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SENATE

S.B. No. 175

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Introduced by **SENATOR LUISA "LOI" P. EJERCITO ESTRADA**

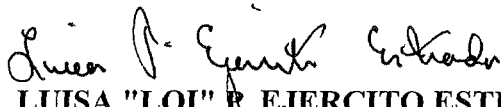
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EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Bill of Rights protects persons accused of a commission of a crime. Victims are not provided with the same safeguards to minimize damage or injury caused by the commission of crimes. These victims usually suffer physical and psychological trauma. Hence, they should be treated with respect, compassion and dignity throughout the criminal justice process.

This bill implements the constitutional mandate that: "The State values the dignity of every human person and guarantees full respect for human rights." It codifies certain rights of crime victims, prescribes the duties of responsible officers and provides penalties for violations of its provisions.

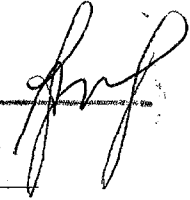
Approval of this bill is earnestly sought.

  
**LUISA "LOI" P. EJERCITO ESTRADA**  
Senator

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AN ACT  
PROVIDING THE RIGHTS TO BE ACCORDED VICTIMS OF CRIMES, DEFINING  
THE DUTIES OF RESPONSIBLE OFFICERS AND PROVIDING PENALTIES  
THEREFOR

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

**Section 1. *Short Title.*** - This Act may be cited as, the "Magna Carta for Crime Victims".

**Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.*** - It is the policy of the State to provide protection and assistance to victims of crime and ensure that no further harm and damage is inflicted on them during the entire prosecution of their case.

**Sec. 3. *Definition of Terms.*** - As used in this Act:

(a) The term "victim" means a person who has suffered direct physical, emotional or pecuniary harm as the result of the commission of a crime, including:

(6) in the case of a victim that is an institutional entity, an authorized representative of the entity; and

(7) in the case of a victim who is under 18 years of age, incompetent, incapacitated or deceased, one of the following (in order of preference):

(a) spouse;

(b) a legal guardian;

(c) a parent;

(6) a child;

- (e) a sibling;
- (f) another family member; or
- (g) another person designated by the court.

- (b) The term "responsible official" means a person designated pursuant to Section 4 of this Act to perform the functions of a responsible official.

**Sec. 4. *Best Efforts to Accord Rights.*** - Officers and employees of the Department of Justice and other departments and agencies of the government engaged in the detection, investigation or prosecution of crime shall exert their best efforts to ensure that victims of crimes are accorded the rights described in Section 5.

**Sec. 5. *Rights of Crime Victims.*** - A crime victim has the following rights:..

- (1) The right to be treated with fairness and with respect for the victims' dignity and privacy. In line with this, a responsible official shall -
  - (a) inform the victim of the place where the victim may receive emergency medical and social services;
  - (b) inform the victim of any restitution or other relief to which the victim may be entitled under this Act or any other law and the manner in which such relief may be obtained;
  - (c) inform the victim of public and private programs available for the counseling, treatment, and other forms of support to the victim; and
  - (d) assist the victim in contacting the persons who are responsible for providing the services and reliefs described in sub-paragraphs (a), (b) and (c).
- (2) The right to be reasonably protected from the accused. In line with this, a responsible official shall make necessary arrangement for a victim to receive reasonable protection from the accused and persons acting in concert with or at the behest of the accused. During court proceedings, a

responsible official shall ensure that a victim is provided a waiting area removed from and out of the sight and hearing of the accused and his witnesses;

- (3) The right to be notified of the status of the investigation and prosecution of the crime. During the investigation and prosecution of a crime, a responsible official shall provide the victim the earliest possible notice of
  - (a) the status of the investigation of the crime, to the extent it is appropriate to inform the victim and to the extent that it will not interfere with the investigation;
  - (b) the arrest of the accused;
  - (c) the filing of charges against the accused;
  - (d) the scheduling of each court proceeding that the witness is either required to attend or is entitled to attend; and
  - (e) the acceptance of a plea of guilty or the rendering of verdict after trial;
- (4) The right to be present at all public court proceedings related to the offense, unless the court determines that testimony by the victim would be materially affected if the victim heard other testimony at trial.
- (5) The right to confer with government prosecutor handling the case;
- (6) The right to restitution. In line with this, a responsible official shall at all times ensure that any property of a victim that is being held for evidentiary purposes be maintained in good condition and returned to the victim as soon as it is no longer needed for evidentiary purposes.
- (7) The right to information about the conviction, sentencing, imprisonment and release of the accused. In line with this, after trial, a responsible official shall provide the victim with the earliest possible notice of
  - (a) the scheduling of parole hearing of the convict;
  - (b) the escape or any other form of release from custody of the convict;
  - (c) the death of the accused, if the accused dies while in custody;

- (d) the sentence imposed on the accused, including the date on which the accused will be eligible for parole;
- (e) the release and detention status of the accused; and
- (f) a general information regarding the corrections process, including information about pardon, commutation of service, good time allowances, probation and the eligibility for each.

**Sec. 6. Penal Liability.** – Any responsible official, as defined in Section 4 of this Act, who fails, either willfully or negligently, and regardless of good faith, to perform the duties imposed by Section 5 of this Act, shall be penalized with not less than six (6) months imprisonment and not more than one(1) year imprisonment. This is without prejudice to any administrative case which be filed against the official.

**Sec. 7. Civil Liability.** – A responsible official found guilty of violating this Act shall also be civilly liable for any damage that may be suffered by the crime victim as a result of the official's omission to perform duties required under Section 5 of this Act.

**Sec. 8. Separability Clause.** – Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary to or inconsistent with, the provisions of this Act is hereby repealed, modified or amended accordingly.

**Sec. 9. Repealing Clause.** – Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act is hereby repealed, modified or amended accordingly.

**Sec. 10. Effectivity Clause.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,