

WRONG SOLUTION? Restrictions bring more harm than good – group

By **Panay News** - Friday, January 14, 2022



The Alliance Against Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination in Iloilo City holds a protest at Plaza Libertad. People who remain unvaccinated for whatever reason could be deprived of their sources of income and access to basic necessities because of the restrictions, according to the group. KARAPATAN PANAY PHOTO

ILOILO City – While the proposed city ordinance restricting the movement of people unvaccinated against coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has good intentions, it may cause more harm than good, warned a group opposed to such measure.

It could damage the relations between the citizens of this city and their local government, according to the Alliance Against Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination.

It urged the Sangguniang Panlungsod (SP) to reject the proposed ordinance.

“We also call on the local government to scrap the executive orders that prohibit unvaccinated persons and those who have not received booster shots from entering the Iloilo City Hall,” according to the alliance.

The group, which counted as members the human rights group Panay Alliance Karapatan and Bagong Alyansang Makabayan – Panay, submitted to the SP a position paper yesterday.

Here’s the content of the position paper:

secured by

N GOOD

For many months now, the government of Iloilo City has, by executive order, prohibited citizens who are unvaccinated for COVID-19 from entering the Iloilo City Hall, prompting some private establishments like stores, hotels, restaurants, bars and resorts to institute a similar restriction.

Recently, the office of the Iloilo City Mayor proposed a regulation ordinance to restrict the movement of unvaccinated persons when the city is placed under Alert Level 3 or higher.

Such an ordinance would gravely and adversely affect the daily lives of citizens who are unvaccinated for COVID-19. Subject to punishment, they can be prohibited from entering government and private offices, prevented from going to markets, malls, stores, restaurants, resorts, schools and churches and denied access to public transportation. It will be tantamount to a deprivation of their livelihoods, the inaccessibility of basic social services, and forced isolation in their homes.

Evidently, the Iloilo City government is bent on implementing such restrictions to put pressure on the citizens of Iloilo City to get vaccinated.

We respectfully manifest our opposition to such a city ordinance for the following reasons:

1. It would violate human rights and our Constitution

The restrictions in the proposed ordinance discriminate against those who are unvaccinated for COVID-19. It will violate their right to equal protection under the law, and, most importantly, their right to make informed choices in matters of personal health. These rights are guaranteed by international human rights conventions and by the 1987 Constitution.

Data, both domestically and abroad, have shown that vaccinated individuals may still be infected and spread COVID-19. This has likewise been acknowledged by the Department of Health and by vaccine-makers. There is, therefore, no basis to discriminate against or deprive unvaccinated persons of their basic civil rights.

The fact that the vast majority of new COVID-19 cases in Iloilo City, as well as in other major cities, were vaccinated persons, only shows that you cannot and should not discriminate against unvaccinated individuals.

secured by

itled to social services from the government and the enjoyment of

2. It is contrary to R.A. 11525

Republic Act (RA) No. 11525, or the COVID-19 Vaccination Program Act of 2021 states, in Section 12 (g) that "...vaccine cards shall not be considered as an additional mandatory requirement for educational, employment and other similar government transaction purposes."

RA 11525 itself prohibits discrimination against those who are unvaccinated. A local ordinance or regulation that does so would go against the very intent and mandate of the said law and, inevitably, be invalid.

3. Vaccination must be done voluntarily

Forcing someone to have a foreign substance injected into his body is extremely intrusive. It must be done in a safe manner and only with the informed consent of the individual concerned.

We cannot discount or casually ignore the concerns of those who remain unvaccinated; nor should we ignore the trauma or potential impact a forceful approach may have on them.

Even the World Health Organization does not recommend vaccine mandates. Education and engagement should be the key in addressing vaccine hesitancy and in implementing any medical program.

A heavy-handed approach only creates discord and distrust.

4. Discriminating against unvaccinated persons would cause grave harm

People who remain unvaccinated for whatever reason could be deprived of their sources of income and access to basic necessities because of the restrictions. This would result in hunger, loneliness and, ultimately, sickness. It will create the very problem sought to be addressed by this proposed measure.

ALTERNATIVES

The alliance has proposed alternative steps to be taken by the city government. These are the following:

secured by

- * Provide sufficient information on vaccines to ensure an informed consent for all who would be vaccinated and make use of persuasion to convince people to be vaccinated,

 - * Ensure the availability of vaccines and other alternative remedies to COVID-19, preferably early treatment with either free or inexpensive, safe and effective medicines,

 - * Fine-tune existing health protocols, such as the wearing of face mask, so as not to deprive the people of elements needed for healthy functioning, such as oxygen, and

 - * Implement a practicable and people-oriented health program that will enhance the natural immunity of the citizens, including easy practices such as regular exercise and exposure to sunlight, a costless source of vitamin D much needed by the body's immune system in fighting diseases./**PN**
-
-