Expanded Solo Parents Welfare Act approved by House

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The House of Representatives approved on third and final reading a bill expanding the Solo Parents Welfare Act of 2000 granting additional benefits for solo parents and their children.

Approval came after the plenary registered a 208 "yes" and 0 "no" votes on House Bill 8097 which will amend Republic Act 8972 or the "Solo Parents Welfare Act of 2020."

HB 8097 represents 21 legislative proposals that were consolidated by the House Committee on Revision of Laws chaired by Zambales Rep. Cheryl Deloso Montalla.

Among the authors are Deputy Speakers Mikee Romero (1PACMAN Partylist); DV Savellano (PDPLaban, Ilocos Sur); Loren Legarda (NPC, Antique) and Ferdinand Hernandez (PDP-Laban, South Cotabato) and Reps. Alfred Vargas (PDP-Laban, Quezon City); Jay Jay Suarez (PDP-Laban, Quezon); Eric Pineda (1PACMAN Partylist); Alberto Pacquiao (OFW Family); Aurelio "Dong" Gonzales (PDP-Laban, Pampanga); Rida Robes (NUP, San Jose del Monte City); Yeddah Marie Romualdez (Tinggog Sinirangan); Alfred Delos Santos (Ang Probinsyano) and Ana MarieVillaraza Suarez (ALONA).

Authors said the bill will benefit an estimated 15 million single parents and their children. Of this number 95 percent are women.

Romero and Pineda said the bill will expand the benefits already granted to solo parents, adding that introduction of amendments to the current law has become imperative to correspond to the present times.

"In a progressive and responsive legislation, the evolving dynamics of the family must be addressed as part of responsible relationships with the protection of children in mind," explained Pacquiao, younger brother of Sen. Manny Pacquiao.

For his part, Gonzales stressed the need for additional support to solo parents who are tasked to bring up a family by their lonesome.

For a solo parent to qualify for the additional benefits of 10 percent discounts and value added tax exemption from purchases of basic necessities of a child, the applicant must show that he or she is earning less than ₱250,000 annually.

The discounts will be extended for purchase of children's clothing material, baby's milk, food and micronutrient supplements, medicines, vaccines and basic school supplies, among others.

The bill also provides for enhanced educational benefits by guaranteeing full scholarship for a child.

It also promotes child minding centers, breastfeeding in the workplace and social safety assistance to all kinds of solo parents and their children.

Local government units are mandated to create a Solo Parent Office that will address the concerns of beneficiaries of the bill.