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Senators of the Republic of the Philippines

May, 2019

Dear Senators

We are writing to you today as you will soon decide whether the minimum age of criminal responsibility (MACR) for children should be lowered from 15 to 12 years old.

It is not our duty to advise you as to how you should decide. Clearly, you alone can decide on this very important matter. Being the ones responsible for the future of your country, you certainly are always guided by your conscience. Like all of us, you must justify what you do before God and humanity.

Our only concern is that you see to it that you follow your conscience.

As we also know in our country, children are innocent and need protection and security.

They need parents' warmth and encouragement and a chance to have a good life.

Without hope and confidence nobody can really develop.

Children are not to blame for the precarious situations in which they live in your country. Unfortunately, too many of them suffer deprivations and the worst forms of violence that come with poverty.

We believe that we - private individuals and state institutions - have the responsibility to help indigent families so that children may receive the guidance and support that they need.

It was for a film shooting for a German television crime series that we visited your country for the first time in 1997. The film that we made showed how Germans also took part in the commercial sexual exploitation and abuse of children. We have become advocates of children's rights since then, supporting the work of the People's Recovery, Empowerment and Development Assistance (PREDA) Foundation in Olongapo since 1998.

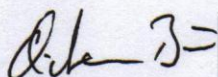
As film actors, we are able to mobilize a considerable amount of donations in Germany which we then send to PREDA for its various projects to protect children and minors who get victimized by the sex industry as well as those children who come in conflict with the law.

Some of us visited the Philippines again early this year and saw some positive changes. You have passed the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act (JJWA) in 2006, for example, thereby paving the way for the creation of programs that address the needs of children in conflict with the law.

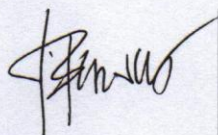
We call on you to continue the efforts that you have started in promoting restorative justice instead of following more punitive measures for children. Keep the minimum age of criminal responsibility at 15 years old as stipulated by the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act.

Lack of discernment and experience do push vulnerable children towards unlawful activities. But as we all know, jails are not at all effective in keeping them away from a life of crime. Let us work together in creating more compassionate measures that would instead empower children who get in conflict with the law. Let us help them believe that they do have a chance to live a good life.

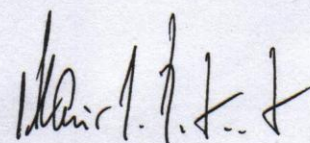
Yours Sincerely,



Dietmar Bär



Joe Bausch



Klaus J. Behrendt