SECTION 4. Program Framework. – There shall be a comprehensive program to be formulated by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), in coordination with the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), to protect street children from circumstances, which endanger their survival and normal development. Such program shall include but not limited to the following:

- a) Emergency medical and feeding program;
- b) Temporary shelter for street children who have been separated from their respective homes and who have been staying in the streets;
- c) Basic educational, legal and counsel services;
- d) Immediate rehabilitation program for those identified as substance abusers;

- e) Programs geared towards the acquisition of livelihood, technical, social and other related skills, which would help the children become productive members of society;
- f) Support system provided by the Local Government Units;
- g) Referral network of assistance consisting of other government agencies;
- h) Program for securing foster homes or employment best suited to the individual child's capacity, training and personality;
- i) A follow-up program for monitoring the progress of each child, after a certain period of time, to determine other interventions needed to further enhance the normal development of the child;
- j) Information, education and communication campaign/programs to promote the objectives of this Act; and
- k) Such other functions as may be necessary for the effective implementation of this Act.

SECTION 5. Implementing Agency. – The program shall be implemented by the Department of Social Welfare in close coordination with the Local Government Units (LGUs) concerned.

The local officials may call upon private and responsible volunteers of the community to assist in the care of street children by providing consultative services for medical, educational and other needs of children.

SECTION 6. Functions of the Department of Social Welfare and Development. – The Department shall:

- a. Formulate the criteria for the selection and qualification of street children who shall be covered by this Act;
- b. Provide training for crisis center workers, counselors and other volunteers;
- c. Coordinate activities of non-government organizations with the crisis center workers and other social workers of the Department in order that their services may be fully utilized for the attainment of the program goals;
- d. Protect and assist abused, neglected or exploited children and secure proper government assistance for said street children; and
- e. Promulgate the necessary implementing rules and regulations within six (6) months from the effectivity of this Act.

SECTION 7. Appropriations. – The funds necessary for the implementation of this Act shall be taken from the following sources:

- a. The funds for the establishment, maintenance and operation of the crisis center for street children in every region shall be included in the General Appropriations Act as part of the annual budget of the Department of Social Welfare and Development;
- b. A portion of the health programs available to the Philippines under official aid or official debt arrangements from foreign countries, the amount to be determined by the Office of the President, shall be extended in support of the crisis centers.
- c. Funds for the establishment of sub-regional crisis center, as may be deemed necessary shall be included in the budget of the LGUs concerned.

SECTION 8. Authority to Accept Donations. – The Department of Social Work and Development may accept donations and grants, both domestic and foreign, for purposes relevant to the functions of the crisis center. These donations and grants shall be allocated among the regional crisis centers nationwide.

SECTION 9. Joint Oversight Committee. – There is hereby created a Joint Oversight Committee to oversee the implementation of this Act. The Oversight Committee shall be composed of five (5) members each from the Senate and the House of Representatives in addition to the Chairs of the Senate Committee on Youth, Women and Family Relations and that of the House Committee on the Welfare of the Children.

SECTION 10. Separability Clause. – If any portion of this Act be declared unconstitutional, the remainder of the Act or any provision not affected thereby shall be remain in force and effect.

SECTION 11. Repealing Clause. – All laws, decrees, rules and regulations, and executive orders contrary to or inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 12. Effectivity Clause.– This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in at least two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,