

VISION

The Visayas, which form the center of the Philippine Archipelago is composed of different and unique regions, islands and provinces. We envision bridging these regions and uniting its people in order to establish a single Visayan community having a common aspiration for just, fair society with love for their own culture, environment and country.



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PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES discuss the delay of the implementation of the 20-percent discount for them. Left to right: Jasper Rom, project manager of Handicap International; Celona Villahermosa of Molo, Iloilo City; Johnkin Lambuson of Jaro, Iloilo City; and Dolores Laudensorio, head of the Iloilo City government's Office of Persons with Disability Affairs. GUIJO DUEÑAS/PN

'WHERE'S OUR DISCOUNT?'

Persons with disabilities, drugstores wrangle over 20% discount

BY JEZZA NEPOMOCENO

ILOILO City – Drugstores are required by law to give 20-percent discount to persons with disabilities (PWDs). They could be held criminally liable for refusing to do so.

They could be charged with violating the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, warned Atty. Dan Valenzuela, president of the International Fellowship Program Alumni Association (IFPAA) – a group advocating for the rights of marginalized sectors such as PWDs.

Valenzuela spoke in a press conference yesterday organized by the Iloilo City government's Office of Persons with Disability Affairs (OPDA) and Handicap International (HI), an "independent international aid organization working in situations of poverty and exclusion."

Republic Act (RA) 9442, which amended RA 7277 known as the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, gives a 20-percent discount to PWDs' medicines and other goods, said Valenzuela.

But drugstores are opposed to the discount. In the same press conference, National Secretary Rosalyn Pasaporte of the Drug Stores Association of the Philippines (DSAP) said their businesses – especially the small pharmacies -- wouldn't become profitable.

DSAP has some 2,500 drugstore-member owners running over 5,000 outlets nationwide. Last year, it challenged before the Court of Appeals the National Council on Disability Affairs' (NCDA) Administrative Order No. 1 (the implementing guidelines of the Magna Carta for PWD).

After the appellate court denied its request for a temporary restraining order, DSAP elevated its case to the Supreme Court.

The high court has yet to render a decision.

"Nothing will be left with our profits if we give PWDs 20-percent discount," said Pasaporte.

Drugstores are only allowed to have a profit margin of from three to five percent in

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cities and 10 percent in the provinces, she said.

Drugstore owners, Pasaporte explained, also have expenses such as for electricity, rent and salaries of pharmacists.

She said drugstores should not be burdened with giving the PWDs discounts also because "under the Constitution, the primary responsibility to look after the welfare of the PWD rests on the state and not on private establishments."

According to IFPAA's Valenzuela, however, DSAP has no choice but to give PWDs their discount.

The law does not distinguish between small or big drugstores, he stressed.

"Only a temporary restraining order can suspend the law. But since there is none yet, drugstores have no reason not to grant this privilege to PWDs," Valenzuela said.

Should a drugstore deny a PWD the discount, Valenzuela said, a complaint may be filed with the Commission on Human Rights.

The Philippines is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, he stressed.

Pasaporte suggested that the government subsidize drugstores, especially the small and independent ones, for them to comply with the Magna Carta for PWDs. She cited as examples the governments of the United States and United Kingdom./PN

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