

## QC passes STI, HIV-AIDS ordinance

Daily Tribune (Philippines) · 4 Dec 2021 · A8 · BY PAULA AnTOLIn

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The Quezon City Council has passed an ordinance seeking to prevent and control the local spread of sexually transmitted infections (STI), human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and the acquired immune deficiency syndrome. Coinciding with the celebration of this year's World AIDS Day, the passage of the measure authored by **Councilor Marie Juico** adopts and localizes Republic Act 11166 or the Philippine HIV and AIDS Policy Act.

When fully implemented, the measure will hasten the delivery of treatment for those afflicted with STI and care for those with HIV and AIDS.

It will reorganize the Quezon City STI, HIV and AIDS Council to include representatives from various offices at city hall led by the mayor as chair.

"The QCSAC may, as necessary, invite to its meetings and activities, other government agencies, nGOs, and experts, who have relevant expertise that may be useful to accomplish its functions," read part of the ordinance. The council shall be responsible in developing, reviewing, and ensuring the implementation of the comprehensive STI, HIV, AIDS Prevention and Control Action Plan.

In a bid to bolster multi-sectoral partnerships, the **Quezon City local government** also held on Monday a commitment ceremony attended by various organizations and public health professionals, among others.

The new partners and city government departments signed the pledge of commitment to ensure equitable access to quality, comprehensive, and client-centered services by actively participating in the service delivery network for persons with HIV.

Data from the **QC Epidemiology and Disease Surveillance Unit** showed that as of September, 7,173 residents have been diagnosed positive for HIV. Of the number, 4,433 individuals or 62 percent are on treatment.

"Our treatment coverage is aligned with the national average, but it falls 33 percent short of the UnAIDS' interim target of 95 percent," **Mayor Joy Belmonte** said.

"Meanwhile, our viral load testing coverage is only at 29 percent which again is below the 95 percent target. We propose to address these by coming up with a comprehensive Service Delivery network (SDn)," she added.

Belmonte said the comprehensive SDn will aid the city in delivering effective, needs-based, and targeted HIV programs that will fill the remaining gaps in the city's HIV "continuum of care."

She also enumerated the city's programs that are in the pipeline.

Some of the programs include making HIV testing available in all 69 health centers in the city; peer counseling and access to antiretroviral treatment through Sundown Clinics; and the establishment of Klinika Bernardo, a sundown clinic that caters to men who have sex with men and transgender people, in Libis in District 3 and Tandang Sora in District 6.