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MAKE CHILD CAR SEATS MANDATORY, GROUP ASKS CONGRESS

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Child safety advocates have urged the Senate to prioritize discussions on a bill requiring child-restraint systems (CRS) in vehicles to help prevent the death of close to 100 kids monthly due to road crashes in Metro Manila and other parts of the country.

In a forum on Saturday, advocacy group Initiatives for Dialogue and Empowerment through Alternative Legal Services (Ideals) asked senators to give the issue "as much attention" as other transport-related matters such as the jeepney modernization program and the deteriorating state of the

Metro Rail Transit 3.

Last year, both the Senate and the House of Representatives filed their respective bills requiring the use of CRS or child car seats in vehicles.

Senate bill pending

While House Bill 6938 authored by Catanduanes Rep. Cesar Sarmiento and Buhay party-list Rep. Mariano Velarde Jr. was passed earlier this month, the Senate has yet to discuss its version filed by Sen. JV Ejercito.

Ideals advocacy officer Melisa Jane Comafay expressed hope the bill would be passed within the year to help reduce the number of children who die from road crashes. Based on

data from the Philippine Statistics Authority, 99 kids are killed monthly as a result.

Comafay added that from 2010 to 2015, the number of kids who were either hurt or killed due to road crashes rose from 2,335 to 3,503.

Globally, road crashes are the fourth leading cause of death for children aged 5 to 9 and the top cause for those between 15 to 17 years old.

Under the bill, car owners are required to have child car seats if they are carrying kids aged 12 or below.

Earlier, Jason Salvador, the Ateneo School of Government's road safety project manager, said that Filipinos must understand that while

having child car seats may be seen as an additional expense, it was a worthwhile investment as it would increase the possibility of saving their kids' lives.

Lower risk of injury, death

According to him, studies have shown that child car seats help reduce the likelihood of infants getting hurt or killed in a road crash by up to 70 percent. The figure varies from 54 percent to up to 80 percent among young children.

A University of the Philippines study also showed that in 2014, the country lost P26.5 billion in economic opportunities due to road crash deaths and injuries. INQ.

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