



DECRIMINALIZATION OF PROSTITUTION ON AT SENATE

An Anti-Prostitution Bill which decriminalizes prostitution is now being pushed at the Senate which has Senator Chiz Escudero as the lead defender having the bill tackled before the Justice and Human Rights Committee of which he chairs.

Senate Bill Number 2006 (SBN 2006) an act amending article 341 of the Revised Penal Code, removes criminal liability from the women and instead consider them the victims in the said situation.

Escudero is optimistic that the bill will get the approval of his colleagues in the Upper Chamber as it is now in the period of interpellation, which the senator said he is ready to defend at the plenary.

"We need to pass this bill into law to accord greater protection to our women and children who are usually the victims in this system". Escudero said in the existing antiquated law on prostitution, women are usually considered criminals thus are at the receiving end of the penal code. "Prostitution is included in the provision of anti-vagrancy law. Since prostitution is difficult to prove and cannot really be used to effect arbitrary arrests, authorities resort to vagrancy charges.

"Ang madalas nilang magamit, bagansya lamang. Na wala kang makitang mapaghahanapbuhayan, na wala kang ginagawa kundi nakatayo sa isang kanto o establisimyento. Wala ka halos dapat patunayan kaya't napakadaling idemanda at i-charge ang isang tao at babae at damputin at arestuhin sa kaso ng bagansya. Ang tanong namin dito, maliban sa ito ay tumutulong sa pag-aabuso ng ating kapulisan sa kababaihan, ito ay anti-poor at kontra mahirap dahil papaano naman nalagay sa batas natin na krimen na mawalan ng trabaho? Huhulihin ka ng pulis pag wala kang trabaho. Aba'y teka muna ginagawa ba ng pamahalaan ang kanyang trabaho na magbigay ng trabaho sa kanyang mga kababayan?"

To address arbitrary arrests on vagrancy charges, which commonly result to sexual exploitation or monetary pay off to avoid jail, Escudero had moved and got the approval of the Senate to repeal the ant-vagrancy law but the anti-prostitution law still remains which is now being tackled in the Senate.

Government is to be blamed for the proliferation of prostitution in the country because it failed to deliver basic services to the people like generating jobs and opportunities where each Filipino can earn a decent living, Escudero said. "Huhulihin ka ng pulis pag wala kang trabaho. Aba'y teka muna ginagawa ba ng pamahalaan ang kanyang trabaho na magbigay ng trabaho sa kanyang mga kababayan?."

With SBN 2066, criminally liability already lies with the pimp and the customer. The penalty of reclusion temporal in its medium and maximum periods shall be imposed.

Escudero said the bill does not only protect women but it also cuts across gender and age as it considers anyone who receive the same treatment in the system.

As the bill has already passed at the Senate Justice and Human Rights Committee, and is already in the plenary for debate, the version of the Lower House is needed to immediately pass this piece of legislation.

Ref.: http://www.senate.gov.ph/press_release/2008/0307_escudero1.asp