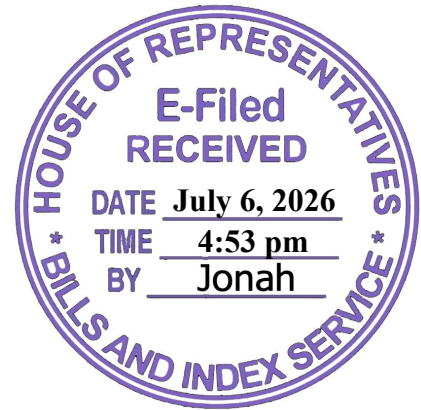


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **10017**



Introduced by REP. YSABEL MARIA J. ZAMORA

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Section 14, Article II of the 1987 Constitution declares that the State shall recognize the vital role of women in nation-building and ensure fundamental equality before the law of women and men. Guided by this constitutional mandate, the Philippines has progressively built a robust legal and policy framework to advance gender equality and women's empowerment, anchored on landmark legislation such as Republic Act No. 7192¹, Republic Act No. 9710², Republic Act No. 11313³, alongside its commitments under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Beijing Platform for Action.

The Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) serves as the government's primary policy-making and coordinating body on women's rights, gender equality, and women's empowerment. As the national machinery for gender equality, the Commission leads national policy development, coordinates government-wide implementation of gender equality programs, and serves as the central institution responsible for advancing the State's commitments to women's rights and empowerment.

Yet, despite the significant expansion of its mandate over the past five decades, **the Commission's institutional structure, powers, and resources have remained largely unchanged.** The result is a growing misalignment between the State's expanding gender equality commitments and the institutional capacity required to effectively implement them.

When the Commission was established in 1975 through Presidential Decree No. 633, **its functions were primarily centered on policy advocacy, coordination, information generation, and promoting women's participation in development.** During this period, the regulatory and organizational framework for gender-related rights was far more restricted, characterized by **fewer systems for accountability and a more limited scope of government responsibilities.**

¹ Women in Development and Nation-Building Act.

² The Magna Carta of Women.

³ Safe Spaces Act.

In 2025, the nation marked the 50th anniversary of the creation of the PCW. This milestone presents an important opportunity not merely to commemorate the Commission's historic contributions, but to modernize and strengthen the country's national gender equality machinery so that it remains capable of responding effectively to present realities and future challenges confronting Filipino women.

Five decades after PCW's creation, the institutional environment surrounding gender equality governance has evolved significantly, requiring a stronger and more empowered Commission.

The enactment of Republic Act No. 9710 or the Magna Carta of Women fundamentally transformed gender equality from a policy objective into a legally enforceable obligation of the State. As a result, the Commission's responsibilities expanded significantly, requiring it to ensure that government institutions nationwide integrate women's rights standards into laws, policies, programs, and public institutions in ways that did not exist when the Commission's current structure was originally conceived.

Equally important, the challenges confronting Filipino women have become increasingly complex and urgent. Despite significant progress in women's rights and participation, women continue to face persistent discrimination arising from gender-based violence, trafficking, economic inequality, workplace discrimination, unequal care responsibilities, digital exclusion, online harassment, conflict-related vulnerabilities, and intersecting forms of discrimination affecting women from marginalized sectors.

Likewise concerning is the persistence of misogyny and gender-based discrimination in public discourse itself. In recent years, the country has witnessed repeated instances of misogynistic remarks, sexist rhetoric, degrading public statements, and harmful gender stereotypes being perpetuated by public officials and other public figures. **Left unaddressed, these acts erode the State's constitutional commitment to uphold the dignity of women and guarantee substantive equality in both law and practice.**

The PCW, despite being the government's lead agency for promoting and protecting gender equality, **currently lacks sufficient statutory authority to independently initiate formal fact-finding inquiries, examine systemic or recurring acts of gender-based discrimination affecting women in public life, gather relevant information and documentation, and issue formal recommendations to appropriate government agencies or policymakers for responsive action.**

As a result, the PCW is often left unable to act decisively in situations where public conduct, institutional behavior, or emerging patterns of discrimination demand immediate intervention, policy response, or accountability measures. **This widening institutional gap can no longer be ignored.**

This measure seeks to comprehensively strengthen and modernize the PCW by aligning its institutional powers and organizational structure with the scale of its present-day responsibilities.

Specifically, this bill seeks to:

- **Reposition the Commission under the Office of the President**, restoring its policy advisory and coordinating role at the highest level of government, recognizing that gender equality is a cross-cutting national development concern requiring whole-of-government coordination and stronger institutional accountability;
- **Strengthen the Commission's policy leadership, oversight, research, and coordination functions** to enable government to respond more effectively to emerging and increasingly complex gender equality challenges;
- **Authorize the Commission to undertake fact-finding and policy inquiries on systemic, recurring, or emerging patterns of discrimination, exclusion, or institutional barriers affecting women, including gaps in the implementation of laws, policies, programs, and services**, and to issue formal findings and recommendations to appropriate government agencies for corrective policy, programmatic, or administrative action, without prejudice to the mandates of the Commission on Human Rights, the Office of the Ombudsman, and other bodies vested by law with investigative or adjudicatory powers;
- **Expand the Commission's presence at the regional and local levels** to strengthen direct engagement with communities, improve localization of gender-responsive programs, and provide more accessible technical support to local government institutions;
- **Institutionalize a national system for gender equality capacity development, research, and knowledge generation** to strengthen evidence-based policymaking and build long-term institutional expertise on emerging gender issues; and
- **Strengthen government-wide institutional mechanisms for gender mainstreaming and accountability** to ensure more effective implementation of programs and public investments dedicated to women's empowerment.

Strengthening the Philippine Commission on Women is not merely an institutional reform — **it is a strategic investment in better governance and more effective public service.** This measure **reinforces whole-of-government policy coherence, strengthens accountability for the use of public resources, improves coordination among national and local institutions, and ensures that laws, policies and international commitments on gender equality are translated into consistent, measurable, and responsive government action.**

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


REP. YSABEL MARIA J. ZAMORA
Lone District, City of San Juan

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 10017

Introduced by REP. YSABEL MARIA J. ZAMORA

**AN ACT STRENGTHENING
THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL WOMEN'S MACHINERY REDEFINING ITS POWERS,
FUNCTIONS, AND STRUCTURE, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES**

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

ARTICLE I

Title, Declaration of Policy, and Objectives

SECTION 1. Short Title. — This Act shall be known as the “Philippine Commission on Women Strengthening Act.”

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy. — It is the policy of the State to recognize and uphold women’s rights as human rights and ensure the substantive equality of women and men before the law. Pursuant to Article II, Section 14 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, the State affirms the role of women in nation-building and shall ensure their fundamental equality before the law.

Pursuant to Republic Act No. 9710, otherwise known as the Magna Carta of Women (MCW), the State recognizes its obligation to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women by respecting, protecting, fulfilling, and promoting the rights of Filipino women, particularly those belonging to marginalized sectors.

The State likewise reaffirms its commitments under the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (UN CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and other global frameworks advancing gender equality and women empowerment (GEWE).

Accordingly, the State shall strengthen the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) as the country’s national women’s machinery and lead entity for the promotion of GEWE in all sectors of society.

SEC. 3. The Philippine Commission on Women. — The Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) is hereby reorganized and strengthened under the Office of the President (OP), hereinafter referred to as the Commission.

The Commission shall serve as the primary policymaking, advisory, coordinating, and oversight body on GEWE. It shall provide strategic direction, facilitate inter-agency coordination, and promote the integration of gender perspectives across all levels of governance and sectors.

The Commission shall also serve as the official national focal point for regional and international cooperation on GEWE, including engagement with multilateral and intergovernmental mechanisms.

SEC. 4. Mandate and Core Functions. — The Commission shall exercise the following core functions:

- a. **Policy Development and Advisory.** Lead the formulation, harmonization, and recommendation of policies, plans, and programs on GEWE;
- b. **Coordination and Oversight.** Ensure alignment, coherence, and convergence of national and local initiatives;
- c. **Monitoring, and Evaluation.** Assess compliance with GEWE-related laws, policies, and commitments;
- d. **Technical Assistance and Capacity Development.** Provide support to agencies, local government units (LGUs), and stakeholders;
- e. **International Representation and Reporting.** Lead the coordination of the State's participation in regional and international GEWE mechanisms and compliance reporting obligations.

The Commission shall further act as the official focal point of the Philippines for the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy (PPWE) - Women and the Economy Forum (WEF), and other regional gender equality frameworks, and shall ensure the mainstreaming and integration of international and regional commitments into national, sectoral, and local development plans, policies, and programs.

In this capacity, it shall lead the monitoring, evaluation, and reporting of the State's compliance with the UN CEDAW, the BPfA, and other international and regional human rights instruments on women and gender equality; and

- f. **Research, Data, and Knowledge Management.** Promote evidence-based policymaking through data, research, and knowledge management systems.

The detailed powers and functions necessary to implement the foregoing shall be provided under Section 6 of this Act.

SEC. 5. Nature and Character of the Commission. — The Commission is hereby strengthened as the national gender equality and women’s rights mechanism, vested with policy leadership in the formulation of GEWE policies, as well as coordination, oversight, monitoring and evaluation, capacity-building, and international representation functions.

In the exercise of its policy leadership, the Commission shall lead in the development, harmonization, and recommendation of national policies, frameworks, standards, and guidelines on GEWE, for consideration and appropriate action by the OP or other competent authorities, while concurrently serving as the primary monitoring and oversight body to ensure compliance and effective implementation of the GFPS Policy across all agencies.

The Commission may issue policy advisories, guidelines, and standards, consistent with existing laws and executive issuances, to ensure the effective and coherent implementation of GEWE-related policies, plans, and programs across national government agencies (NGAs), regional line agencies (RLAs), government-owned or –controlled corporations (GOCCs), state universities and colleges (SUCs), and LGUs.

In relation to LGUs, the exercise of such authority shall be consistent with the principles of local autonomy and in accordance with applicable laws.

All policy issuances of the Commission shall be aligned with the Constitution, existing laws, and the overall policy direction of the OP.

SEC. 6. Expanded Powers of the Commission. — In addition to the powers and functions provided under existing laws, the Commission, shall exercise the following powers and functions:

- a. **Policy Leadership and Standard-Setting.** Formulate, adopt, and issue national policies, frameworks, standards, guidelines, and advisories on GEWE to ensure the effective and harmonized implementation of relevant laws and commitments. The Commission shall review proposed legislation, executive and administrative measures, and provide technical comments, policy recommendations, and official positions on matters affecting women’s rights, gender equality, and women’s empowerment.
- b. **Oversight and Policy Coordination.** Exercise technical oversight and policy coordination over NGAs, RLAs, GOCCs, SUCs, LGUs, and other government instrumentalities for purposes of gender mainstreaming. For this purpose, the Commission shall:
 - i. Convene and lead inter-agency and multi-sectoral coordination mechanisms on GEWE;
 - ii. Require the designation and maintenance of functional Gender and Development Focal Point Systems (GFPS) in all agencies and instrumentalities; and
 - iii. Issue standards, indicators, and guidance to ensure the functionality, effectiveness, and sustainability of GFPS as institutional mechanism for gender mainstreaming.

- c. **Monitoring, Reporting, and Compliance.** Monitor, assess, and evaluate compliance of covered agencies and instrumentalities with GEWE-related laws, policies, standards, and commitments. For this purpose, the Commission shall:
- i. Require the submission of gender-related plans, programs, budgets, accomplishment reports, and relevant data, including, but not limited to, Gender and Development (GAD) Plans and Budgets (GPB), GAD Accomplishment Reports (GAD AR), GAD Agenda, and other agency or sectoral plans integrating GEWE concerns, as may be necessary for monitoring and evaluation purposes;
 - ii. Serve as the primary oversight and support body for Gender Focal Point Systems (GFPS) by monitoring compliance, maintaining a national database, providing capacity-building technical assistance, and incentivizing high-performing agencies;
 - iii. Issue findings, policy advisories, and recommendations to concerned agencies; and
 - iv. Require agencies to submit written responses and time-bound action or corrective plans.

Provided, That these monitoring and review functions shall be exercised without audit authority, and without prejudice to the powers of the Commission on Audit (COA), the Civil Service Commission (CSC), the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM).

- d. **Fact-Finding and Assessment.** Conduct fact-finding inquiries, assessments, and reviews, motu proprio or upon receipt of information or complaints, on acts, omissions, policies, programs, or practices of covered government agencies and instrumentalities, and where relevant to the implementation of gender equality and women empowerment laws and standards, private entities, for the limited purpose of determining compliance with applicable GEWE laws, policies, and standards.

For this purpose, the Commission may require the submission of relevant documents, data, and information, and invite responsible officials, officers, or staff to provide clarifications: *Provided,* That such requests to private entities shall be limited to information relevant to compliance and shall be subject to applicable laws on due process, data privacy, and confidentiality.

Where findings indicate possible violations of applicable laws or standards, the Commission shall refer the matter, together with its findings, to the appropriate authority having jurisdiction.

Provided, That nothing in this Act shall be construed as granting the Commission adjudicatory, prosecutorial, regulatory, or punitive powers, nor as diminishing the exclusive mandates of the courts, the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), the Office of the Ombudsman, the CSC, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), or other constitutionally or statutorily mandated bodies.

- e. **Gender and Development Planning and Budgeting Oversight.** Provide policy oversight and technical guidance on GAD planning and budgeting processes, in coordination with the DBM, the DILG, the COA, and other oversight agencies, to ensure alignment with GEWE priorities and standards.
- f. **Technical Assistance and Capacity Development.** Provide or mobilize technical assistance, capacity-building, and knowledge support to government agencies, LGUs, and other stakeholders to strengthen gender mainstreaming and implementation.
- g. **Public Information, Advocacy, and Strategic Communications.** Develop, lead, and implement a national public information, advocacy, and strategic communications agenda on GEWE; design and disseminate gender-responsive information, education, and communication materials; and conduct advocacy campaigns to promote public awareness, positive social norms, and support for women's human rights, gender equality, and the elimination of all forms of discrimination and VAW, in coordination with relevant agencies, media, educational institutions, and other stakeholders.
- h. **Empowerment and Engagement of Women's Organizations.** Strengthen the capacity, participation, and leadership of women's organizations, women's rights organizations, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders in governance and development processes. For this purpose, the Commission shall establish and institutionalize consultative and participatory mechanisms to ensure their meaningful involvement in the formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of GEWE policies, plans, and programs, and facilitate access to technical assistance, information, and resource-linkaging.
- i. **Research, Data, and Knowledge Management.** The Commission shall promote the generation, analysis, utilization, and dissemination of gender-responsive data, research, and knowledge products to support evidence-based policymaking, planning, monitoring, and evaluation on GEWE. For this purpose, the Commission shall:
 - i. Establish and oversee the GAD Training and Research Institute (GTRI) as the technical arm responsible for the implementation of research, data, and knowledge management functions;
 - ii. Coordinate with the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) and other relevant agencies to issue policy standards, frameworks, and indicators for gender statistics, ensuring methodological consistency and avoiding duplication of authority;
 - iii. Commission or undertake research studies on accomplishments, gender gaps, and emerging issues affecting women and marginalized groups;
 - iv. Develop and maintain knowledge management systems to store, organize, and make accessible research outputs, best practices, lessons learned, and evidence for policymakers, NGAs, LGUs, CSOs, and the public; and

- v. Utilize gender-responsive evidence to inform policy recommendations, program design, monitoring, evaluation, advocacy, and reporting, including for national, regional, and international obligations.

Provided, That nothing in this section shall be construed as granting the Commission powers to collect official statistics or exercise functions reserved by law to the PSA.

- j. **Accreditation and Certification of Persons, Institutions, and Programs.** The Commission may develop and implement a system for the accreditation and certification of programs, institutions, and service providers engaged in GEWE training, capacity-building, and technical assistance, for the purpose of ensuring adherence to national standards on GAD and GEWE. Such accreditation and certification shall be limited to GEWE-related programs and standards and shall not include professional licensing, regulation, or functions vested in other government agencies.
- k. **International and Regional Representation.** The Commission shall coordinate and ensure the meaningful participation and representation of the Philippines in global, multilateral, regional, and bilateral fora, dialogues, negotiations, and conferences relating to GEWE, including, but not limited to, the United Nations (UN) Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the UN Commission on the Status of Women (UN CSW), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). In this capacity, the Commission shall:
 - i. Lead the formulation of national positions, statements, reports, and follow-through on international and regional commitments, treaties, and agreements;
 - ii. Coordinate with relevant government agencies, instrumentalities, and other stakeholders to ensure unified and coherent positions; and
 - iii. Promote the integration of GEWE principles and commitments into national development plans, local policies, development cooperation, foreign policy, and international engagements.

SEC 7. Nature of Investigatory, Monitoring, and Compliance Functions. — The investigatory, monitoring, and compliance functions of the Commission shall be non-adjudicatory in nature and shall be exercised solely for the purpose of policy oversight, assessment of compliance, and formulation of recommendations.

In the exercise of such functions, the Commission may conduct fact-finding inquiries, request the submission of relevant documents, data, and information, and invite concerned officials or entities to provide clarifications, in accordance with due process and applicable laws.

The findings, reports, and issuances of the Commission shall be recommendatory and advisory, and shall not have the force and effect of judicial or quasi-judicial determinations.

- a. **Referral and Coordination.** Where the Commission’s findings indicate possible violations of laws, rules, or regulations, it shall refer or endorse the matter, together with its findings and recommendations, to the appropriate government agency or body having jurisdiction for investigation, adjudication, or enforcement.

The Commission shall establish and maintain formal coordination mechanisms with relevant oversight and accountability institutions, including the CHR, and the Office of the Ombudsman, to ensure complementarity of mandates, avoid duplication of functions, and promote efficient handling of cases involving gender equality and women’s rights.

- b. **Non-Diminution.** Nothing in this Act shall be construed as conferring upon the Commission adjudicatory, prosecutorial, or disciplinary powers, nor as diminishing or impairing the constitutionally and statutorily vested powers and functions of the CHR, the Office of the Ombudsman, the Civil Service Commission (CSC), the Commission on Audit (COA), the Department of Justice (DOJ), or other competent authorities.

SEC. 8. Composition, Authority, and Advisory Mechanism. — The Commission shall be the principal decision-making and policy recommending body on GEWE.

- a. The Commission Proper. It shall be headed by a Chairperson, serving full-time with the rank and emoluments of Secretary, who shall exercise overall strategic, policy, and representational leadership of the Commission. The Chairperson shall:
 - i. Provide overall direction and policy guidance to the Commission;
 - ii. Lead the formulation, adoption, and coordination of national policies, programs, and initiatives on gender equality and women empowerment;
 - iii. Represent the Commission in high-level national and international fora, inter-agency councils, and multilateral engagements; and
 - iv. Ensure the effective performance of the Commission in accordance with this Act.
- b. The Commission shall be supported by:
 - i. A Vice-Chairperson, serving full-time with the rank and emoluments of Undersecretary, whose role is primarily advisory and coordination-focused. The Vice-Chairperson shall:
 - 1. Assist the Chairperson in coordinating policy and inter-agency engagement, including the work of the Advisory Board and other multi-stakeholder mechanisms;
 - 2. Serve as Chairperson in the temporary absence of the Chairperson; and
 - 3. Facilitate collaboration with government agencies, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders on matters within the Commission’s mandate.

- ii. Three (3) Commissioners, shall serve as full-time members of the Board of Commissioners, with the rank of Undersecretary. The Board shall be headed by the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson, and all members of the Board shall be appointed by the President of the Philippines.

Any person appointed to the Board shall be a natural-born citizen of the Philippines, at least thirty (30) years of age, and of good moral character and standing in the community. In the selection of members of the Board, due consideration shall be given to qualifications that will ensure a multi-sectoral composition and a broad range of expertise in gender equality and women's empowerment. At least one (1) member of the Board shall be a member of the Philippine Bar. The remaining members of the Board, other than the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson, shall come from the policymaking or women's development sector.

- 1. Compensation of the Members of the Board of Commissioners. For the performance of their functions and responsibilities, the Commissioners shall receive compensation, allowances, and other benefits equivalent to those of an Undersecretary, in accordance with existing laws, rules, and regulations.
- iii. An Executive Director, with the rank and emoluments of Assistant Secretary, who shall serve as the chief operating officer of the Commission and secretariat of the Board of Commissioners. The Executive Director shall:
 - 1. Manage the day-to-day operations of the Commission and oversee its offices, staff, and programs;
 - 2. Implement policies, programs, and decisions issued by the Chairperson and the Commission;
 - 3. Ensure effective internal coordination among technical and administrative units, including international affairs; and
 - 4. Support the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson in the execution of their respective duties.
- iv. Three (3) Deputy Executive Directors, who shall assist the Executive Director in the management of specific clusters or portfolios of the Commission.
- v. Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Advisory Board. A GEWE Advisory Board is hereby constituted, with the heads of the following government agencies serving as ex-officio members of the Commission's GEWE Advisory Board:
 - 1. Secretary of the Department of Agriculture (DA);
 - 2. Secretary of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM);
 - 3. Secretary of the Department of Economy, Planning, and Development (DEPDev);

4. Secretary of the Department of Education (DepEd);
5. Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR);
6. Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA);
7. Secretary of the Department of Health (DOH);
8. Secretary of the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT);
9. Secretary of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG);
10. Secretary of the Department of Justice (DOJ);
11. Secretary of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE);
12. Secretary of the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW);
13. Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD);
14. Secretary of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI);
15. Secretary of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST); and
16. Chairperson of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP).

Other relevant agencies may be invited to participate in specific sessions when matters within their mandates are discussed.

Heads of agencies may designate permanent alternates, with a rank not lower than Assistant Secretary, to represent them during meetings and official functions, provided such designation is submitted in writing to the Commission.

The Advisory Board shall not exercise decision-making, regulatory, or supervisory authority over the Commission, and its recommendations shall be non-binding. The Commission may convene the Advisory Board as necessary and may adopt internal rules to govern its proceedings.

- vi. **Civil Society Members.** The Commission shall further be composed of 6 (six) members from civil society representing the diversity and intersectionality of women in the Philippines. Civil society members represent constituencies or advocacy sectors and do not duplicate seats allocated to government agencies. Specifically, the civil society members shall represent:

1. Professionals and Academe;
2. National Council of Women in the Philippines;
3. Women's Human Rights and Feminist Advocacy Groups;
4. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual, and more (LGBTQIA+) Groups; and
5. Other women in vulnerable populations (Urban Poor, Persons with Disability, Women in Especially Difficult Circumstances (WEDCs), etc.)

Civil society members shall:

1. Serve co-terminous with the Chairperson, or until expiration of their term;
2. Participate in Commission deliberations and provide policy inputs;
3. Represent sectoral perspectives in the formulation, monitoring, and evaluation of GEWE policies and programs;
4. Represent the Commission in national and international fora, inter-agency councils, and multilateral engagements;
5. Perform such other functions as may be assigned by the Commission consistent with this Act; and
6. Receive a fixed honorarium, in accordance with DBM guidelines, for every PCW-related engagements and/or activities undertaken in connection with their functions, chargeable against the funds of the Commission subject to applicable laws, policies, rules and regulations.

Upon the effectivity of this Act or upon assumption of a new Chairperson, existing civil society members may continue in a holdover capacity solely to ensure continuity of ongoing programs and institutional reforms, without prejudice to the authority of the new President to appoint or replace co-terminus officials.

SEC. 9. Organizational Structure and Staffing. — The Chairperson of the Commission shall determine the organizational structure and staffing pattern of the Commission in accordance with the revised compensation and position classification system, subject to the evaluation and approval of the DBM, and in compliance with the Civil Service laws, rules and regulations, and other relevant laws.

The Commission shall submit the proposed revised organizational structure and staffing pattern to the DBM within ninety (90) days from the date of effectivity of this Act. The DBM shall complete its evaluation and act thereon within ninety (90) days from receipt of complete documentary requirements, unless extended for justifiable reasons, in accordance with applicable laws, rules, and regulations.

Pending the submission, evaluation, and approval by the DBM of the revised organizational structure and staffing pattern, the Commission shall continue to operate under its existing organizational structure and staffing complement, without prejudice to actions necessary for the uninterrupted performance of its functions.

SEC. 10. Gender and Development Training and Research Institute. — A GTRI is hereby established under the Commission to strengthen gender mainstreaming efforts through capacity-building, policy research, and knowledge management. The institute shall:

- a. Develop and implement training programs on GEWE and gender-responsive governance for government agencies, regional GAD mechanisms, local government units, and other stakeholders;
- b. Conduct policy research and studies to support evidence-based decision-making and enhance the implementation of GAD programs;

- c. Serve as a knowledge hub by maintaining a repository of best practices, case studies, and gender-related resources for policymakers, educators, students, and advocates; and
- d. Forge partnerships with academic institutions, civil society organizations, international bodies, and other relevant mechanisms to advance gender-responsive research, innovations and capacity building programs.

The DBM shall ensure that funding and staffing requirements for the establishment and operations of the Institute is appropriately allocated in accordance with government budgeting policies and aligned with national priorities on gender and development. Subject to existing government regulations, the Institute may also secure funding from external grants, and other applicable sources, including registration fees for capacity building and financial support to research projects.

SEC. 11. PCW Regional Offices. To ensure inclusive, responsive, and accessible delivery of GEWE services nationwide, the Commission shall establish and maintain five (5) regional offices, as follows:

- a. North Luzon Regional Office – covering Regions I, II, III, and the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR)
- b. South Luzon Regional Office – covering Regions IV-A, IV-B, V, and the National Capital Region (NCR)
- c. Visayas Regional Office – covering Regions VI, VII, VIII, and the Negros Island Region (NIR)
- d. North Mindanao Regional Office – covering Regions IX, X, and Caraga
- e. South Mindanao Regional Office – covering Regions XI and XII

Each PCW Regional Office shall be headed by a Regional Director with Salary Grade of Director II assisted by an Assistant Regional Director with Salary Grade of Director I, who shall exercise leadership over the office and discharge, as appropriate, the functions of the Commission at the regional level.

The PCW Regional Offices shall have the following functions:

- i. **Technical and Coordination Support.** Provide technical, coordination, and secretariat assistance to relevant regional and local inter-agency mechanisms, councils, and committees on GAD, VAW, and related concerns, as may be designated by law or policy;
- ii. **Capacity-Building and Stakeholder Engagement.** Deliver technical assistance, capacity-building, and coordination support to regional development partners, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders, consistent with the Commission's mandate and functions;
- iii. **Regional Implementation.** Support the monitoring, reporting, and evaluation of GEWE programs, policies, and standards at the regional level, ensuring alignment with national directives;

- iv. **Knowledge and Best Practices.** Facilitate the dissemination of GEWE standards, guidelines, and best practices, and serve as a conduit for regional feedback to the national Commission; and
- v. Perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Commission to effectively carry out its mandates.

SECTION 12. Institutionalization of Gender and Development (GAD) Positions. All NGAs, GOCCs, RLAs, including local water districts (LWDs), SUCs, and LGUs shall establish GAD positions to support the effective implementation and institutionalization of gender mainstreaming efforts.

The establishment of such positions shall be undertaken in a phased manner, taking into consideration the size, mandate, capacity, and resource availability of the concerned agency or LGU, and shall be subject to the guidelines issued by the Commission, in coordination with the CSC and the DBM.

At a minimum, each covered agency or LGU shall establish at least one (1) plantilla GAD position or its functional equivalent: Provided, That larger agencies, GOCCs, SUCs, and LGUs shall establish additional positions commensurate to their size, budget, and scope of operations, as may be determined by the DBM in coordination with the Commission and the CSC.

The permanent GAD positions shall be distinct from the GFPS, but may serve as members of the GFPS Technical Working Group (TWG), as provided under the MCW.

To ensure adequate authority and effectiveness, each agency shall establish the permanent GAD positions at a rank and salary grade determined in accordance with existing civil service and budgetary laws, rules, and regulations. Where more than one (1) plantilla position is created for this purpose, at least one (1) position shall be at a professional or supervisory level, with the corresponding salary grade prescribed by the DBM, taking into account the size, mandate, and organizational structure of the agency or LGU.

The CSC, in coordination with the DBM and the Commission, shall prescribe the qualification standards, competency framework, and minimum training requirements for GAD positions, including mandatory training on GEWE, gender mainstreaming, gender-responsive planning and budgeting, and relevant laws, policies, and international commitments.

SECTION 13. Compliance, Administrative Accountability, and Referral Mechanism. —

- a. **Prima Facie Evidence of Non-Compliance.** The findings, reports, and recommendations of the Commission shall constitute prima facie evidence of non-compliance or violation of GEWE laws, policies, directives, or standards. Such findings may serve as the basis for referral or endorsement to the appropriate administrative, disciplinary, or prosecutorial authority having jurisdiction over the concerned agency, official, or staff.

- b. **Non-compliance with PCW Directives.** Any public officer, employee, or responsible person who, without lawful justification, fails or refuses to comply with policies, orders, directives, or corrective measures duly issued by the PCW, in the exercise of its mandate, shall be subject to appropriate administrative proceedings in accordance with existing laws, rules, and regulations. Such non-compliance shall include, but shall not be limited to, the following acts or omissions:
- i. Failure to prepare and submit GAD Plans and Budgets, GAD Accomplishment Reports, gender audit results, or other reports required under law, rule, or regulation;
 - ii. Failure to establish, fill, or maintain the required permanent GAD Focal Person plantilla positions;
 - iii. Refusal to allocate, or the misuse, diversion, or improper utilization of GAD budget funds, in violation of existing budgeting, accounting, or auditing laws and rules;
 - iv. Disregard of PCW gender audit findings, compliance directives, or corrective measures;
 - v. Failure or refusal to grant access to records, documents, facilities, premises, or data lawfully required for monitoring, audit, evaluation, or compliance verification; and
 - vi. Any other act or omission which materially delays, obstructs, or defeats the implementation of laws, policies, or programs on GEWE.
- c. **Obstruction of Investigations.** Any act that directly or indirectly obstructs, impedes, or frustrates PCW investigations, monitoring, or compliance proceedings shall constitute obstruction, including but not limited to:
- i. Refusal or unjustified failure to cooperate in lawful investigation or compliance processes;
 - ii. Deliberate withholding, destruction, alteration, falsification, concealment, or tampering of documents, records, or electronic data relevant to an inquiry;
 - iii. Intimidation, coercion, harassment, reprisal, retaliation, or threats against complainants, witnesses, whistleblowers, or investigators;
 - iv. Knowingly making false statements or submitting false, incomplete, or misleading information;
 - v. Preventing or restricting lawful access to premises, facilities, information systems, or evidence; and
 - vi. Any act intended to compromise the integrity of evidence, fact-finding, or case documentation.
- d. **Referral to Proper Authorities.** The Commission shall not exercise disciplinary or adjudicatory powers. Where non-compliance or violations are established based on its monitoring, fact-finding, or assessment functions, the Commission shall formally refer or endorse the matter, together with its findings and recommendations, to the appropriate authority, including but not limited to the CHR, CSC, the DILG, the COA, the Office of the

Ombudsman, or other competent bodies, for investigation and disposition in accordance with their respective mandates.

- e. **Presumption of Responsibility of Agency Heads.** In cases of institutional or systemic non-compliance, the head of the concerned agency or local government unit may be held prima facie responsible, subject to due process and based on substantial evidence, in accordance with applicable civil service and administrative laws. This presumption may be rebutted by demonstrating that the head exercised due diligence, including issuance of directives, allocation of resources, and institution of reasonable monitoring and control mechanisms.
- f. **Administrative and Criminal Liability.** Acts or omissions constituting non-compliance or obstruction under this Section may give rise to administrative, civil, or criminal liability, as may be appropriate, in accordance with existing laws, rules, and regulations. The Commission's findings, reports, and recommendations shall constitute prima facie evidence for purposes of initiating or supporting such proceedings before the appropriate authority.

Criminal liability may attach where non-compliance or obstruction results in, contributes to, or facilitates, as defined and penalized under existing laws, any of the following:

- i. Violations of women's rights under the Magna Carta of Women and related statutes;
 - ii. Gender-based violence, including digital or technology-facilitated violence;
 - iii. Discrimination prohibited under national or local gender equality and non-discrimination laws;
 - iv. Trafficking in persons, exploitation, sexual abuse, or related offenses;
 - v. Violations of data privacy and confidentiality rights affecting women and girls;
 - vi. Gross negligence or willful omission resulting in harm to the life, safety, dignity, liberty, employment, or autonomy of women or girls; and
 - vii. Retaliation, reprisal, or intimidation against whistleblowers, complainants, witnesses, or individuals assisting investigations or enforcement proceedings.
- g. **Referral for Prosecution.** Where the facts disclosed indicate the probable commission of an offense under the Revised Penal Code or special laws, the Commission shall refer or endorse the case, together with its findings, to the appropriate prosecutorial or law enforcement authority for investigation and prosecution.
- h. **Coverage of Liability.** Administrative and criminal liability under this Section shall attach notwithstanding any change in leadership or organizational structure, and may attach to any elective or appointive public official, employee, or responsible person, including uniformed staff, contractual staff, consultants, or service providers engaged by government entities, without prejudice to the liability of the public office or institution concerned under existing laws.

- i. **Due Process and Safeguards.** All proceedings arising from referrals or endorsements made by the Commission shall observe the requirements of due process, including the right to notice, explanation, and opportunity to be heard, in accordance with applicable laws, rules, and regulations.

The Commission's findings and recommendations shall not be considered final or binding determinations of liability, but shall form part of the evidentiary record in the appropriate administrative or judicial proceedings.

SECTION 14. Staff Transition. — No officer or employee of the Commission, or of any office, unit, or program affected by the reorganization under this Act, shall be removed from service, separated, demoted in rank, reassigned to a position with lower responsibilities, or subjected to any diminution of salary, allowances, benefits, privileges, or security of tenure, solely by reason of the structural changes, transfer of supervision, expansion of functions, or creation of new positions and field offices mandated by this Act.

All staff shall retain their current rank, status, compensation, and tenure, and shall be absorbed, transferred, or reassigned in a manner consistent with Civil Service laws, ensuring the full protection of their rights as government workers.

Officers or employees appointed to co-terminus positions shall continue to serve only in a hold-over capacity until such time that a new appointment has been made in accordance with applicable laws. During this period, they shall continue to perform duties necessary to ensure continuity of operations and programs, without prejudice to the authority of the incoming appointee.

Any movement, reassignment, or reclassification shall not prejudice the employee and shall be undertaken only to achieve organizational efficiency, with the employee's consent whenever practicable.

SECTION 15. Appropriations, Transfer of Assets, and Records.

- a. **Appropriations.** The amount necessary to implement the provisions of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriations of the Commission. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for its continued implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA).

The Commission shall be accorded priority funding status to enable the effective discharge of its mandate as the national gender equality and women's rights machinery. The preparation, review, and approval of its annual budget shall take into consideration the scope, scale, and cross-sectoral nature of its functions.

The approved appropriations of the Commission shall be released in a timely and regular manner, subject to existing budgeting, accounting, and auditing laws, rules, and regulations.

No reduction, realignment, or modification of the approved budget of the Commission shall be made in a manner that would materially impair the implementation of its core mandates, except in accordance with law.

Nothing in this Act shall be construed as granting the Commission fiscal autonomy as reserved for constitutional bodies.

b. Custody, Control, and Protection of Assets and Records.

- i. **Custody and Management of Assets.** All assets, equipment, property, facilities, digital infrastructure, and resources of the PCW shall remain under the exclusive management, control, and administration of the Commission, notwithstanding its attachment to the OP.

No asset of the Commission may be realigned, reassigned, disposed of, or utilized by any other office without the express written approval of the PCW Chairperson.

- ii. **Protection and Confidentiality of Records.** All records, documents, case files, digital databases, archives, evidence gathered during investigations, gender compliance reports, and all other information produced or acquired by the Commission shall remain under its exclusive custody, and shall be protected by strict confidentiality and data protection protocols.

Such records shall not be accessed, altered, transferred, or disclosed by any person or office, including those within the OP except in accordance with law or with the written authorization of the PCW Chairperson.

- iii. **Independence of Investigatory and Oversight Records.** Records relating to investigations, audits, monitoring, or enforcement actions shall be immune from external interference. Destruction, alteration, withholding, or unauthorized access to such records shall constitute:

1. an administrative offense (grave misconduct), and
2. when applicable, a criminal offense (obstruction of justice, violation of women's rights, or breach of data privacy).

- iv. **Digital and Data Assets.** All digital platforms, gender databases, AI systems, and data infrastructures developed or used by the Commission shall remain under PCW control. The Commission shall maintain independent servers or secured cloud storage to guarantee integrity, confidentiality, and protection from external interference.

- v. **Continuity and Institutional Memory.** During reorganizations or transitions, no asset, record, or digital file of the Commission shall be transferred, archived, modified, or disposed of without:
1. a written directive from the PCW Chairperson;
 2. audit documentation by COA; and
 3. secure custody procedures consistent with government records laws.

This guarantees preservation of institutional memory and continuity of governance.

SEC. 16. Implementing Rules and Regulations. — Within one hundred twenty (120) days from the approval of the revised organizational structure and staffing pattern under Section 8 of this Act, the PCW, in coordination with the DBM, DILG, CHR, PSA, DEPDev, CSC, COA, and DOJ, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to implement this Act.

SEC. 17. Transitory Provision. — All references to the Commission in existing laws, executive orders, administrative issuances, rules and regulations, contracts, memoranda of agreement, and other official documents shall hereafter be deemed references to the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW). Such references shall not affect the validity, continuity, or enforceability of any rights, obligations, powers, functions, or authorities previously vested in or exercised by the PCW.

SEC. 18. Separability Clause. — If any provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions shall not be affected thereby.

SEC. 19. Repealing Clause. — All laws, presidential decrees or issuances, executive orders, letters of instruction, rules or regulations inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

SEC. 20. Effectivity. — This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,