

SENATE  
P.S.R. No. 929

RECEIVED BY



---

Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

---

RESOLUTION  
DIRECTING THE PROPER SENATE COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE, IN AID OF  
LEGISLATION, THE ALLEGED HIDDEN, BUT GROWING HUMAN  
IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (HIV) AND ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY  
SYNDROME PROBLEM (AIDS) IN THE PHILIPPINES

WHEREAS, the Constitution, Article 2, Section 15 provides: The State shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them;

WHEREAS, the *Agence France-Presse*, in a recent article entitled "HIV/AIDS "Hidden But Growing" Problem in RP", reported that local and foreign health experts agreed to the growing number of AIDS and HIV cases in the Philippines,

WHEREAS, while the government puts the number of HIV/AIDS cases at 8,600, it was reported that AIDS worker Roberto Ruiz, 44, who was diagnosed with AIDS in 1993 and sits on the board of trustees of Positive Action Foundation Philippines Inc., believes the number is much higher, saying "the true number is probably fast approaching 10,000";

WHEREAS, it was reported that while the foundation acts as a support group for HIV/AIDS sufferers in the Philippines, it also conducts research and has an education program aimed at lifting the stigma associated with the disease in a country where more than 80 percent of the 90 million population are Roman Catholic;

WHEREAS, Soe Nyunt-u, the World Health Organization's (WHO) representative in the Philippines, allegedly said that the number of HIV/AIDS cases being reported each month, at 40-45, is nearly double this year compared to last year, saying that in October 2008, there were 59 new cases detected;

WHEREAS, Nyunt-u reportedly claimed that "the number of cases detected annually has also spiked to 454 in the first 10 months of this year, from 309 in 2006 and 342 last year, which is just the tip of the iceberg";

WHEREAS, the WHO representative also reportedly said that "The real number could be much higher than this, since many cases still go unreported; and what is alarming is that infections are now being found outside of the traditional high-risk groups: sex workers, drug users, men who have sex with men, and Filipinos returning from working overseas";

WHEREAS, it was learned that transmission among sex workers and other risk groups is going down, but it is in the general population that it is increasing, citing the threat particularly among the young;

WHEREAS, in addition, Ruiz reportedly said that "So far, health officials have found 481 people aged 15-24 who were infected, with 50 children below the age of 15 also infected -- the children were all born of mothers with the disease";

WHEREAS, he also claimed that there needs to be a greater government focus on education and prevention programs before the case of HIV/AIDS explodes, and further suggested that the programs should not be confined to schools but should be featured at the workplace as well;

WHEREAS, Ruiz reportedly revealed that the Department of Education has not done any firm HIV/AIDS program yet, maybe because in the past there were no students yet and only a small number of young people were diagnosed with the disease; he also claimed that if HIV/AIDS education been carried out in high school, then perhaps many of the young people now infected would have avoided the disease;

WHEREAS, Massimo Ghidinelli, a special WHO adviser on HIV/AIDS reportedly said that although the Philippines is credited with carrying out effective HIV/AIDS programs among marginalized groups, since there is a fairly established, organized civil society with many non-government organizations who work with the Department of Health to reach these marginalized groups, particularly sex workers, there are some obstacles. The Catholic Church has opposed sex education among children and the promotion of condoms -- two things that would help prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, which makes it unlikely that the Philippines will adopt the massive HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns that were so effective in Thailand;

WHEREAS, with HIV and AIDS becoming a growing problem, it is mandatory that the government effect policies and measures that will curb the growth of this disease;

WHEREAS, existing policies that aim to educate the people about the disease and limit its proliferation should be consistently checked on if such policies are adequately implemented;

WHEREAS, by the there is an urgent need to investigate and substantiate these reports not only to ascertain its veracity, but also to initiate legislation that would plug the loopholes in our existing laws in order to protect our most important resources -- our countrymen;

WHEREFORE, be it hereby resolved by the Philippine Senate, to direct the proper Senate committee to investigate, in aid of legislation, the alleged hidden, but growing HIV/AIDS problem in the Philippines.

Adopted,

  
MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO

/cdr