

PRESS RELEASE**DepEd, gov't agencies support Tobacco-Free Generation initiative**

BALANGA CITY, October 9, 2018 – The Department of Education (DepEd) reaffirmed its strong commitment to continue its fight against smoking, and to promote a healthy environment in and around schools and DepEd offices during the Tobacco-Free Generation (TFG) Culminating Activity held at the Vista Mall on September 27.

In front of 5,000 Bataeño learners in attendance, Education Secretary Leonor Magtolis Briones reiterated the salient features of DepEd Order No. 48, s. 2016, or the Policy and Guidelines on Comprehensive Tobacco Control, which applies to all DepEd officials, teaching and non-teaching personnel, and all elementary and secondary students while in DepEd offices and school premises, or during official events and school activities held outside DepEd.

“Gusto ko lang i-remind ang mga teachers, ang mga opisyal ng Department of Education, lalo na ang mga learners tungkol sa nilalaman ng memorandum circular na ito. Una, absolute smoking ban ang kailangang ipatupad. Bawal ang pagbebenta ng sigarilyo sa gate ng mga eskwelahan. Pangatlo, banned ang pag-sponsor ng mga proyekto ng mga cigarette companies.”

Through DO 48, DepEd also prohibits the establishment of Designated Smoking Areas in schools and all DepEd offices, as mandated by the law. It also tasks the Child Protection Committee (CPC) of each school to report violations of tobacco control measures at the school level. The CPC, whose chairperson is the school principal, shall report violations of the absolute smoking ban in the premises of schools, and of the ban on the sale, advertisement, and promotion of tobacco products in and within the 100-meter perimeter of the premises of all schools.

These guidelines also cover all private elementary and secondary students and school officials, visitors, and other persons who are within the premises of DepEd offices and elementary and secondary schools.

This school year, the Department also rolled out *EskweLA BAN sa Sigarilyo*, a project implemented in partnership with the Tobacco-Free Kids Action Fund, aimed at strengthening the implementation of the Department’s comprehensive tobacco control policy in all schools nationwide.

Other government agencies which pledged their support to the TFG Campaign include the Department of Health (DOH) and the National Youth Commission (NYC).

Crusade against smoking

The Education chief also shared her personal crusade against tobacco: *“Ako ay sumusuporta sa Tobacco-Free Campaign hindi lamang dahil ako ay Secretary of Education. Lumaki ako nang may pananampalataya na nagsasabing huwag sirain ang ating katawan lalo na sa mga bisyo. Lumaki ako na tinuturuan na huwag magsigarilyo,”* Briones stated.

She also shared the “Tax Tobacco to the Max” campaign of Social Watch Philippines, a civil society organization of which she was the Lead Convenor, to deter smoking and increase funding for universal health coverage.

“Kami sa Social Watch Philippines ay active partners ng Department of Health para taasan ang buwis ng sigarilyo para malimit ang pagkonsumo ng cigarettes sa pamamagitan ng signature campaign,” she added.

Towards a tobacco-free Bataan

With the active and strong initiatives of local government officials in Bataan and the TFG movement headed by its founder Dr. Koong Heng Nung, Bataan residents born from 2000 onwards are encouraged to vow to never smoke in their entire life.

Bataan Governor Albert Garcia said that the provincial government prioritizes the health of its constituents and implements projects that are geared towards the improvement of hospitals, rural health units, and barangay centers.

“We want our people to have a healthy lifestyle through balanced diet, exercise, and practice of no smoking,” Garcia said.

Nung, meanwhile, awarded Balanga City and Dinalupihan as the first Tobacco-Free City and Municipality, respectively.

The TFG Movement in Bataan started in 2016, and has completed its information campaign this year with 44,173 students from 44 junior high schools who committed to never smoke in their lifetime.

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