



## **STATEMENT OF THE STUDENTS OF THE DIOCESE OF PARANAQUE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS ON THE PROPOSED LOWERING OF THE MINIMUM AGE OF CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY**

We, the student leaders of the Diocese of Paranaque Catholic Schools Association (DOPCASA), are against the House Bill 002 and strongly believe that the minimum age of criminal responsibility should not be lowered to nine years old. Instead, we urge for the strengthening and strict implementation of the Republic Act 9344 also known as Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006, as amended by Republic Act 10630, to preserve and protect the rights of children in conflict with the law (CICL) through delinquency prevention and effective intervention programs. We present the following points collated from the reflection sessions of the Student-Leaders' Forum Against the Lowering of the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility:

- Placing children in jail is the opposite of rehabilitation. It distracts us from the real problems of the children in conflict with the law which are: poverty, domestic violence, and exposure to a criminalized environment. Instead, we want to adopt and enforce the principle of restorative justice.
- Through the Intensive Juvenile Intervention and Support Center within the Bahay Pag-Asa, the children in conflict with the law will be able to ensure the prevention, intervention, diversion, and reintegration of the children to the community.
- A child's maturity is not enough to hold him/her accountable for his/her actions. Based from the research talks during the forum, a child has the intuition to differentiate right from wrong; however, their actions may not always be consistent. Thus, disqualifying the arguments that state otherwise such as, how organized crime- groups have taken advantage of the youth and that two Congress representatives believe that most children above the age of nine are already fully informed with knowledge from digital media.

With our deep understanding on the issue at hand, we do not aspire to spread social awareness alone, but we target to urge fellow students to take a stand and carry out specific plans of action. It is essential to provide the youth with authentic facts and figures to encourage them to take a stand. In addition, as much as we are against lowering the minimum age of criminal responsibility, it is significant to view both sides to take a concrete stand. Even as young as we are, we will not stay silent in such a crucial time.

As Catholic students, we strongly urge the present government to find solutions that protect the dignity of all people and bring about true reconciliation. In the DOCAT, a catechism for the youth, Pope Francis urges the youth to become active and to fight for justice and human dignity, especially for the poorest of the poor. In that way, we will be like torches that make the path to God brighter for our society. We are neither apathetic, nor passive and the fight does not stop here. We must empower the youth with the hope of continuing the advocacy; together, we will work for a nation that is built on the basis of love and restorative justice.

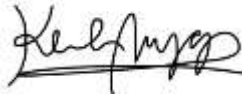
**Signed during the Prayer Walk and Noise for Life held at De La Salle Santiago Zobel School, University Avenue, Ayala Alabang Village, Muntinlupa City on March 8, 2017.**



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