



Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity

Public Hearing Summary

Monday June 06, 2016 at 2:00 p.m.

Topic:

Inquiry into the challenges faced by persons with disabilities with specific focus on access to services and employment.

Committee Members:

The following Committee Members were present for the meeting:

- Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, MP – Chairman
- Ms. Sarah Budhu – Vice Chairman
- Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith, MP – Member
- Mrs. Vidia Gayadeen-Gopeesingh, MP – Member
- Ms. Jennifer Raffoul – Member
- Mr. Dennis Moses – Member
- Mr. Rodger Samuel - Member

Witnesses who appeared:

Consortium of Disability Organisations

- Mr. Bhawani Persad President
- Ms. Sharda Ramlakhan Representative, Physically Challenged
- Ms. Nichol Alves Autistic Society of Trinidad & Tobago
- Ms. Nicole Cowie Representative, Mental Health
- Ms. Niobe Rodriguez Interpreting Officer

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

- Ms. Jacinta Bailey-Sobers Permanent Secretary
- Mr. Dennis Williams Deputy Permanent Secretary
- Mr. Vijay Gangapersad Chief Technical Officer (Ag.), Disability Affairs Unit
- Mr. Michael Reid Senior Research Officer, Disability Affairs Unit
- Ms. Catherine Ferreira Research Officer I, Disability Affairs Unit
- Ms. Tessa Pascal Research Assistant, Disability Affairs Unit

Key Issues Discussed with the Consortium of Disability Organisations:

1. The 2011 Census indicated there are 52,244 Persons with Disabilities in Trinidad and Tobago;
2. Persons with disabilities face many challenges at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels such as:
 - i. lack of Teacher and Student Aides and Sign Language Interpreters;
 - ii. computers do not have the software to assist the students;
 - iii. frequent bullying of students within the Secondary school system;
 - iv. lack of awareness and sensitization of teachers, students and the general public;
 - v. lack of training for teachers to deal with PWDs in a regular classroom setting;
 - vi. shortage of Special Education Teachers; and
 - vii. lack of technical assistance for teachers and students within the classroom.
3. Challenges faced with public transportation are:
 - i. difficulties to access public transportation hubs, e.g. City Gate and bus stops;
 - ii. unable to utilize the Water Taxi Service without a personal aide; and
 - iii. ELDAMO buses were purchased for persons with disabilities without consultation by the Ministry of Works and Transport and the Public Service Transportation Corporation.
4. Initiatives to address issues faced by persons with disabilities are:
 - i. awareness and sensitization;
 - ii. building and strengthening the capacity of persons of Special Education Teachers and Sign Language Interpreters;
 - iii. comprehensive review of the legal framework;
 - iv. attitudinal and physical access; and
 - v. accurate collection of statistics.

Key Issues Discussed with the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services:

1. Reasons for the delay in the Review of the National Policy on Persons With Disabilities;
2. Possibility of discussions between the Ministry and persons with disabilities to adopt the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as the national policy rather than commence the review on the current Policy;
3. Mandate of the Disability Affairs Unit;
4. Inability of persons with disabilities to access some of the offices of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services;

5. High cost of drugs for persons suffering with mental illness;
6. Review of the provisions for the Disability Grant;
7. Difficulties to define “disability”; and
8. Lack of a Monitoring and Evaluation Unit at the Ministry to follow-up with all non-governmental organizations that receive Government grants and subventions.

View the Hearing:

The hearing can be viewed on our YouTube page via the following link:

<https://youtu.be/Imhm3niybZ4>

Contact Information:

You may contact the Committee’s Secretary at jschumanrights@tparliament.org or 624-7275 Ext. 2288/2627.

Committees Unit

June 08, 2016