



## **CHR lauds bills seeking accessibility and mobility for PWDs**

By Franco Luna – February 8, 2021

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MANILA, Philippines — The Commission on Human Rights expressed support Monday for pending proposals at the House of Representatives pushing for accessibility and mobility initiatives for persons with disabilities.

This came in response to a number of measures filed by the lower chamber's special committee on PWDs, which also unanimously agreed to consolidate the proposed PWD bills and amend existing laws to address the current day-to-day challenges of PWDs taking public transportation.

In a statement sent to reporters, the CHR said that the move was "a welcome update to ensure that the evolving needs of PWDs in these extraordinary times are addressed."

To recall, the following bills have been approved at the committee level by the House panel on Persons with Disabilities:

- House Bill No. 2224 or the PWD-friendly and Safe Transportation Act
- House Bill No. 2017 or An Act Mandating the Provision of Exclusive Parking Space for Persons with Disability and Penalizing Unauthorized Use Thereof
- House Bill 4596 or An Act to Further Promote the Mobility of Persons with Disability by Mandating Certain Accessibility Facilities and Services

"Daily routines that most people find easy can already pose as huge challenge to PWDs even during normal circumstances. Considering the economic slump and quarantine restrictions, which gravely limited the opportunities and mobility of PWDs, prioritising the welfare and needs of this sector will help ensure that they can cope and will not be left behind," the commission's statement read.

"In particular, it is noteworthy that the envisioned consolidated bill endeavors to focus on greater safety and convenience of the transport system to cater to the special needs of PWDs. Other salient points of the proposed legislation include provision of exclusive parking space; installation of accessibility facilities and services; and designation of service lanes in both public and private offices for the convenience and safety of PWDs," it also said.

Leaders within the disability community often point to accessibility as one of the principal concerns of PWDs: despite the Magna Carta for PWDs mandating accessibility and a "barrier-free environment" for PWDs, members of the disability community today still struggle with accessing basic services such as healthcare, education and transportation, all of which were only amplified by the coronavirus pandemic.

### **No PWD ramps despite law**

In an interview aired over CNN Philippines on the International Day of Disabled Persons 2020 on December 3, National Council for Disability Affairs executive director Emerito Rojas said that despite

laws mandating accessible buildings to PWDs, the basic requirements of ramps, non-skid flooring, signages, toilet and washrooms, and parking slots are still lacking in many buildings and establishments.

Though the last census of the disability community in the country was conducted in 2010, a 2017 study by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies of 1,031 adult women and 823 children with disabilities in two cities found that many respondents were found to be mobility-impaired (39.7%).

"The CHR looks forward to the swift passage of the consolidated law for PWDs to expediently remove the barriers that limit their participation and inclusion in all aspects of social life. As we increasingly transition to the new normal, it is important that PWDs, as well as other disadvantaged sectors, are able to stride forward alongside the rest of the population," the commission also said.