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## POSITION PAPER OPPOSING THE ABOLISHMENT OF THE SANGGUNIANG KABATAAN (SK) AND CALLING FOR THE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SK REFORM ACT

The **Model Sangguniang Kabataan Network (MSK Network)**, a national youth-led organization composed of elected SK officials, youth leaders, Katipunan ng Kabataan and governance advocates, firmly and unequivocally **opposes all proposals to abolish the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK)** or to remove its autonomy by placing it under the control of barangay or local government officials.

This position is anchored on consultations with SK officials, youth organizations, Local Youth Development Offices, and community youth leaders across the country. These engagements consistently reveal that the challenges faced by the SK are not rooted in youth incapacity or disinterest, but in **structural weaknesses, delayed reforms, and persistent political interference** that undermine youth independence and democratic participation.

The **MSK NETWORK** firmly opposes the proposal of abolishment of **Sangguniang Kabataan** or in any similar variants for the following compelling reasons:

### 1. THE ABOLISHMENT OF THE SK IS A MISPLACED RESPONSE TO STRUCTURAL GOVERNANCE FAILURES

Calls to abolish the Sangguniang Kabataan misdiagnose the real problem confronting youth governance. The difficulties experienced by some SK councils stem from **systemic neglect**, including delayed issuance of guidelines, lack of accessible and meaningful capacity-building, and insufficient institutional support.

Rather than addressing these gaps, abolition proposals dangerously redirect blame toward the youth. This narrative ignores the fact that many SK councils operate under **politically hostile environments**, where barangay or LGU officials exert undue influence over youth programs and funds.

Abolishing the SK does not resolve these governance failures—it **institutionalizes them**.

### 2. THE SANGGUNIANG KABATAAN IS A CONSTITUTIONALLY CONSISTENT DEMOCRATIC MECHANISM

In line with the Philippines Constitution 1987; Article II, Section 13 “The State recognizes the vital role of the youth in nation-building and shall promote and protect their physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual, and social well-being. It shall inculcate in the youth patriotism and nationalism, and encourage their involvement in public and civic affairs.” the **Sangguniang Kabataan Reform Act of 2015 (Republic Act No. 10742)** represents a landmark reform in youth governance. It strengthened accountability mechanisms, clarified roles, and—most importantly—introduced an **explicit prohibition against political dynasties**.

The SK is the **only public elective position in the Philippines with an anti-political dynasty provision**, reflecting the spirit of the **1987 Constitution, Article II, Section 26**, which mandates the State to guarantee equal access to opportunities for public service and prevent concentration of political power.

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### 3. THE SK PROVIDES A UNIQUE AND IRREPLACEABLE SPACE FOR YOUTH LEADERSHIP

The Sangguniang Kabataan remains the **only institutionalized platform** where young Filipinos can democratically elect their own leaders and directly participate in governance.

Through the SK, young people are able to:

- Showcase leadership talents and innovation
- Advance social causes relevant to their communities
- Build solidarity and networks among youth sectors
- Gain practical experience in governance, budgeting, and public service
- Bridge the gaps between all generations

These opportunities foster civic consciousness, social responsibility, and community engagement—outcomes that cannot be replicated by appointed or adult-controlled structures. Removing the SK strips the youth of a **training ground for democratic leadership**.

### 4. THE CLAIM OF YOUTH DISENGAGEMENT IS MISLEADING

Assertions that the SK has failed due to declining youth participation are not supported by evidence. Recent elections demonstrate that young people remain willing to engage in governance when genuine democratic space is available.

What discourages potential candidates is not apathy, but a **toxic political environment** characterized by intimidation, manipulation, and the negative reputation of politics shaped by corruption and patronage.

Some SK councils, frustrated by the absence of guidance and support, have resorted to unethical shortcuts offered by opportunistic contractors. This is not a failure of youth leadership, but a consequence of **institutional abandonment**.

Granting barangay officials more control over the SK will not eliminate corruption—it will **erase youth independence entirely**.

### 5. ABOLITION UNDERMINES YOUTH RIGHTS AND DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION

Placing the SK under barangay control or abolishing it outright:

- Silences the independent voice of the youth
- Weakens democratic participation at the grassroots
- Rewards political interference and patronage
- Eliminates safeguards against dynastic domination
- Removes or neglect the purpose of the SK reform law

Youth empowerment cannot be achieved through **abolition or control**, but through **genuine reform, protection, and capacity-building**.

## LASTLY THE MSK NETWORK CALLS FOR STRENGTHENING, NOT ABOLITION

In place of abolition, the **Model Sangguniang Kabataan Network** calls for:

- **Genuine financial and operational independence** of SK councils
- **Timely, accessible, and effective capacity-building programs**

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*The Model SK Network is an accredited organization under the **National Youth Commission-Youth Organization Registration Program (YS-5791-010424)**. Additionally, it proudly holds a position as one of the **elected Council Members of the National Anti-Poverty Commission-Youth and Student Sectors** for the term 2023-2026.*

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- **Strong safeguards against LGU and barangay interference**
  - **Protection of the democratic right of the youth** to elect their leaders freely
  - Full and faithful implementation of the **SK Reform Act of 2015**

In light with this presenting concerns, the Sangguniang Kabataan is not a failed institution but a constitutional expression of the State's duty to recognize the vital role of the youth in nation-building and to guarantee equal access to public service while prohibiting political dynasties. Through the SK Reform Act of 2015, the SK has become the only elective public office that concretely enforces the Constitution's anti-political dynasty mandate, making it a critical safeguard for democratic participation at the grassroots. Abolishing the SK or placing it under barangay control would silence the independent voice of the youth, dismantle this constitutional protection, and regress youth governance to traditional patronage politics. The challenges confronting the SK are not failures of the youth but failures of support and political will; thus, the proper response is not abolition but the full implementation, protection, and strengthening of the SK as a genuine platform for youth leadership, civic engagement, and democratic renewal.

**In service,**

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