



# LGUs told: Prepare to vaccinate kids

By Macon Ramos-Araneta

**F**OLLOWING the Food and Drug Administration's approval of drugmaker Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine for inoculating minors aged 12-17, Senator Win Gatchalian pressed the urgency of preparing local government units for the vaccination of the age group.

Citing both the safety of the younger population and the long-term impact of school closures, Gatchalian has lobbied for the vaccination of minors aged 12 to 17.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on Basic Education, Arts and Culture said vaccinating school-age children would lay down a clearer path on the gradual resumption of face-to-face classes.

Meanwhile, Senator Christopher Go reiterated his appeal to the government to study the possibility of expanding the

rollout of the vaccination program to the wider population to expedite the population's protection from COVID-19.

In a letter to the National Task Force on COVID-19, the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines, led by Quirino Governor and ULAP President Dakila Cua, recognized the "considerable" progress made by the government towards attaining population protection.

However, they also noted the "crucial" need to ramp up the country's vac-

ination efforts.

A Pulse Asia Survey commissioned by Gatchalian, conducted from June 7 to 16 with 1,200 respondents, revealed that nationwide, agreement to allow face-to-face classes is at 44 percent 33 percent were unsure, and 23 percent disagree.

Among those who disagree with face-to-face classes, 90 percent said it was still too dangerous to go out because of the pandemic, while 57 percent cited the lack of vaccines for children.

"At this point, I can see that one of the solutions to open our schools safely is to already inoculate our teenagers," said Gatchalian.

With the government eyeing to vaccinate minors by September or October this year, preparations should already start at the level of LGUs, the lawmaker said.

He also cited the crucial involvement of the NTF, the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases, the Department of Interior and Local Government, the Department of Health, and the Department of Education.

"My call is to allow LGUs and private schools to import their own vaccines and to inoculate their own teachers, their own school officials, as well as their own students and their own teenage population. This way, it will hasten the vaccine rollout in our schools and the LGUs," Gatchalian said.

The FDA previously approved the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for the inoculation of minors aged 12-15. Drug-maker Sinovac also applied for the authorization of its COVID-19 vaccine for children and minors aged 3 to 17.