

PRESS RELEASE**DepEd reaffirms commitment to teachers' safety and well-being**

PASIG CITY, October 20, 2019 –The Department of Education (DepEd) remains committed to ensuring teachers' safety and well-being, and to maintaining schools as zones of peace following the shooting incident of two elementary teachers in Valencia City, Bukidnon.

DepEd Secretary Leonor Magtolis Briones earlier issued a statement strongly condemning the crime and called on the Philippine National Police (PNP) to judiciously resolve the case and bring the perpetrators to justice.

In today's meeting with the Alliance of Concerned Teachers at the DepEd Central Office, Undersecretary Annalyn Sevilla and OIC-Assistant Secretary for Legal Affairs Alberto Escobarte apprised them of DepEd's efforts to provide financial assistance to the victims for their hospitalization and to ensure safety of teachers and learners.

"Sa ngayon nakapagbigay na po tayo nang financial assistance [sa mga biktima]. We were able to give it through voluntary contributions *doon sa pamilya*," Sevilla added.

Escobarte also assured that the victims are entitled to rehabilitation leave (leave with pay) subject to extension, on top of the statutory benefits from GSIS and PhilHealth.

He added that there could be higher penalties against the perpetrators since the direct assault was committed against persons in authority on official duty.

The Schools Division Office of Valencia City coordinated with the local authorities for added security.

"The barangay leaders committed to assign civilian volunteer organizations (CVO), *purok* leaders, and *barangay tanod* to serve as security officers during school hours. The community people have become more aware and are escorting the teachers in coming to school and going home up to the boundary of the barangay," Escobarte underscored.

Likewise, learners, teachers, and parents already received psychological first aid through stress debriefing. Classes in the school will resume next week.

"We continue to reiterate our call to various stakeholders to maintain the neutrality of schools as "zones of peace" to ensure that learners and teachers are in an environment conducive to learning and free from harm," underscored the Secretary.

END**PRESS RELEASE**