

**REMARKS**

**By**

**The Minister of Health and Seniors**

**The Hon. Jeanne Atherden, CA, CPA, JP, MP**

**U S Government’s International Visitor Leadership Program**

**26th May 2016, 11 a.m.**

**AB Place Press Room, Global House**

Good morning.

First, I would like to thank the U. S. Consulate, Consul General Mary Ellen Koenig in particular, for the opportunity given to Bermuda to participate in a multi-regional exchange program on disability rights.

Bermuda’s coordinator of the Department of Court Services, Mrs. Kelly Madeiros, who helped develop the Mental Health Treatment Court pilot initiative, was selected to participate. For that we are very grateful and I would like to congratulate Mrs. Madeiros on being chosen.

Her three week exchange and learning opportunity on disability rights will serve her and indeed Bermuda well as we all continue to work to improve the lives of persons with disabilities.

In recognising that Bermuda needed extra services for people with disabilities as well as our seniors, last year the Bermuda Governments National Office for Seniors and the Physically Challenged was formally renamed Ageing and Disability Services.

The Aging and Disability Services office provides services to all persons with disabilities and not just those with physical challenges and we remain committed to ensuring that they receive the best attention their interests and issues demand.

Ageing and Disability Services also provides advice and guidance on best practices for accessibility to both public and private sectors and they will continue to move towards its vision of a caring and inclusive Bermuda that supports the well-being of all persons with disabilities.

Just last week in the House of Assembly, amendments aimed at prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of mental illness were roundly supported. The primary purpose of the Human Rights Amendment Act (No 2) 2016 is to protect those who suffered from mental illness from discrimination by changing the definition of disability to include mental disability.

Bermuda is making progress and the Bermuda Government will continue our efforts in implementing programs aimed at access for the disabled. Mrs. Madeiros experience will be very helpful in ensuring that our strategy is reflective of the needs of our community as well as international standards and best practice.

Today we have come to share Mrs. Madeiros observations from her experience. I am looking forward to hearing her presentation and again on behalf of the Government of Bermuda, we thank the United States Government for affording her this wonderful opportunity.

We will all benefit as we continue to champion the rights of persons with disabilities in our community.

Thank you.