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Office of the Secretary

12 FEB 21 2008

SENATE

P.S. Res. No. 723

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INTRODUCED BY SENATOR MANNY VILLAR

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RESOLUTION

URGING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND DEMOGRAPHY TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE PROGRAMS AND APPROACHES OF THE GOVERNMENT TO COMBAT THE SCOURGE OF LEPROSY IN THE COUNTRY

**WHEREAS**, Section 15, Article III of the 1987 Constitution states that: *"The State shall protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them."*

**WHEREAS**, Leprosy is a chronic infectious disease caused by *Mycobacterium leprae*. It usually affects the skin and peripheral nerves;<sup>1</sup>

**WHEREAS**, among communicable diseases, leprosy is a leading cause of permanent physical disability.

**WHEREAS**, the bacteria that causes the disease multiplies very slowly, with an incubation period ranging from three to 20 years;

**WHEREAS**, timely diagnosis and treatment of cases, before nerve damage has occurred, is the most effective way of preventing disability due to leprosy; effective management of leprosy complications, including reactions and neuritis, can prevent or minimize the development of further disability. The disease and its associated deformities are responsible for social stigma and discrimination against patients and their families in many societies;<sup>2</sup>

**WHEREAS**, according to the World Health Organization, the battle against the age-old scourge of leprosy is not yet over;

**WHEREAS**, the Department of Health established its National Leprosy Control Program (NLCP) in 1986;

**WHEREAS**, according to the Department of Health, there were 38,570 registered leprosy patients in the country, translating to an annual prevalence rate of 7.2 per 10,000 Filipinos;

**WHEREAS**, the Department of Health further reported that by the end of 1998, leprosy was virtually eliminated as a public health problem, in response to the World Health Organization-World Health Assembly call to eliminate leprosy in 2000. This level has been sustained up to the present. However, there are still pockets of cases identified in some municipalities in the country. In fact, according to World Health Organization, some 2,000 new cases are reported yearly;

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<sup>1</sup> Global Strategy for Further Reducing the Leprosy Burden and Sustaining Leprosy Control Activities (Plan period: 2006-2010), World Health Organization

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

**WHEREAS**, the DOH's **Leprosy Control Program** envisions to eliminate Leprosy as a human disease by 2020 and is committed to eliminate leprosy as a public health problem by attaining a national prevalence rate (PR) of less than 1 per 10,000 population;

WHEREAS, Health Secretary Enrique Ona expressed concern that the number of new cases yearly in the Philippines may be underreported and DOH is currently reviewing its leprosy program, and is educating the public that the disease is not easily transmitted and patients need not be ostracized by the community;

**WHEREAS**, there is a need to revisit the country's leprosy program because the stigma associated with leprosy has not disappeared completely in many countries, including the Philippines, thus, the right to life, dignity of the person, and equality before the law must be protected;

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, by the Senate of the Philippines, to urge the Senate Committee on Health and Demography to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, into the programs and approaches of the government to combat the scourge of leprosy in the country.

Adopted,

  
**MANNY VILLAR**