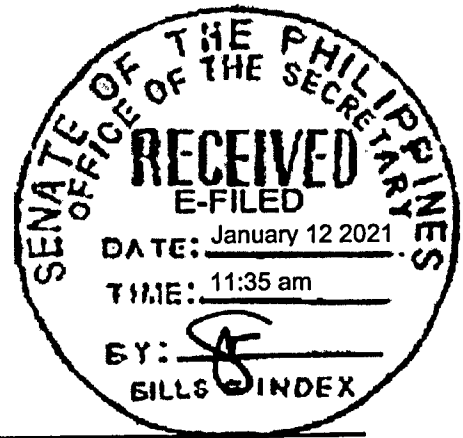


EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE )  
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES )  
Second Regular Session )



SENATE

P.S. Res. No. 609

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Introduced by SENATOR LEILA M. DE LIMA

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**RESOLUTION**  
**DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT**  
**AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE GROWING TREND**  
**OF “SUGAR DATING” IN THE PHILIPPINES DURING THE COVID-19**  
**PANDEMIC AND THE SURGE IN POPULARITY OF POTENTIALLY**  
**EXPLOITATIVE WEBSITES AIMED AT WOMEN SEEKING**  
**ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF INCOME**

1           WHEREAS, Article II, Section 13 of the 1987 Constitution provides that, “[t]he  
2 State recognizes the vital role of the youth in nation-building and shall promote and  
3 protect their physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual and social well-being.”;

4           WHEREAS, Section 14 of the same declares that “[t]he State recognizes the  
5 role of women in nation-building, and shall ensure the fundamental equality before  
6 the law of women and men.”;

7           WHEREAS, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported that, in 2020,  
8 the unemployment rate was lower than the 10% reported in July and the  
9 unfortunately high 17.6% unemployment rate last April. The fact still remains,  
10 however, that as of October 2020 there were around 3.8 million jobless Filipinos  
11 amid the global health pandemic<sup>1</sup>;

12           WHEREAS, as unemployment skyrockets due to COVID-19 pandemic, many  
13 Filipinos are hard-pressed to find means to provide for their families. With the  
14 present shortage of legitimate job opportunities, many of our countrymen, especially  
15 young women, are forced into finding alternative means of livelihood, regardless of  
16 the moral issues involved;

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<sup>1</sup> Rivas, Ralf. Rappler. *Unemployment eases to 8.7% in October 2020, but workers looking for more jobs.* 3 December 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.rappler.com/business/unemployment-rate-philippines-october-2020>

1           WHEREAS, one such alternative means of livelihood is "sugar dating". It is  
2 defined as a transactional dating practice typically characterized by an older  
3 wealthier person and a younger person in need of financial assistance in a mutually  
4 beneficial relationship. Under this arrangement, the "sugar baby" is given financial  
5 assistance by a "sugar daddy/mommy" in exchange for companionship and other  
6 favors which are mostly sexual in nature;

7           WHEREAS, one popular mode of facilitating sugar dating is a website named  
8 "Sugarbook". The owner of the website contends that Sugarbook does not advocate  
9 prostitution and claims that their sugar babies "have the freedom of choice" and "do  
10 not sell their bodies";

11           WHEREAS, a number of Filipinos, especially women, joined the website with  
12 the fervent hope of alleviating their current situation. According to reports, there has  
13 been a 63% surge in sign-ups and 79% of them were sugar babies, from March to  
14 August 2020 or the months when enhanced community quarantine were  
15 implemented in many areas of the country<sup>2</sup>;

16           WHEREAS, the dating site registered the largest number of Filipino users in  
17 the National Capital Region (NCR), where 12,450 of which are sugar babies while  
18 4,507 are sugar daddies. CALABARZON comes second with 4,822 sugar babies and  
19 1,442 sugar daddies. Central Visayas followed suit with 3,646 sugar babies and 1,086  
20 sugar daddies. Central Luzon ranked fourth with 2,391 sugar babies and 270 sugar  
21 daddies. Davao Region placed fifth with 1,799 sugar babies and 103 sugar daddies.  
22 All these total to 28,310 sugar babies and 7,526 sugar daddies in the country<sup>3</sup>;

23           WHEREAS, majority of the registered sugar babies are students, comprising  
24 46% of the overall number of sugar babies in the Philippines;<sup>4</sup>

25           WHEREAS, sugar babies are offered a certain amount in exchange of photos  
26 or actions requested by sugar daddies. Victims said that they fell prey to these  
27 luxurious offers which after the sending of the requested photo, the sugar daddy ends

<sup>2</sup> Quismundo, Tarra. ABS-CBN News. *Dangerous or empowering? Signups in sugar daddy dating site rise among young women in PH amid pandemic*. 30 October 2020. Retrieved from <https://news.abs-cbn.com/life/10/30/20/signups-on-sugar-daddy-dating-site-rise-among-young-ph-women-amid-pandemic>

<sup>3</sup> Malasig, Jeline. Interaksyon. *Pucker-up: Sugar dating is on the rise in the Philippines amid COVID-19 pandemic*. 15 September 2020. Retrieved from <https://interaksyon.philstar.com/trends-spotlights/2020/09/15/176885/pucker-up-sugar-dating-is-on-the-rise-in-the-philippines-amid-covid-19-pandemic/>

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*

1 up not giving a single peso. One of the victims narrated how she refused to do the  
2 request but the sugar daddy blackmailed her and threatened that he will post the  
3 victim's photos online<sup>5</sup>;

4 WHEREAS, another Filipina relayed how she joined the dating website to  
5 provide for the needs of her children. The arrangement turned bitter as she claimed  
6 being scammed by a Filipino sugar daddy<sup>6</sup>;

7 WHEREAS, the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) observed that  
8 "platforms like this can attract or can be used by pedophiles, with potential signups  
9 from minors should they be able to fake credentials and join, and this open ups  
10 opportunities for abuse and exploitation of children"<sup>7</sup>;

11 WHEREAS, the Commission further explained that arrangements offered by  
12 the dating website could be considered as a form of prostitution. "We already heard  
13 horror stories where women fell victims to scammers and suffered trauma when  
14 [their] nude photos or videos were distributed or sold to porn sites without their  
15 consent.", PCW added<sup>8</sup>;

16 WHEREAS, women's right advocates and legal experts posit that despite the  
17 argued freedom of choice, this kind of setup could perpetuate gender disparity and  
18 worsen female objectification and worse, could even lead to abuse;

19 WHEREAS, Attorney Evalyn Ursua, a lawyer who has prosecuted cases of  
20 gender-based violence said that "This business capitalizes on women who need  
21 money, whether as a means for a living, to finish school, or sometimes to finance a  
22 specific lifestyle. The axis lies on women who are trading their services as sugar  
23 babies, their own bodies and their own being, in exchange for money or allowances  
24 from sugar daddies who can afford their price"<sup>9</sup>;

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<sup>5</sup> GMA News Online. 'Sugar babies' cry foul after being scammed by 'sugar daddies' in dating site. 4 November 2020. Retrieved from [https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/762648/sugar-babies-cry-foul-after-being-scammed-by-sugar-daddies-in-dating-site/story/?utm\\_source=GMAnews&utm\\_medium=Facebook](https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/762648/sugar-babies-cry-foul-after-being-scammed-by-sugar-daddies-in-dating-site/story/?utm_source=GMAnews&utm_medium=Facebook)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Salaverria, Lella B. Inquirer.net. *Beware of 'sugar daddy' sites exploiting crisis-Philippine Commission on Women*. 13 December 2020. Retrieved from <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1371113/pcw-beware-of-sugar-daddy-sites-exploiting-crisis>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> *Supra* Ibid 4

1           WHEREAS, Atty. Ursua likens the business model of the sugar dating sites to  
2 the concept of prostitution by “exploiting the vulnerabilities of women, particularly  
3 young women”;<sup>10</sup>

4           WHEREAS, prostitution is punished under R.A. No. 9208 or the Anti-  
5 Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003;

6           WHEREAS, according to Atty. Ursua, the spike in sign-ups for sugar dating  
7 shows how some Filipino women were becoming desperate to get help in the middle  
8 of a pandemic, resorting to sugar dating for relief. This, she said, reflected the  
9 unequal power dynamic that ensues in a sugar baby-sugar daddy arrangement;<sup>11</sup>

10           WHEREAS, Gabriela’s Secretary General Joms Salvador said that the drastic  
11 increase in Filipino sign-ups in Sugarbook reflects “how the business of  
12 commodifying women thrives in times of crises”<sup>12</sup>;

13           WHEREAS, there is need to examine the underlying conditions in our  
14 population that render them vulnerable to exploitation by these kinds of website that  
15 prey on women, even minors, who are in desperate need of financial assistance;

16           WHEREAS, there is an urgent need to safeguard vulnerable sectors and  
17 effectively address the employment needs and concerns of Filipinos for them to  
18 obtain their most productive capacity and help them contribute to our national  
19 development and likewise prevent the further proliferation of abuse and exploitation,  
20 particularly among young women;

21           WHEREAS, it is likewise necessary to investigate these alleged cases of abuse  
22 and exploitation and gather more concrete data regarding this emerging industry in  
23 order to further protect women’s and children’s rights amid the looming effects of a  
24 global health crisis;

25           NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE, as it is hereby  
26 resolved to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, into the growing trend of “sugar

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<sup>10</sup> Quismundo. Tarra. ABS-CBN News. *Dangerous or empowering? Signups on sugar daddy dating site rise among young women in PH amid pandemic*. (30 October 2020). Retrieved from: <https://news.abs-cbn.com/life/10/30/20/signups-on-sugar-daddy-dating-site-rise-among-young-ph-women-amid-pandemic>

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>12</sup> *Supra*. Footnote 7

1 dating” in the Philippines during the COVID-19 pandemic and the surge in  
2 popularity of potentially exploitative websites aimed at women seeking alternative  
3 sources of income, with the end in view of protecting our women and girls from  
4 exploitation, abuse, and objectification.

*Adopted,*

  
**HEILA M. DE LIMA**