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Senate
Office of the Secretary

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SENATE
P. S. R. No. **658**

Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE PROPER SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ALARMING INCREASE OF HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (HIV) INFECTIONS AND THE NECESSITY OF FUNDING HIV PREVENTION PROGRAMS TO CURTAIL THE SPREAD OF THE CONCENTRATED EPIDEMIC

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, according to the 23 November 2011 article in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, the rate of new HIV infections and deaths from Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS)-related illness are decreasing worldwide, except in the Philippines and Bangladesh, where the number of new HIV cases continues to increase;

WHEREAS, this is based on the 21 November 2011 report released by the United Nations Program on HIV-AIDS (UNAIDS), which revealed the worldwide trend that since 1997, new infections have been reduced by 21 percent while deaths from AIDS-related illnesses decreased by 21 percent since 2005;

WHEREAS, the Philippines was one of seven nations in the world which reported a drastic increase in new HIV infections of over 25 percent;

WHEREAS, based on the April 2011 Philippine HIV and AIDS registry, from 1984 to 2011, there are 6,669 HIV Ab sero-positive cases reported of which 5,802 (87%) were asymptomatic and 867 (13%) were AIDS cases;

WHEREAS, the total new infections from January to May of 2011 alone has already exceeded the total new cases for the year 2009 and the reported HIV cases jumped from one new infection a day in 2007 to six new infections in 2011;

WHEREAS, the mode of transmission is largely sexual (90%), and around 80% of which have been acquired through unprotected male-to-male sex and the burden is mainly in urban centers like Metro Manila, Cebu, and Davao, and their adjacent localities;

WHEREAS, the demographic profile of those infected is getting younger, with the mean age of 27 years old and sixty-four percent of those infected are in their productive years (20 to 34 years old);

WHEREAS, according to UNAIDS, on a scale of one to 10, with 10 being the most alarming, the HIV-AIDS problem in the Philippines was "five nationally" but it was already eight to nine in specific sites mainly associated with officially reported HIV prevalence;

WHEREAS, these statistics prove that the Philippines had not been making progress in meeting its sixth Millennium Development Goal, which is halting and reversing the spread of the dreaded HIV-AIDS;

WHEREAS, all the necessary ingredients of an epidemic are present in the country: condom use remains low, multiple sexual partners is common, and the prevalence of sexually transmitted infection (STI) is high;

WHEREAS, a concentrated epidemic could easily reach the general population and would be more difficult to control; the human and economic cost of the concentrated epidemic among the key affected populations is already a cause of alarm: for instance, with the current infection rate, around 1,500 Filipinos need to get into anti-retroviral treatment (ART), the therapy that prevents the progress of HIV to AIDS, and this means that the country has to spend at least P45 million each year for the purchase of anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs for their life span;

WHEREAS, by 2015, it is estimated that the number of those who need ART would reach 6,900, which translates to P207 million in ARVs alone annually and a full-blown epidemic would mean an annual cost of P50 billion in ARVs;

WHEREAS, HIV prevention programs, which include HIV education, HIV counseling and testing, diagnostic and treatment of other sexually transmitted infections, and access to safer sex commodities (condoms and lubricants), have limited coverage;

WHEREAS, according to the National Economic Development Authority and the Philippine National AIDS Council, the total resource requirement for a comprehensive HIV and AIDS response will balloon to USD100 million by 2012 and up to USD160 million by 2015;

WHEREAS, a crucial element in the response to halt HIV is scaling up the coverage of prevention programs, which should include providing services to those who belong to the most at-risk populations, or groups or communities that have a greater chance of contracting the HIV infection; these include men who have sex with men, drug abusers, and sex workers;

WHEREAS, the alarming situation of increasing HIV prevalence demands that the government begin owning HIV as a priority that requires the government's urgent response and recognition that the current public spending on HIV and AIDS is severely insufficient;

WHEREFORE, be it hereby resolved by the Philippine Senate, to direct the proper Senate Committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the alarming increase of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infections and the necessity of funding HIV prevention programs to curtail the spread of the concentrated epidemic.

Adopted,


MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO
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