

September 20, 2019

Mr. Pedro Eastmond  
Clerk of Parliament  
Parliament Buildings  
Trafalgar Square  
Bridgetown

Dear Mr. Eastmond:

The Barbados Council for the Disabled is pleased to have been asked to comment not he proposed Medicinal Marijuana Bill.

With the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of persons with disabilities, the Government and people of Barbados have signaled that the needs of citizens living with disabilities are recognised to have value. Enshrined in its several articles, the CRPD inculcates the practice “*nothing about us without us*” as evinced by Article 4:

The General Obligations clause 3 which states: “*In the development and implementation of legislation and policies to implement the present Convention, and in other decision-making processes concerning issues relating to persons with disabilities, States Parties shall closely consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations.*” It is therefore most encouraging that we - the Barbados Council for the Disabled - welcomes the invitation of the joint select committee to make this submission as we are the umbrella body of and for persons with disabilities in Barbados.

In considering the present bill, the Barbados Council for the Disabled wishes to lend its support to its eventual adoption by Parliament as it is our conviction that a well-regulated access to medicinal marijuana has the potential to improve the quality of life for a large section of the community; not only the disabled, but their families, caregivers and all associated with their care.

Our reasons in support of this bill are not merely anecdotal, but having reviewed the clauses, we have established the following arguments in reaction to the legislation.

1) Many persons with disabilities live with chronic pain, spasms and césures. Medical research has shown that these situations can be greatly improved with the use of the medicaments derived from the hemp plant. It must be noted that these properties were identified for centuries with its benefits recognised in the 1800's as an anticonvulsive; it has received patients with multiple sclerosis, aided with Krone's disease and aided children/adults living with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. With the high incidences of non-communicable diseases in our country, opportunities to alleviate the multifaceted issues are to be embraced.

As a naturally based product CBDs also have the potential to reduce the several damaging side effects faced by some persons who are required to live on medications. At present, persons living with some health conditions are only able to access a very limited cadre of medicines. Often, the associated costs are prohibitive - as much as \$3,000 per month for the prescribed dose. With the costs associated with some health conditions, the lack of employment and often the inability to work put these medical options out of the reach of many.

2) Another factor is the many side effects associated with some medications which can create secondary issues which further exacerbate the wellbeing of the patient. Disorders such as Multiple Sclerosis, asthma, epilepsy, glaucoma and innumerable others are rife among our segment of the society

A further supporting argument is the real improvement to the quality of life of not only the patient but their wider circle of family, friends, caregivers and others who interact. Living with and caring for persons suffering from constant excruciating pain has caused intensely stressful situations. The burden of the high costs already outlined, witnessing the distress of the sufferer and the stress placed on the family, strains family relations; and in a country which has become infused with the knowledge the health and wellness is not limited to physical illness, but mental illness and overall wellbeing, the potential impact of ready access to cannabinoids will contribute to this aspect of daily living.

3) In reviewing the varying clauses of the bill, the BCD is encouraged by the stringent regulations proposed to streamline the availability of medical marijuana. A properly regulated dispensing of the CBD derivatives as outlined by the bill meets with the approval of disabled community.

The licensing of imports and persons charged with the dispensing of the medical marijuana will afford us to avail ourselves of drugs prescribed professionally and removing the somewhat dubious approach taken to the CBDs.

4) Finally, the bill will remove the overwhelmingly bureaucratic approach which is now in existence. Persons already impacted by health conditions who have been able to obtain prescriptions for medical marijuana are now faced with the daunting task of applying for import licenses to obtain the drug from international sources.

The process is lengthy, involved and can ultimately fail. There are several incidences of persons having obtained the prescription to then find they have to wait months and sometimes years to access the drugs which have unfortunately in several instances come too late to affect any real impact on the sufferer.

With the proposed licensing as outlined in the present bill, this process will be considerably improved. The current system present an onerous task on a person already with compromised health entangled in a process when their energies should be otherwise directed in preserving and improving their condition.

How is the quality of life measured? Is it through a man's or a woman's earthly possessions, or is it the status or ranking in authority bestowed upon them. knowing the fallacy of life, the life we live is by far impacted by the quality of life that we live; and for many of us living within this society, whose health has been compromised, our focus switches from actively living to barely surviving because of what seems as a mountain of health challenges.

The Barbados Council for the Disabled fully supports the bill as presented as its passage has the potential to improve the quality of life of many Barbadians.

Sincerely,

Kerryann Ifill SCM MBA BSC Hons.  
President  
Barbados Council for the Disabled