

## **Comments on Senate Bill Nos. 441 and 1582: Proposed Expansion of the Anti-Bullying Act**

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Bullying remains a persistent challenge in Philippine schools and poses serious risks not only to student well-being but also to the country's long-term human capital development. Filipino learners report relatively high levels of bullying compared with students in many other countries.

The PIDS, through its partnership with EDCOM II, has conducted several studies examining the effects of bullying and violence on educational outcomes and long-term development. Research by Senior Research Fellow Dr. Michael Abrigo shows that bullying contributes to measurable learning losses among Filipino students and explains part of the achievement gap between proficient and non-proficient learners. The study estimates that bullying-related learning losses may translate to approximately PHP 10–20 billion in foregone economic activity each year.

Also, PIDS Senior Research Fellow Dr. Val Ulep has estimated the long-term effects of violence on educational outcomes among Filipino adolescents. Related studies likewise highlight the prevalence of SOGIE-related violence among Filipino youth. These findings show that exposure to violence during childhood can have lasting negative implications for educational outcomes and overall development.

PIDS research indicates that bullying is not merely a disciplinary issue within schools but a broader development concern with implications for education, health, and economic productivity. Therefore, PIDS supports the PHL Congress to strengthen policies that protect students and promote safe learning environments.

However, evidence shows that anti-bullying policies are most effective when interventions are grounded in empirical research and implemented through comprehensive school-based strategies. Effective approaches typically combine preventive education, teacher training, confidential

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reporting systems, counseling and behavioral interventions, and broader efforts to improve school climate and student well-being. Policies that rely primarily on surveillance or punitive measures alone have generally shown weaker impacts.

A robust Anti-Bullying Act is therefore an important policy direction. However, policy design and implementation should prioritize interventions that have been demonstrated to be effective through rigorous research. PIDS recommends that relevant government agencies, including the DOH, be involved in identifying and promoting evidence-based interventions that can meaningfully improve student well-being and learning outcomes.

PIDS remains committed to supporting evidence-informed policymaking and stands ready to provide further research and technical assistance to help develop effective strategies that ensure safe and supportive learning environments for Filipino students.

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