

2 senators back drug tests in QC schools

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At least two senators are backing Quezon City's plan to conduct mandatory drug tests in public high school and colleges, although reminding that the protection of children should be ensured.

Senate President Vicente Sotto III, a former vice mayor of the Quezon City, on Saturday expressed support for his successor, Vice Mayor Joy Belmonte, in her plan to enforce mandatory drug tests of all public high school and college students in the city, with or without their parents' consent.

Belmonte made the announcement after the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) reported that the city has a "100 percent drug affectation" in all school levels, including elementary school-children.

Sotto said that other cities may follow suit, but depending on the extent of illegal drug problem in their areas, and "their strategy and approach on their drug problem."

"I'm sure VM (vice mayor) Belmonte knows where and when it (drug testing) is possible," Sotto told the Manila Bulletin in text message.

Sotto also allayed concerns on the welfare of students, saying that the drug tests will be a "danger only to addicts."

Senator Grace Poe, for her part, said she agrees with Quezon City's mandatory drug tests as long as it is conducted with "transparency" and "properly."

"I agree, for as long as the tests are done with transparency and handled properly, with the appropriate level of privacy. The test facilitators should take care to label samples accurately, so there are no mix-ups," Poe said. (Vanne Elaine P. Terrazola)