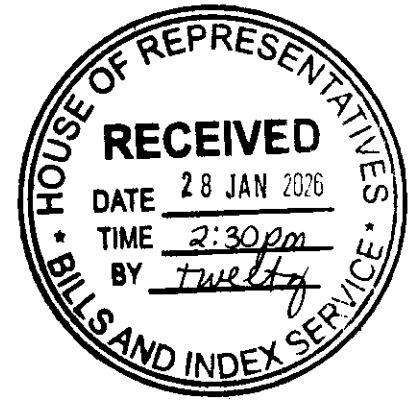


Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
Quezon City, Metro Manila

**TWENTIETH CONGRESS**  
*First Regular Session*



HOUSE BILL NO. 7468

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**Introduced by Representative JB BERNOS  
and Representative CHING BERNOS**

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**AN ACT ESTABLISHING CHILD ADVOCACY CENTERS IN EVERY CITY AND  
MUNICIPALITY, INSTITUTIONALIZING A CHILD-FRIENDLY AND  
MULTI-DISCIPLINARY RESPONSE SYSTEM FOR CASES OF CHILD ABUSE,  
NEGLECT, AND EXPLOITATION, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

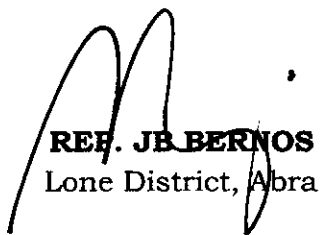
The Constitution mandates the State to defend the rights of children and to promote their welfare at all times. Article XV, Section 3(2) of the 1987 Constitution expressly provides that the State shall defend the right of children to assistance, including proper care and nutrition, and special protection from all forms of neglect, abuse, cruelty, exploitation, and other conditions prejudicial to their development.

Over the years, Congress has enacted landmark laws to protect children, including Republic Act No. 7610 or the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act, Republic Act No. 9344 as amended by Republic Act No. 10630 or the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act, and Republic Act No. 8505 or the Rape Victim Assistance and Protection Act. These laws provide substantive rights, define offenses, and assign responsibilities to government agencies. However, despite the existence of these legal protections, the handling of child abuse and neglect cases on the ground remains fragmented. Child victims are often required to recount their experiences multiple times to different authorities: barangay officials, police investigators, social workers, prosecutors, and medical personnel, resulting in further trauma and emotional distress. Coordination among agencies is inconsistent, and the availability of child-friendly facilities varies widely across local government units. Republic Act No. 8505 mandates the establishment of rape crisis centers, but its scope is limited primarily to sexual assault cases. There is currently no national law that institutionalizes a comprehensive, multidisciplinary Child Advocacy Center system that addresses all forms of child abuse and neglect through an integrated, child-sensitive, and victim-centered approach.

This measure seeks to address that gap by establishing Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) in every city and municipality. These centers shall serve as dedicated, child-friendly facilities where investigation, medical examination, psychosocial intervention, legal coordination, and case management are conducted through a unified and trauma-informed process. By bringing together social workers, law enforcement, medical professionals, prosecutors, and child protection specialists, the proposed system minimizes re-victimization while strengthening accountability and case resolution.

The establishment of Child Advocacy Centers ensures that child protection laws are compassionate in implementation. It shifts the system from one that unintentionally retraumatizes victims to one that prioritizes healing, dignity, and the best interests of the child.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this measure is earnestly sought.



**REP. JB BERNOS**  
Lone District, Abra



**REP. CHING B. BERNOS**  
SOLID NORTH Party-List

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NEGLECT, AND EXPLOITATION, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

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

**SECTION 1. Short Title.** – This Act shall be known as the “Child Advocacy Centers Act.”

**SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy.** – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to uphold the best interests of the child and to ensure immediate, coordinated, and child-sensitive responses to cases of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The State shall institutionalize a multidisciplinary system that protects child victims from further trauma while ensuring effective investigation, intervention, and access to justice.

**SEC. 3. Definition of Terms.** – For the purpose of this Act, the following terms are defined:

- (a) Child – refers to any person below eighteen (18) years of age;
- (b) Child Advocacy Center (CAC) – refers to a child-friendly facility that provides coordinated services for child victims of abuse, neglect, or exploitation through a multidisciplinary team; and
- (c) Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) – refers to a group composed of social workers, law enforcement officers, medical professionals, prosecutors, and other trained personnel responsible for handling child abuse cases in a coordinated manner.

**SEC. 4. Establishment of Child Advocacy Centers.** – There shall be established a Child Advocacy Center in every city and municipality in the Philippines. Each CAC shall serve as the primary venue for the reporting, assessment, interview, medical examination, psychosocial intervention, referral, and case coordination involving child abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

**SEC. 5. Scope of Cases.** – Child Advocacy Centers shall handle, but not be limited to, the following cases:

- (a) Physical abuse;
- (b) Sexual abuse and exploitation;
- (c) Psychological or emotional abuse;
- (d) Neglect and abandonment;
- (e) Online sexual abuse and exploitation of children; and
- (f) Other acts punishable under child protection laws.

**SEC. 6. Functions of Child Advocacy Centers.** – Each CAC shall:

- (a) Provide a child-friendly environment for forensic interviews;
- (b) Facilitate medical and psychological assessment;
- (c) Coordinate investigation among concerned agencies;
- (d) Ensure immediate protective intervention and referral;
- (e) Assist in case documentation and monitoring; and
- (f) Support the child throughout legal proceedings when necessary.

**SEC. 7. Composition of the Multidisciplinary Team.** – The MDT shall include representatives from:

- (a) Department of Social Welfare and Development;
- (b) Philippine National Police – Women and Children Protection Desks;
- (c) Department of Health or government hospitals;
- (d) (d) Department of Justice or Office of the Prosecutor;
- (e) (e) Local government social welfare office; and
- (f) (f) Other agencies, as may be necessary.

**SEC. 8. Role of the Department of Social Welfare and Development.** – The DSWD shall serve as the lead agency for policy coordination, standards setting, and technical supervision of Child Advocacy Centers nationwide.

**SEC. 9. Appropriations.** – The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current appropriations of the Department of Social Welfare and Development. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act. Local government units may provide counterpart funding and facilities.

**SEC. 10. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** – Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and

Development, in consultation with the Department of Justice, Department of Health, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Philippine National Police, and other concerned agencies, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the implementation of this Act..

**SEC. 11. Separability Clause.** – If any portions or provisions of this Act are declared unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining portions or provisions not otherwise affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

**SEC. 12. Repealing Clause.** – All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, memoranda, circulars, and other issuances, or parts thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

**SEC. 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,