

(Translation)

**Hon Michael TIEN's motion on
“Addressing squarely the problem of child abuse in Hong Kong and
protecting children's rights”**

Wording of the Motion

That in retrospect, quite a number of appalling child abuse cases have occurred one after another in Hong Kong in recent years, including two cases in 2018 and 2019 in which a girl aged five and a baby girl aged less than two respectively died of being abused, a serious child abuse incident which occurred in the boarding section of Hong Chi Pinehill No. 2 School in 2020, a case of child abuse by a babysitter in 2021, and the child abuse incident in the Children's Residential Home in late 2021; according to the information released by the Police in November 2021, in the first three quarters of 2021, the Police received a total of 871 criminal child abuse cases, an increase of nearly 66% over the corresponding period in 2020, in which 18% of the abused children were aged only zero to five, thus showing that the above child abuse incidents are likely to be just the tip of the iceberg; the SAR Government stated in the 2021 Policy Address that to prevent child abuse tragedies from happening again, the authorities were formulating a legislative proposal to provide for a mandatory reporting mechanism on child abuse cases, but it is undeniable that at present, there are problems in the whole chain of child protection in Hong Kong, resulting in children being unable to receive proper protection at home, in schools, hostels, as well as child welfare service organizations, etc.; abuse will not only cause bodily harm to children but also affect children's mental and personality development; in this connection, this Council urges the SAR Government to:

- (1) present the bill on the mandatory reporting mechanism on child abuse cases to this Council for scrutiny as early as possible;
- (2) expeditiously provide social welfare personnel with training and guidelines so that the sector can comply with the requirements under the new legislation and also provide services with the highest professional standard before the relevant legislation comes into operation;
- (3) comprehensively review the monitoring, funding and inspection mechanisms of subsidized welfare service units, so as to ensure that the relevant organizations can meet the expected service standard;

- (4) establish a clear accountability mechanism and thoroughly investigate the responsibilities of government departments, individual officers and child welfare service organizations in child abuse incidents in the past;
- (5) check whether closed-circuit television records of all child welfare service organizations in Hong Kong are complete, and conduct random checks on the footage to enable early identification of child abuse incidents;
- (6) given that many victims of child abuse cases all have records of unexplained absence from class and abnormal behaviour and even apparent injuries, study in detail why the child abuse incidents concerned failed to be identified early; and
- (7) require class teachers of all schools to meet and talk with each student individually for at least two times in each academic year to understand the recent situation of the students, including whether they have greater psychological and physical problems; in case a child is suspected of being abused, the class teacher should immediately hand over the case to the school social worker for further follow-up actions; at the same time, the authorities should also provide school teachers with training and guidelines on handling of suspected child abuse cases.