

**PRESS RELEASE****DepEd joins calls to hike tobacco tax**

*PASIG CITY, February 7, 2019* – The Department of Education (DepEd) strongly supports President Rodrigo Duterte’s approval to certify as urgent a Senate bill that aims to impose higher taxes on tobacco products, adding that the measure will strengthen DepEd’s efforts in protecting learners from getting into smoking.

The President approved during the first Cabinet meeting in 2019 the recommendation of the Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Finance (DOF) to certify as urgent Senate Bill No. 1599, which aims to increase the tax on tobacco to P60 per pack.

“Significant increase in tobacco tax will lead to higher prices of cigarettes, making them less affordable and less available especially for the youth,” Education Secretary Leonor Magtolis Briones said.

DOH and DOF have been calling for the passage of the bill to curb smoking prevalence among Filipinos and to generate funds for the government’s Universal Health Care program.

DepEd acknowledges that effective tobacco taxation complements the Department’s own tobacco control efforts.

DepEd has its comprehensive tobacco control policy, issued through DepEd Order No. 48, s. 2016, which aims to educate learners, teachers, and non-teaching personnel on the hazards of tobacco use and exposure to second-hand smoke; adverse socio-economic and environmental consequences of tobacco production and consumption; tobacco control policies; and the tactics of the tobacco industry to circumvent tobacco control measures, glamorize smoking, and downplay or deny the addictive and harmful nature of tobacco products.

“In school, we teach our learners to reject tobacco use. But education alone is not enough. Outside the school, we need policies that will help reinforce our learners’ health-promoting choices, complementing what we teach them in school,” Briones added.

Increasing the prices of tobacco products through taxation has been proven successful in preventing young people from smoking and lifelong addiction. In the Philippines, tobacco tax was most effective in reducing smoking among the younger age groups. A comparison of the National Nutrition Surveys conducted by the Food and Nutrition Research Institute of the Department of Science and Technology (FNRI-DOST) in 2008, 2013, and 2015, reveals that the relative reduction in smoking prevalence is biggest among those below 20 years. This was during the same period when the implementation of the Sin Tax Law led to significant increase in the tax and prices of cigarettes.

“If we succeed in preventing our learners from smoking, perhaps until they graduate from Grade 12, there are high chances that they will never smoke in their lifetime,” Briones added.

“DepEd is hopeful that our lawmakers will adhere to our call for a significant increase in tobacco tax, for the promotion of the health of Filipinos and the protection of our youth,” Briones concluded.

**END**

**PRESS RELEASE**