

QC to bankroll random drug tests

THE Quezon City government will finance the mandatory random drug testing in public high schools, colleges and universities in the city beginning school year 2018-2019, Quezon City Vice Mayor Joy Belmonte said Wednesday.

The city has 99 public elementary and 48 public high schools, 274 private elementary schools, 175 private high schools, 81 colleges and nine universities.

"The random drug testing in public schools in the city will be funded by the city government," Belmonte said.

"Only public schools are covered by the random drug testing," she said.

Belmonte made her statement even as former Ozamiz City vice mayor Nova Princess Parojinog, daughter of the slain mayor Reynaldo Parojinog Sr., on Wednesday entered a not-guilty plea in an arraignment before the Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 95.

She is facing charges of illegal possession of firearms, ammunition and

dangerous drugs.

In July 2017, Chief Insp. Jovie Espenido, along with his operatives, served the Parojinogs with search warrants for illegal possession of firearms and ammunition that resulted in the arrest of the former vice mayor, her brother Reynaldo Jr. and other occupants.

A firefight ensued that led to the deaths of the elder Parojinog, his wife Susan and 14 others.

Belmonte said private schools must also have random drug tests in accordance with the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002, and that Quezon City

will appropriate funds for the testing.

She said Quezon City's ordinance and the Department of Education's memorandum circular only specified mandatory drug testing in public schools.

The Quezon City government has passed an ordinance mandating random drug tests for public school students in high school and college.

Ordinance SP-2615, S-2017 was signed into law by Mayor Herbert Bautista on Oct. 3, 2017, a month after it was passed by the city council on third and final reading. **PNA, with Rio N. Araja**