QC spearheads cervical cancer program

The Philippine Star · 27 Feb 2025 · 8

An ordinance seeking the elimination of cervical cancer has been enacted in Quezon City.

In a move to safeguard women's health, Councilor Alfred Vargas has spearheaded pioneering legislation establishing the comprehensive cervical cancer elimination program.

Ordinance No. SP-3361, the Quezon City Cervical Cancer Elimination measure, will reinforce the city's commitment to protecting women and families from one of the deadliest yet preventable diseases in the Philippines.

Vargas said the measure aims to intensify HPV vaccination efforts, targeting 90 percent of girls by age 15.

Cervical cancer screening will be expanded at community and institutional levels.

Patient navigation for timely diagnosis and treatment will be enhanced, according to Vargas.

Reducing vaccine hesitancy is also being sought through health literacy campaigns and partnerships with schools, workplaces and barangays.

The ordinance supports the city's legacy of innovative health policies such as free Pap smears and an integrated cancer control ordinance that Vargas also initiated.

Quezon City is the first local government unit to pass a measure addressing cervical cancer.

Cervical cancer remains a critical public health challenge in the country, ranking as the second leading type of cancer among Filipino women aged 15 to 44.

More than 6,000 new cervical cancer cases are diagnosed annually, resulting in 12 deaths daily, according to the Department of Health.

These dire statistics underscore the urgency of the initiative, which aligns with the World Health Organization's call to eliminate cervical cancer by reducing its incidence to below four per 100,000 women.

"Every day, we lose 12 mothers, daughters and sisters to cervical cancer, a tragedy that is entirely preventable with the right interventions," Vargas said.

With the ordinance enacted on Nov. 25, 2024 and approved by Mayor Joy Belmonte on Jan. 16, the city health department is now tasked with crafting its implementing rules within 120 days.

Vargas has received commendations for pushing the fight against cervical cancer.

"Your commitment to cancer prevention is truly commendable – first as a principal author of the National Integrated Cancer Control Act during your time in Congress, and now through the Quezon City Integrated Cancer Control Ordinance in your current term," CerviQ (End Cervical Cancer PH) said.