

KEYNOTE MESSAGE

SOGIE Equality Bill as it influences gender and sexuality in everyday life

Hon. Ana Theresa “Risa” Navarro Hontiveros-Baraquel

Senate of the Philippines, Pasay City, Philippines

Keynote message of the Honorable Senator Risa Hontiveros during the main conference of the Global Assembly on Everyday Life, Gender and Sexuality held online on October 30, 2021

We all know too well how the COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the fault lines of existing inequalities. Our COVID-19 response has disregarded particular difficulties faced by many already vulnerable communities including the LGBTQIA+ community. Here in the Philippines, we heard stories about lesbian couples who did not receive aid from the government because they weren't considered as a family unit. We've read reports about gay men publicly humiliated by law enforcement officials as a form of punishment for violating curfew. We've learned of cases about LGBTQIA+ employees who while retained by their companies cannot include their partners as beneficiaries of their healthcare coverage plans.

Other countries across the world face similar alarming challenges; Colombia, Panama, and Peru, at one point impose gender quarantines. Only allowing people of a certain gender only to leave the house. Which puts many trans people at risk. In Uganda, around 20 LGBT homeless young people were detained for allegedly breaking COVID-19 restrictions and were then tortured in prison.

This is why we will not stop until the SOGIE equality bill is passed into law. I filed this bill in 2019 and finally sponsored it in December last year. As author of this bill and as a proud ally, I will do what I can to push this legislation forward. I know how much this means to many of us Filipinos, to the younger generation searching for acceptance, to advocates who have devoted our lives to the fight for equal rights, to family and friends who only want to see our loved ones live without fear of stigma and discrimination. Passing the SOGIE equality bill will not be an easy task, but day to day I'm always reminded and energized by the strength and support the members of the LGBTQIA+ community have for each other. The well spring of love and kindness emanating from the community only confirms my hope that one day we can truly see a Philippines to a long overdue promise for all.