



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

Twentieth Congress
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 10882



Introduced by Representatives Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez, Yedda Marie K. Romualdez, Andrew Julian K. Romualdez and Jude A. Acidre

AN ACT
STRENGTHENING THE JUSTICE, PROTECTION, AND SUPPORT
SYSTEM FOR VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST
WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN, PROVIDING FOR EXPEDITED
PROTECTION AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE MECHANISMS,
INTEGRATED SURVIVOR SERVICES, CHILD-SENSITIVE AND
TECHNOLOGY-RESPONSIVE PROCEDURES, INTER-AGENCY
COORDINATION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Violence against women and their children remains a serious concern that requires not only strong laws, but also an effective, accessible, and coordinated justice and protection system.

The Philippines has enacted significant legislation addressing violence against women and children which provide important legal remedies and protections. However, the existence of legal remedies does not by itself guarantee meaningful access to justice. Victims and survivors may still encounter delays in obtaining protection, difficulty navigating multiple government agencies, inadequate access to legal and psychosocial services, geographic barriers, lack of specialized personnel, repeated interviews and disclosures, insufficient coordination among service providers, and limited access to assistance outside regular government operating

hours. These difficulties can be particularly severe for women and children in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas, persons with disabilities, persons with limited financial resources, and victims who lack access to reliable transportation, technology, or legal assistance.

The urgency of strengthening the justice and protection system is heightened by the changing nature of violence. Abuse may now extend beyond physical spaces into digital environments through online harassment, cyberstalking, threats, unauthorized dissemination of intimate material, technology-assisted coercion, and other forms of technology-facilitated violence. Children are likewise increasingly exposed to online sexual abuse and exploitation, requiring close coordination between traditional child-protection mechanisms and digital investigation and response systems.

The proposed measure therefore seeks to strengthen the implementation of existing laws without diminishing or duplicating their substantive protections. Rather than creating an entirely separate judicial system, the bill strengthens the existing Family Court and VAWC framework by allowing the Supreme Court, consistent with its constitutional authority, to establish specialized dockets, calendars, or other appropriate mechanisms for the expeditious handling of VAWC-related proceedings.

The bill further establishes mechanisms for expedited protection-order processing and emergency response. In situations involving imminent or continuing danger, victims and survivors should not be required to navigate multiple agencies independently before receiving appropriate assistance. The proposed emergency response mechanism seeks to facilitate coordinated law-enforcement intervention, protection-order assistance, emergency medical and psychosocial services, shelter, transportation, and legal assistance.

The measure also establishes integrated Survivor Support Desks and Survivor Support Coordinators to help victims and survivors navigate available legal, medical, psychological, social welfare, shelter, and other government services. This approach seeks to reduce unnecessary duplication, prevent victims from repeatedly recounting traumatic experiences, and improve continuity of assistance from the initial report through the resolution of the case.

Every victim and survivor should be able to seek protection without having to overcome unnecessary institutional barriers. Through this measure, the State affirms that protection from violence is not merely a statutory promise but a responsibility

that must be supported by functioning institutions, trained personnel, accessible services, accountable agencies, and sustained public investment.

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



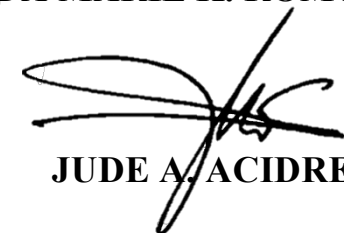
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*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines
in Congress assembled:*

SECTION 1. Short Title. - This Act shall be known as the “VAWC Justice,
Protection, and Survivor Support Strengthening Act.”

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. - It is hereby declared the policy of the State to:

(a) Protect women and children from violence, abuse, exploitation, threats, coercion, intimidation, and other acts that endanger their safety, dignity, liberty, and well-being;

(b) Ensure that victims and survivors have timely, accessible, affordable, gender-responsive, trauma-informed, child-sensitive, and survivor-centered access to justice and protection;

(c) Strengthen the implementation and enforcement of Republic Act No. 9262, otherwise known as the “Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004,” Republic Act No. 8369, otherwise known as the “Family Courts Act of 1997,” Republic Act No. 11313, otherwise known as the “Safe Spaces Act,” Republic Act No. 11930, otherwise known as the “Anti-Online Sexual Abuse or Exploitation of Children and Anti-Child Sexual Abuse or Exploitation Materials Act,” and other applicable laws;

(d) Ensure that the availability of legal remedies does not depend upon a victim's financial capacity, geographic location, technological access, disability, age, or ability to navigate multiple government institutions;

(e) Strengthen coordination among the courts, prosecutors, law enforcement agencies, local government units, social welfare agencies, health institutions, legal aid providers, and other relevant government entities;

(f) Prevent secondary victimization, victim-blaming, intimidation, retaliation, forced settlement, unnecessary repetition of testimony, and unnecessary disclosure of sensitive information;

(g) Ensure that children who are victims or witnesses of violence are afforded procedures consistent with their age, developmental needs, safety, dignity, and best interests; and

(h) Establish measurable standards for the delivery of VAWC-related justice, protection, and support services.

SECTION 3. Definition of Terms. - For purposes of this Act:

(a) “VAWC” refers to violence against women and their children as defined under Republic Act No. 9262 and other applicable laws;

(b) “Covered Case” refers to a criminal, civil, or protection-order proceeding involving violence against women and their children or another gender-based or child-protection offense for which specialized protection, referral, or support services are authorized under existing law;

(c) “Survivor-centered approach” refers to procedures and services that prioritize the safety, dignity, privacy, autonomy, informed participation, and well-being of victims and survivors, while respecting the rights of the accused and the requirements of due process;

(d) “Child-sensitive procedure” refers to a procedure designed to protect a child's safety, dignity, privacy, developmental needs, and best interests and to minimize trauma and unnecessary repetition of interviews or testimony;

(e) “Survivor Support Coordinator” refers to a qualified person designated to facilitate and monitor a victim's or survivor's access to legal, medical, psychosocial, shelter, social welfare, and other appropriate services;

(f) “Emergency VAWC response” refers to immediate protective, medical, psychosocial, legal, and law-enforcement measures undertaken when a victim or survivor faces an imminent or continuing threat of violence or harm;

(g) “Technology-facilitated violence” refers to acts of violence, harassment, stalking, intimidation, coercion, abuse, exploitation, or threats committed or facilitated through digital or electronic means, insofar as such acts are punishable or otherwise actionable under existing law; and

(h) “Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas” or “GIDA” refers to areas identified by the appropriate government agencies as geographically isolated, disadvantaged, or otherwise underserved in terms of access to essential public services.

SECTION 4. Strengthening of Family Courts and Specialized VAWC Dockets.

- The existing Family Court system shall be strengthened to ensure the expeditious and effective disposition of VAWC cases and related proceedings.

The Supreme Court, consistent with its constitutional authority over the judiciary, court administration, and rules of procedure, may designate or establish specialized VAWC dockets, branches, calendars, or other appropriate mechanisms within existing Family Courts or other courts with jurisdiction under existing law.

In determining where specialized mechanisms shall be prioritized, consideration shall be given to:

- (a) Caseload and population;
- (b) Incidence of VAWC and related offenses;
- (c) Geographic accessibility;
- (d) Availability of judges and court personnel;
- (e) Availability of victim-support services; and
- (f) Other factors affecting meaningful access to justice.

Nothing in this section shall be construed as creating a new court or altering the jurisdiction of any court in a manner inconsistent with the Constitution or existing law.

SECTION 5. Specialized Personnel and Mandatory Training. - Judges, prosecutors, public attorneys, clerks of court, law enforcement officers, social workers, health professionals, child-protection personnel, and other government personnel regularly assigned to covered cases shall undergo appropriate initial and continuing training on:

- (a) Gender-responsive and trauma-informed approaches;
- (b) VAWC laws and protection-order procedures;
- (c) Child-sensitive justice;
- (d) Psychological and behavioral effects of trauma;
- (e) Victim and witness protection;
- (f) Prevention of victim-blaming and secondary victimization;
- (g) Cultural and disability sensitivity;
- (h) Digital and technology-facilitated forms of abuse;
- (i) Evidence preservation and handling appropriate to the personnel's functions;
- (j) Confidentiality and data protection; and
- (k) Referral and case-management procedures.

The Philippine Judicial Academy, Department of Justice, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Philippine National Police, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Health, Philippine Commission on Women, and other appropriate agencies shall develop standardized training materials within their respective mandates.

SECTION 6. Expedited Protection-Order Processing. - All applications for protection orders shall be acted upon in accordance with Republic Act No. 9262 and applicable Supreme Court rules, with the objective of ensuring that urgent applications receive action on the date of filing whenever legally and practically possible. For purposes of this Act:

- (a) BPO applications shall continue to be processed in accordance with Republic Act No. 9262 and applicable law;

- (b) TPO and PPO applications shall be given priority by courts having jurisdiction;
- (c) Courts shall maintain procedures for the prompt handling of urgent protection-order applications during court operating hours;
- (d) Appropriate mechanisms shall be established for urgent applications arising outside regular court hours, subject to the Constitution, existing law, and rules of the Supreme Court; and
- (e) Protection orders shall be promptly transmitted to the appropriate law enforcement agencies and other authorized government offices for implementation.

No provision of this Act shall be construed to reduce, delay, or otherwise diminish any protection or relief already available under Republic Act No. 9262.

SECTION 7. Emergency VAWC Response Mechanism. - The DILG, PNP, DSWD, DOJ, DOH, LGUs, and other appropriate agencies shall establish coordinated procedures for responding to cases involving an imminent or continuing threat to the safety of a victim or survivor.

The mechanism shall, as appropriate:

- (a) Receive and immediately assess reports of imminent danger;
- (b) Facilitate immediate law-enforcement intervention;
- (c) Assist the victim or survivor in obtaining an appropriate protection order;
- (d) Facilitate emergency transportation and referral;
- (e) Facilitate access to emergency medical and psychosocial services;
- (f) Facilitate access to temporary shelter or other safe accommodation;

- (g) Assist in the safe retrieval of essential personal belongings when authorized by law;
- (h) Facilitate referral to legal assistance; and
- (i) Establish procedures for continuity of protection when the victim or survivor moves between jurisdictions.

The emergency response mechanism shall operate in accordance with existing laws governing arrest, evidence, due process, confidentiality, and protection orders.

SECTION 8. Survivor Support and Case Coordination. - Every court, government office, or facility designated by the appropriate agency to receive or process covered cases shall, subject to available resources and applicable law, provide access to a Survivor Support Desk or equivalent integrated support mechanism.

The support mechanism shall facilitate access to:

- (a) Legal assistance;
- (b) Social work services;
- (c) Psychological and psychosocial services;
- (d) Medical and reproductive health services, where appropriate;
- (e) Child-protection services;
- (f) Emergency shelter or safe accommodation;
- (g) Transportation assistance where necessary and legally authorized;
- (h) Financial or livelihood assistance available under existing government programs;
- (i) Educational assistance for affected children where available;

- (j) Interpretation and language assistance;
- (k) Disability accommodations; and
- (l) Other services appropriate to the needs and circumstances of the victim or survivor.

A Survivor Support Coordinator may be assigned to facilitate referrals and monitor whether appropriate services have been accessed.

The designation of a coordinator shall not diminish the independent professional duties of lawyers, social workers, medical professionals, prosecutors, or other authorized personnel.

SECTION 9. Survivor Rights. - In addition to rights provided under Republic Act No. 9262 and other applicable laws, victims and survivors shall, to the extent provided by law and consistent with due process, have the right:

- (a) To be treated with dignity, respect, and without discrimination;
- (b) To receive understandable information concerning available remedies and services;
- (c) To access legal assistance and appropriate referral services;
- (d) To reasonable accommodations for disability, age, language, or other circumstances affecting access to justice;
- (e) To reasonable measures protecting privacy and confidentiality;
- (f) To reasonable measures against intimidation, harassment, retaliation, and unnecessary contact with the respondent;

- (g) To avoid unnecessary repetition of statements, interviews, or testimony, consistent with the rights of the accused and applicable rules of evidence and procedure;
- (h) To receive information concerning the status of protection-order proceedings and other proceedings to the extent permitted by law;
- (i) To participate in safety planning;
- (j) To receive appropriate referrals for medical and psychosocial care; and
- (k) To be informed of available mechanisms for reporting violations of protection orders or failures in the delivery of mandated services.

SECTION 10. Protection Against Forced Settlement, Retaliation, and Secondary Victimization. - No public officer, law enforcement officer, barangay official, court personnel, or other person performing a public function shall compel, pressure, intimidate, threaten, or unduly influence a victim or survivor to:

- (a) Withdraw a complaint;
- (b) Abandon or reduce a requested protection order or other lawful remedy;
- (c) Refrain from reporting a violation;
- (d) Enter into an unlawful or otherwise prohibited compromise; or
- (e) Participate in any proceeding or interaction that is prohibited under existing law.

All agencies implementing this Act shall adopt measures to minimize victim-blaming, repeated unnecessary interviews, unnecessary disclosure of traumatic experiences, and other forms of secondary victimization.

Nothing in this section shall impair lawful judicial proceedings, the rights of the accused, or lawful settlement mechanisms in matters where settlement is permitted by law.

SECTION 11. Child-Sensitive Proceedings. - When a victim or witness is a child, agencies and courts shall, consistent with existing law and Supreme Court rules:

- (a) Give primary consideration to the best interests and safety of the child;
- (b) Use age-appropriate language and procedures;
- (c) Minimize unnecessary repetition of interviews and testimony;
- (d) Provide access to appropriate child-protection and psychosocial services;
- (e) Protect the identity and personal information of the child;
- (f) Provide child-sensitive facilities or procedures where practicable;
- (g) Facilitate appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities;
- (h) Avoid unnecessary contact between the child and the alleged offender, consistent with due process and applicable law; and
- (i) Utilize legally authorized alternatives to in-person testimony where appropriate.

Nothing in this section shall be construed to replace or diminish protections already provided under Republic Act No. 8369, Republic Act No. 11930, Republic Act No. 7610, Republic Act No. 9344, as amended, the Rule on Examination of a Child Witness, or other applicable laws and rules.

SECTION 12. Technology-Facilitated Violence Response. - Government agencies implementing this Act shall establish mechanisms for responding to technology-facilitated violence, including, where applicable:

- (a) Cyberstalking and repeated unwanted digital contact;
- (b) Threats involving the release or dissemination of intimate material;
- (c) Unauthorized sharing of intimate or sensitive material;
- (d) Digital impersonation and account-related abuse;
- (e) Technology-assisted monitoring or coercive control;
- (f) Online harassment and threats; and
- (g) Other technology-facilitated acts punishable or actionable under existing law.

The mechanisms under this section shall prioritize victim safety, preservation of relevant evidence, lawful referral, and timely access to available remedies.

Nothing in this section shall create a new criminal offense where the conduct is already governed by another law, unless expressly provided by a subsequent law.

SECTION 13. Digital Filing and Remote Access to Justice. - The Supreme Court, consistent with its constitutional authority and applicable rules, may establish or expand secure digital mechanisms for:

- (a) Filing applications for protection orders;
- (b) Submission and receipt of authorized documents;
- (c) Remote or video-enabled proceedings when appropriate;
- (d) Electronic transmission of protection orders to authorized agencies;
- (e) Secure notification of authorized parties;
- (f) Case-status monitoring for victims and authorized representatives; and

(g) Other measures that improve access to justice without compromising due process.

Digital systems shall incorporate appropriate safeguards for authentication, confidentiality, cybersecurity, accessibility, and data protection.

No victim or survivor shall be denied access to justice solely because of lack of internet access, electronic equipment, digital literacy, disability, or financial capacity.

SECTION 14. Rural and Geographically Isolated Access. - The appropriate government agencies, in coordination with LGUs, shall develop programs to improve access to VAWC-related justice and protection services in GIDAs and underserved communities. Such programs may include:

- (a) Circuit or mobile legal services, where legally authorized;
- (b) Remote legal assistance
- (c) Mobile social-work and psychosocial services;
- (d) Community-based referral systems;
- (e) Transportation assistance for critical proceedings where available;
- (f) Designated access points for digital court and protection-order services;
- (g) Training of local service providers; and
- (h) Other appropriate mechanisms based on local conditions.

No mobile or remote mechanism established under this section shall exercise judicial powers beyond those authorized by the Constitution and existing law.

SECTION 15. Inter-Agency Referral and Case Management. - The DOJ, DSWD, DILG, PNP, DOH, DICT, PCW, CHR, LGUs, and other appropriate agencies shall establish coordinated referral protocols for covered cases. The referral system shall:

- (a) Establish clear responsibilities for receiving, referring, and following up cases;
- (b) Reduce unnecessary duplication of victim interviews and assessments;
- (c) Establish time standards for referrals appropriate to the urgency of the case;
- (d) Facilitate coordination between legal, medical, psychosocial, and social welfare services;
- (e) Establish procedures for continuity of services across jurisdictions;
- (f) Develop mechanisms for monitoring whether referrals have been completed; and
- (g) Maintain confidentiality and comply with applicable data-protection laws.

The referral system shall not authorize the unrestricted sharing of personal information. Information shall be shared only when legally authorized, necessary for a legitimate purpose, and subject to appropriate safeguards.

SECTION 16. Confidentiality and Data Protection. - All agencies implementing this Act shall protect the confidentiality and privacy of victims, survivors, children, witnesses, and other persons whose sensitive information is processed under the system. Systems established under this Act shall, where appropriate:

- (a) Limit collection of personal information to what is necessary;
- (b) Restrict access according to official functions;

- (c) Maintain access and audit logs;
- (d) Apply appropriate security safeguards;
- (e) Establish retention and disposal procedures;
- (f) Protect the locations of shelters and other confidential facilities;
- (g) Establish procedures for responding to unauthorized access or disclosure; and
- (h) Comply with Republic Act No. 10173, otherwise known as the “Data Privacy Act of 2012,” and other applicable privacy and confidentiality laws.

Aggregate statistics published pursuant to this Act shall not contain information that directly or indirectly identifies a victim, child, survivor, witness, or protected person.

SECTION 17. Accountability of Responsible Officers. - Public officers and personnel who willfully or repeatedly fail to perform mandatory duties imposed by this Act or applicable VAWC laws, including duties involving receipt of complaints, protection-order processing, referral, confidentiality, or victim assistance, shall be subject to appropriate administrative proceedings, without prejudice to civil or criminal liability under existing law.

Nothing in this section shall impose administrative liability for actions taken in good faith and in the lawful exercise of official discretion.

The Civil Service Commission, Office of the Ombudsman, appropriate disciplinary authorities, and other authorized bodies shall retain their respective powers under existing law.

SECTION 18. Monitoring and Annual Reporting. - The Supreme Court, DOJ, DSWD, DILG, PNP, DOH, DICT, PCW, and other appropriate agencies shall establish measurable indicators for implementation of this Act within their respective mandates.

Annual reports submitted to Congress shall include, where applicable:

- (a) Number of VAWC and related cases received;
- (b) Number and type of protection orders requested and issued;
- (c) Average time for processing protection-order applications;
- (d) Protection-order service and compliance data;
- (e) Reported violations of protection orders;
- (f) Case disposition and resolution timelines;
- (g) Number of victims and survivors receiving legal, medical, psychosocial, shelter, or social services;
- (h) Training conducted and personnel trained;
- (i) Staffing and resource gaps;
- (j) Geographic disparities in service access;
- (k) Digital and technology-facilitated violence cases referred or assisted;
- (l) Budget allocation and utilization; and
- (m) Recommendations for legislative, administrative, or budgetary reforms.

All publicly released information shall be aggregated and anonymized.

SECTION 19. VAWC Justice and Protection Fund. - A VAWC Justice and Protection Fund is hereby established, subject to existing budgeting, accounting,

auditing, and procurement laws and regulations, to support the implementation of this Act. The Fund may be used for:

- (a) Specialized personnel and training;
- (b) Survivor support services;
- (c) Emergency response and referral mechanisms;
- (d) Digital justice and secure information systems;
- (e) Rural and GIDA access programs;
- (f) Child-sensitive facilities and services;
- (g) Data protection and cybersecurity measures;
- (h) Public information and rights-awareness programs;
- (i) Monitoring and evaluation; and
- (j) Other activities necessary to implement this Act.

The concerned agencies shall include the amounts necessary to implement their respective responsibilities under this Act in their annual budget proposals.

SECTION 20. Implementing Rules and Court Rules. - Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DOJ, DSWD, DILG, DOH, DICT, PCW, PNP, and other concerned executive agencies shall, within their respective mandates, promulgate the rules necessary to implement this Act.

The Supreme Court may promulgate such rules of procedure and administrative measures as may be necessary for the implementation of provisions affecting the courts, consistent with the Constitution and existing law.

The rules shall include appropriate mechanisms for coordination between the judicial and executive branches without impairing judicial independence.

SECTION 21. Non-Derogation and Harmonization with Existing Laws. -

Nothing in this Act shall be construed to repeal, diminish, restrict, or otherwise prejudice any right, remedy, protection, penalty, jurisdiction, duty, or obligation established under Republic Act No. 9262, Republic Act No. 8369, Republic Act No. 9710, Republic Act No. 11313, Republic Act No. 11930, Republic Act No. 7610, Republic Act No. 9344, as amended, Republic Act No. 10173, or any other applicable law.

Where provisions of this Act overlap with existing laws, the provisions shall, whenever possible, be interpreted in a manner that provides the greatest protection consistent with the Constitution and the rights of all parties.

SECTION 22. Separability Clause. - If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 23. Repealing Clause. - All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules, regulations, and other issuances or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

Nothing in this section shall be interpreted to repeal or diminish Republic Act No. 9262 or other protective legislation expressly preserved under Section 21 of this Act.

SECTION 24. Effectivity. - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,