



REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH BILL – A CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE

Marian Baltazar
Class of 1980, University of the Philippines Manila
Political Science

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The Reproductive Health Bill, popularly known as the RH Bill, is a Philippine Bill, promoting information on and universal access to both natural and modern family planning methods. It is formerly known as the Responsible Parenthood, Reproductive Health and Population and Development Bill. It was first proposed in 1998. Moreover, the principal author of this proposed Reproductive Health Care and Population Development Act of 2008 is Albay representative Edcel C. Lagman. Reproductive Health Bill is national in scope, comprehensive and according to him has no other intention than to help the Filipino families uplift their living from poverty and help the women avoid the life threatening risks of pregnancy.

Since then this bill has been very controversial since it has been a subject of many debates for almost a year. It is being opposed by concerned citizens, especially the pro-life, pro-family and pro-God groups regardless of creed or religion. Pro-life groups and even many professionals in the medical and nursing fields believe that physicians and policy makers should understand and respect the belief of their patients who consider human life to be very valuable from the moment of fertilization.

In the House of Representatives, this reproductive health bill is being presented as a health bill and anti-poverty bill at the same time. Actually, it is neither one of them. It is an ideological attack on human life, the family, our social and cultural values and it is very relevant to the debate about reproduction rights, which is the right to life. We all know that the Philippine Constitution says that the State "shall equally protect the life of the mother and the life of the unborn since conception. If artificial contraceptives are medically proven to induce abortion as one of their mechanisms of action, then procurement and distribution of such family planning supplies are unconstitutional and illegal.

People from all walks of life have their own opinion about the bill, some are against it and others support it but a number of Senators also oppose the said bill. The church is against the RH Bill for the main reason that it contradicts the teachings of God. In fact even the Catholic Bishop's Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) still clings to the hope that anti-RH Bill members of the House will be able to block the controversial issue. Moreover, even the incoming CBCP president Archbishop Jose Palma expressed his desire of the ones in position to defend our stand for life, for God and for the sanctity of marriage.

The issue is very divisive for it even came to a point wherein the CBCP threatened to excommunicate the President, Benigno Aquino III if he supported the bill. On the other hand, others think that the RH Bill can help people especially the poor (to alleviate their way of living) and those who are ignorant about the proper family planning method usage. Therefore, population can be monitored and abortion can be minimized and lessened. The question still remains; will it be a solution to all known problems of the Philippine society?

Questions for discussion:

1. Will the RH Bill really come as a one-size-fits-all solution to the problems of the Philippine society?
2. Do the majority of the people support this advocacy?
3. Is the RH Bill an answer to poverty?
4. What is your stand about the Reproductive Health Bill?
5. Do the pros weigh more than the cons of this said bill?