

Congress urged to pass bills banning child marriage in PH

By: DJ Yap - Reporter / @deejayapINQPhilippine Daily Inquirer / 03:56 AM December 10, 2019

MANILA, Philippines — Calls are mounting for Congress to pass bills that will ban child marriage in the Philippines, especially among indigenous and Muslim communities, where people younger than 18 years old are allowed to marry.

At least three bills have been filed at the House of Representatives seeking a prohibition on child marriage, which, according to the proponents, continues to be practiced despite a clear minimum age requirement under the Family Code.

The latest measure, House Bill No. 5670, was filed on Nov. 27 by Malabon City Rep. Josephine Lacson-Noel, who lamented the existence of loopholes in Philippine law that permits child brides and forced marriages, among other practices.

The bill declares any child marriage as a “public crime,” and considers it “void ab initio,” or invalid at the outset, meaning an annulment is not necessary.

Noel noted that the Family Code set a minimum age requirement of 18 years old for anyone to have the legal capacity to marry.

“Unfortunately, under the Code of Muslim Personal Laws, the law provides that Muslim parties may marry even before the age of 18,” she said, referring to Presidential Decree No. 1083.

House Bill No. 1486, which was earlier filed by Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman and Bagong Henerasyon Rep. Bernadette Herrera-Dy, said the practice of child marriages in the Philippines was “higher” among indigenous peoples.

A third proponent, Quezon City Rep. Alfred Vargas, cited a 2017 Unicef report showing that 15 percent of Filipino girls were married before their 18th birthday, and 2 percent of girls married before the age of 15. INQ

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1199895/congress-urged-to-pass-bills-banning-child-marriage-in-ph>