



COCOPEA Statement on Drug Testing for Students January 29, 2009

The Coordinating Council of Private Educational Associations (COCOPEA) is committed to ensuring the well-being of its students and therefore believes that they should be guarded against any threat.

Recognizing dangers of the continued proliferation of substance abuse, especially among students, COCOPEA, in principle, supports the government's drive against illegal drugs, especially in the interest of protecting the youth.

While COCOPEA is concerned about the political motivations behind the government's recent pronouncements to conduct drug testing in schools, COCOPEA believes that the proposal must not altogether be dismissed but rather actively be confronted with specific conditions already in place in order to stamp out illegal drugs and achieve a drug free studentry.

As it is, there is already a law – **R. A. 9165 (Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002)** Section 36 (c) and (d) which provides that **students of secondary and tertiary schools shall**, pursuant to the related rules and regulations as contained in the school's student handbook and **with notice to the parents, undergo random drug testing, the expenses of which will be borne by the government.**

It should also therefore be stressed that in order to avoid any abuses or unreasonableness on the part of government agencies, the conduct of said random drug tests should be done with the full concurrence, cooperation and participation of the school and its administrators.

Hence, in the interest of safeguarding the rights of its students from being violated in the process, clear implementing guidelines should be created in consultation with school officials and be discussed with appropriate stakeholders.

Further, while COCOPEA acknowledges the value of this preventive measure, the association maintains that the government's campaign against illegal drugs should substantively focus on the pushers, and not the victims—such as the students.

It is COCOPEA's prayer that government be guided accordingly in undertaking its campaign, and place in its highest interest, the welfare of young Filipinos.


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