THE STATE OF CAMPUS JOURNALISM IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Campus journalism in the Philippines is anchored to Republic Act 7079 or the Campus Journalism Act of 1991. This law declares it is the “policy of the State to uphold and protect the freedom of the press even at the campus level.”

Although RA 1079 made it the government’s responsibility and obligation to defend the freedom of campus journalists, press freedom supporters contend that the CJA has failings that compromise press freedom such as the absence of appropriate budget.

In colleges and universities, the administration is the one who crafts policies about the student publication.

In elementary and secondary schools, the General Parents-Teachers Association (GPTA) can collect contribution for the school paper. This is not mandatory since the parents of the students are not obliged to pay but are only encouraged.

This is one of the flaws of the Campus Journalist Act of 1991. Recently, there is a bill in the House of Representatives that seeks to remedy some of these flaws.

House Bill (HB) 1493, introduced in the 16th Congress by former Kabataan Party-List Representative Terry Ridon, included in its proposal the mandatory funding of student publications, optional appointment of a publication adviser at all levels, a working definition of "technical guidance", should students choose to appoint an adviser, provisions on the security of students' tenure, the power for the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and the Department of Education (DepEd) to investigate violations of campus press
freedom and impose necessary sanctions and provide student journalists with legal assistance when needed (Rappler, 2018)

The Campus Press Freedom Act similarly makes it obligatory for all schools to create at least one student publication.

The government should consider reviewing RA 7079 to strengthen the campus press freedom in the country.

References: