

Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. **3413**



INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVE PM VARGAS

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A REFUGE AND ASSISTANCE CENTER FOR YOUNG
PREGNANT WOMEN IN EVERY PROVINCE, CITY, AND MUNICIPALITY
OF THE PHILIPPINES, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR,
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

In the Philippines, there are around 307 births per hour, about 30 of which are born to teenage mothers.¹ This comprises close to 200,000 Filipino teens who get pregnant annually, which has been considered by the Population Commission as a national emergency that requires immediate action. According to a study by the United Nations Population Fund, the Philippines is the only country in Southeast Asia whose teenage pregnancy rates have continued to rise over the past decades.

Meanwhile, the Philippine Statistics Authority's Annual Poverty Indicators Survey shows that youth pregnancy is one of the main reasons for school dropouts, which reached a total of 3.6 million in 2017 where of whom two-thirds are females. The same survey indicates that rural communities are particularly affected, with 30 percent more teenage mothers.

Conceiving at a young age poses critical health risks to both the mother and her unborn child. The stigma against sexual and reproductive health education has been critical in the prevalent lack of information available for adolescents to further protect their sexual health. This misinformation and lack of guidance have led to inadequate nutrition, complications, premature

¹ Philippine Statistics Authority. 2022 <https://psa.gov.ph/content/registered-live-births-philippines-2020> (Accessed on October 26, 2022)

birth, and fetal and maternal deaths.

Among the many problems linked with adolescent pregnancy, teenage mothers are also more likely to experience lifelong social and economic disadvantages due to limited educational and career opportunities.² Despite efforts to institutionalize sexual and reproductive health through Republic Act No. 10354 or the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012, much work remains to be done, especially in providing equitable and accessible sexual and reproductive health services to our communities.

This bill seeks to establish a Refuge and Assistance Center for Young Pregnant Women in every city, municipality, and province of the country, which will ensure the protection of young mothers' holistic welfare to empower them to build successful lives for themselves and their children and be productive contributors to the country's development. Under this proposed measure, medical assistance, guidance and counseling, and livelihood generation will be provided to expectant young mothers.

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



REP. PM VARGAS

Fifth District, Quezon City

² De Velasco, Monroy.1982. "Consequences of early childbearing"
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12264602/> Accessed on October 27, 2022

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

SECTION 1. Short Title. - This act shall be known as the “*Young Women’s Refuge and Assistance Center Act.*”

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. - It is hereby declared the policy of the State to value the dignity of young women and recognize their fundamental role in nation-building. Towards this end, the State shall protect and promote the physical, moral, and social well-being of young women by providing them with the facilities and opportunities that will enhance their welfare and assist them in their endeavors with the goal of helping them realize their full potential in the service of the nation.

SECTION 3. Establishment of Refuge and Assistance Centers. – There shall be established a Refuge and Assistance Center for Young Pregnant Women (hereinafter referred to as the “Centers”) in every province, city, and municipality all over the country.

SECTION 4. Beneficiaries. – The beneficiaries of this law shall include all young women who are twenty-one (21) years of age and below who are pregnant or have suffered a miscarriage, and their children.

SECTION 5. Refuge and Assistance Center. – The Center shall be under the management and supervision of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in coordination and assistance with the Department of Health (DOH).

The Center shall be headed by a Director who shall be appointed by the President of the Republic of the Philippines.

The Director of the Center shall hold a Master's or Doctorate degree in Social Work or Community Development or similar courses and shall have a minimum experience of five (5) years in counselling, social and psychological services, and other related field or experience.

Each Center shall have the following personnel: (a) at least one doctor; (b) at least one midwife, and (c) such other personnel necessary to provide assistance to the beneficiaries of this act.

SECTION 6. *Functions of the Centers.* - The Centers shall have the following functions:

- (a) To provide temporary shelter and refuge to beneficiaries of this act;
- (b) To provide free medical assistance, including monthly pre-natal checkup or such other care for young women to prevent potentials risks from child-bearing. And all other medical services for childbirth and delivery, and provide them prenatal vitamins and medication;
- (c) To undertake programs geared towards the development of skills for livelihood generation, social communication, and other related skills which will help women and children to become productive members of society; and
- (d) To perform other functions as may be necessary to carry out the objectives of this Act.

SECTION 7. *Rehabilitation and Development Program.* - The DSWD in coordination with the DOH shall, within ninety (90) days from the approval of this Act, formulate a program for the rehabilitation, development, and protection of young women and children.

SECTION 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* - The DSWD in coordination with the DOH shall, issue the necessary implementing rules and regulations within six (6) months from the approval of this Act.

SECTION 9. *Funding and Appropriations.* - The amount necessary for effective implementation of this Act shall be charged to the appropriations for the DSWD under the current General Appropriations Act. Thereafter, such sum as may be necessary for the continued operation and maintenance of the Centers shall be included in the regular appropriations for the DSWD in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SECTION 10. *Non-Impairment Clause.* - Nothing in this Act shall be construed as to diminish, impair, or repeal rights recognized, granted, or made available to disadvantaged, marginalized, or specific sectors under existing laws.

SECTION 11. *Separability Clause.* – If, for any reason, any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, parts or provisions of this Act which are not affected shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SECTION 12. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, executive orders, presidential decrees, Implementing Rules and Regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 13. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,