

Mar 3, 2025

International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines (ICHRP) - DMV Chapter

Statement on Maryland HB1462/SB847: Maryland Campus Accountability and Modernization to Protect University Students Act

To the Senators and Delegates of the Maryland General Assembly,

The District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia chapter of the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines, otherwise known as ICHRP-DMV, calls on the Maryland State Government's General Assembly to vote in opposition of HB1462/SB847, termed the Maryland Campus Accountability and Modernization to Protect University Students Act. We ask for you to vote against this bill given our concerns on how the proposed bill will selectively apply Time, Place, and Manner restrictions and harsher consequences based on an individual or organization's political beliefs. We expect, if passed, that this bill will have a chilling effect and infringe on essential student free speech on university and college campuses within the State of Maryland.

Within the past year, we have observed vibrant, inspiring expressions of free speech across the country in the form of student protest, ranging from encampments to marches. Recently within the State of Maryland, students at Towson University and the University of Maryland College Park engaged in marches and rallies decrying the presence of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) on campus. The work of student organizations to amplify the will of students against the endangerment of migrant students and staff resulted, in the case of Towson and College Park, in the departure of ICE from student career fairs. These wins speak to the strength and necessity of student organizing and the freedom of expression.

As ICHRP DMV, we demand that students are free to express their support for struggles of self-determination waged by the oppressed peoples of the Philippines, Palestine, and other nations subjugated to foreign plunder, domination, and occupation. With the rise of protests among college students in the name of the Palestinian people, who have endured collective punishment at the hands of the Israeli military, we observe the weaponization of the term "hate crime" to silence informed, humanitarian support against oppression. This parallels the repressive tactic of "red-tagging" which prevails in the Philippines to designate human rights defenders, students, clergy people, and peasant activists as terrorists, simply because they challenge the status quo in their demands for justice and genuine peace.

In the current political landscape of the United States, xenophobia, racism, transphobia, sexism, and other forms of hatred have regrettably become normalized aspects of mainstream communication. We applaud lawmakers in their effort to increase protection for marginalized groups on campus. However, we feel this bill has high potential to be wielded to do the exact opposite, and to protect only certain political viewpoints and designate others as "hateful," similar to the application of red-tagging in the Philippines. We recognize this bill as curtailing the rights of students to exercise their right to free speech in the full extent, and ask that members

of the General Assembly in observance of the achievements and necessity of student organizing in the State of Maryland vote against this bill.

Signed,
ICHRP DMV