

**OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

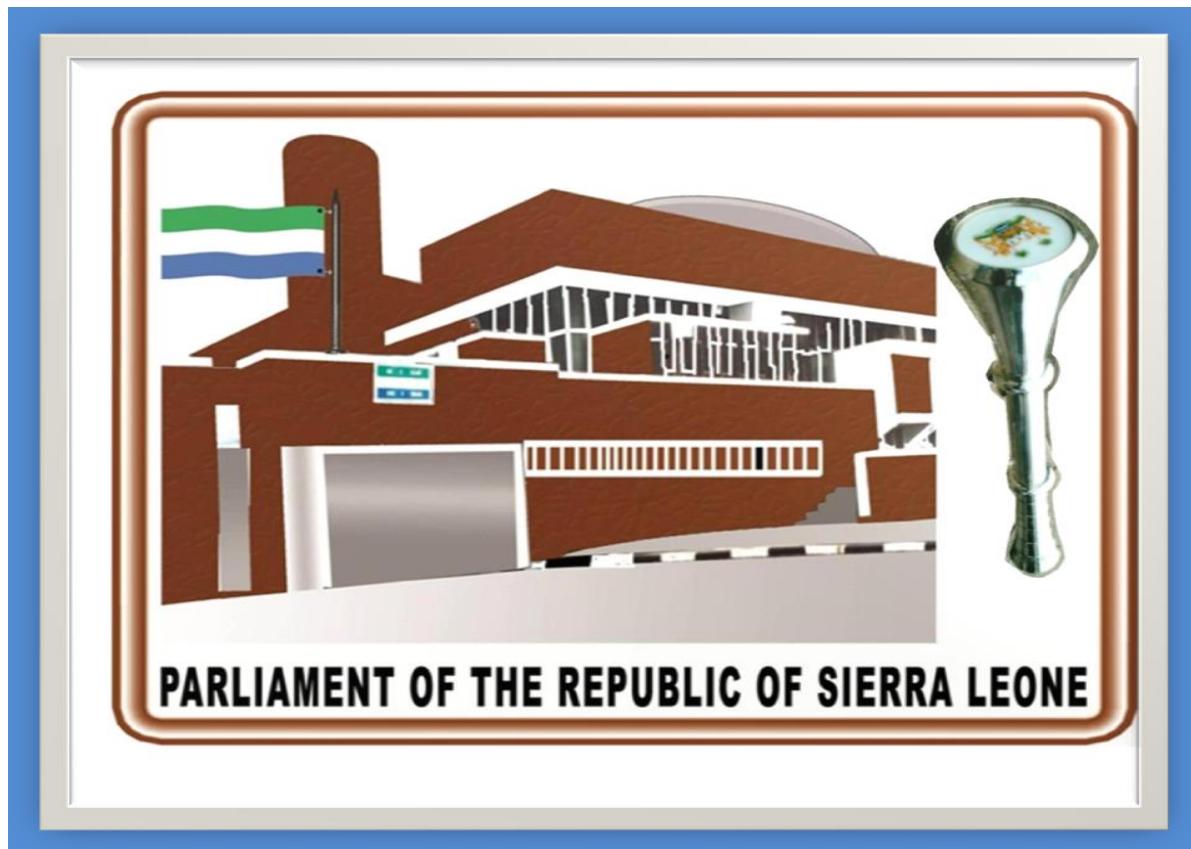
**[HANSARD]**

**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT**

**SECOND SESSION – FIRST MEETING**

**TUESDAY, 10<sup>th</sup> JUNE, 2025**

*SESSION – 2024/2025*



**OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**[HANSARD]**

**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT**

**VOLUME: I**

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First Meeting of the Second Session of the Sixth Parliament  
of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone

Proceedings of the Sitting of the House  
held Tuesday, 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2025

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2025  
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[B] THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AND AVIATION

AFRICAN ROAD SAFETY CHARTER VI

- VI. GOVERNMENT MOTIONS  
THE MINISTER OF FINANCE  
BE IT RESOLVED: THAT THIS HONOURABLE HOUSE HEREBY RATIFIES THE FOLLOWING AGREEMENTS WHICH WERE LAID ON THE TABLE OF THE HOUSE ON THURSDAY 29TH MAY, 2025
  - (i) ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT OF THE ISLAMIC CORPORATION FOR THE INSURANCE OF INVESTMENTS AND EXPORT CREDIT
  - (ii) AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT FUND PROJECT PREPARATION OF SIERRA LEONE RURAL ELECTRICITY ACCESS PROJECT (SLREAP)  
REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE DATED 15TH JANUARY 2025

[III] SUBSIDIARY GRANT AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE REPRESENTED BY MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND MINISTRY OF ENERGY  
(PREPARATION OF SIERRA LEONE RURAL ELECTRICITY ACCESS PROJECT (SLREAP)

- VII. BILL  
THE CHILD RIGHTS ACT, 2024  
COMMITTEE STAGE AND THIRD READING  
THE MINISTER OF GENDER AND CHILDREN'S AFFAIRS



## **THE CHAMBER OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE**

### **Official Hansard Report of the Proceedings of the House**

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#### **SECOND SESSION – FIRST MEETING OF THE SIXTH PARLIAMENT OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE**

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**Tuesday, 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2025**

#### **1. PRAYERS**

*[The Table Clerk, Alimamy Lincoln-Bangura, read the Prayers]*

*The House met at 10:10am in Parliament Building, Tower Hill, Freetown]*

*[The Speaker; Hon. Segepoh Solomon Thomas in the Chair]*

The House was call to Order

*Suspension of S.O 5[2]*

**II. THE RECORD OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR THURSDAY 29<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2025**

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, we go through the record of Votes and Proceedings for Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2025. Pages 1-4? Page 5? Page 6? Page 7? Page 8? Page 9? Page 10? Page 11? And page 12? Can a Member please move?

**HON. IBRAHIM S. KAMARA:** I so move Mr Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** Any Seconder?

**HON. JOSEPH ABDUL BASH BANGURA:** I second Mr Speaker.

**[*Question Proposed, Put and Agreed To*]**

[The record of Votes and Proceedings for Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2025 has been adopted]

**III. ANNOUNCEMENT BY MR SPEAKER:**

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, I have been informed and I do believe several issues are responsible for the huge absent of Members of Parliament to come for sittings in the Well. I have been informed that while some of our Members have elections in their Districts, some Members of the Female Caucus are in a meeting with the United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], and our brothers and sisters on my left informed me that they have a complaint that is why they have decided not to come for sitting and they want to bring that complaint to my notice in the Well of Parliament. But I urged Honourable Members that we all have a sacred duty to perform to this Nation that we all called our own, whether you have elections or you have a meeting I urge Honourable Members to please ensure that when it is time for sitting you always attend sitting and go to attend to other matters. It is extremely important because even as we sit here we have our people out there who wanted to know exactly what we do in the interest of this Nation, you cannot avoid sacred national duties for other matters. So I urge Members that in future even if you have meetings or even if you have elections, please try as best as you could to attend your sittings before you attend such meetings. As for my brothers and sisters on my left I will urge them to bring their complaint forward as soon as possible so that we can find ways and means to address those concerns so that the concerns do not cause them to avoid sittings.

Honourable Members, I wish to recognise the diligence of the following Members who were here in this Well before my entering as you are supposed to be recognized by the State of Sierra Leone. Of course, I have informed you Honourable Members that at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> Parliament I am going to do a letter to the respective Political Parties informing them about the attendance of their Members, and I will personally inform Political Parties about the diligence of individual Members. Honourable Members, I know properly that will not be the sole reason for granting symbols but I know my letter will be persuasive. I will try as best as possible to make my letter persuasive so that they know that not all Members of Parliament are diligent enough when it comes to their duty to the State of Sierra Leone, so if you have a strong opponent that will want to take your seat your Party can easily use that to make sure you do not return. So Honourable Members, I want you to treat this very seriously because I am going to go all out to make my presentation of Members to their Political Parties as persuasive enough to warrant consideration. So let me at this stage recognise the following Members who were in this Well before my entering, I do not know what took them out of the Well but by the time I entered they were here. Honourable Alpha Maddie Jabbie, Honourable Abdul Karim Kanu, Honourable Fatmata Sarah Soukenah, Honourable Marie Kamara, Honourable Musa Fofanah, Honourable P.C. Farama Tass Bubu Bai, Honourable Ibrahim Kabba, Honourable Alie Bayoh, Honourable Memunatu Jalloh, Honourable P.C. Thor Thor Sheka Tink Fonkola Marrah III, Honourable P.C. Haja Fatmata Bintu Meama Kajue, Honourable Joseph Bash Kamara, Honourable Daniel Amadu Bangura, Honourable Fallah Tengbeh, Honourable Nenneh Lebbie, Honourable Osman Abdulai, Honourable P.C. Paul Ngaba Saquee V, Honourable P.C. Desmond M Kargobai, Honourable Abdulai A. Kamara, Honourable Mohamed Bangura, Honourable Komba Quee, Honourable Mohamed Papa Bangura, Honourable Moses A. Edwin, Honourable Alex M. Rogers, Honourable P.C. Saffa M. Tharmu, Honourable Abdul Suliaman Marray-Conteh, Honourable Idriss Sahid Kamara, Honourable Abdul Karim Kamara, Honourable P.C. Bio Prince Lansana, Honourable Ishmael Yillah Sankoh and Honourable Bashiru Silikie. I want to also thank all the other Members that came even though they came after me; I thank you also for your presence in the Well. It is extremely important for you to receive Mr Speaker and not the other way round, thank you very much. Please take note of the names Mr Clerk let them form part of the record of Votes and Proceedings.

#### **IV. PRESENTATION OF AWARD TO THE PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE**

**THE SPEAKER:** Yes the Leader of Government Business.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, on behalf of Parliament, the Turkish Embassy in Istanbul organized an investment and trade seminar, where Ministers and other dignitaries made presentations on behalf of Sierra Leone. The Clerk of Parliament made a very good presentation on the work we are doing and the investment portfolio that we have opened in the Private Sector which encompasses the Acts that we have done. It is coming from the Sierra Leone Embassy Turkey Investment and Trade Seminar Istanbul organized on the 30<sup>th</sup> May, 2025, for the Legislative Arm of Government with sincere gratitude to the House of Parliament of the Republic of Sierra Leone, in appreciation of your dedicated service, legislative excellence and steadfast contribution to promoting good governance and national progress. Mr Speaker, I received this award on behalf of Parliament when I went for the Programme and I humbly want to give this presentation to you on behalf of Parliament.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much Leader of Government Business for representing Sierra Leone in Turkey. You know we have been doing quite well as a Parliament some critics might not see that but we are doing extremely well, if you can notice we are having several visitors coming to this Parliament to understudy what we are doing here that is so right. The name of the Sierra Leone Parliament is all over the world and people do appreciate the kind of work and the Laws we are passing here. If no one congratulates us, we congratulate ourselves for doing quite a good job, so I want to take this opportunity to thank Honourable Members for your support. I know some Members of Parliament find it difficult to come on time but that does not mean we do not get their support, we have the support of every Member of Parliament like I told the Liberians the other day we are set to achieve great wonders, thank you very much. Honourable Members, let me inform you that by the close of today all your microphones will be in good working order, we have done almost all with the exception of just ten but the Contractor just brought in the ten so by the close of business today they would have fixed the ten and the whole House will be properly serviced by good microphones but I urge you to take care of your microphones. Honourable Members, if you have a seat and you have a microphone in front of you, that microphone is your personal property until the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> Parliament that microphone belongs to you so it behooves you to take the greatest care to ensure that they are in proper working order. Do not allow any interference with those microphones because I am tired of this mobile microphone going around.

## **V. PAPERS LAID**

### **i. THE ATTORNEY GENERAL AND MINISTER OF JUSTICE**

**MR ALPHA SESAY:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, with your leave I beg to lay on the Table of this Honourable House the following papers:

**Criminal Procedure Act [Commencement Regulations 2025]**

**The Criminal Procedure Act 2024 Act No.8 of 2024**

**Statutory Instrument No.6 of 2025**

**THE SPEAKER:** Mr Minister you may leave, proceed.

**Ii THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AND AVIATION**

**MR ALHAJI FANDAY TURAY:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, with your leave I beg to lay on the Table of this Honourable House, the following paper:

**African Road Safety Charter**

**THE SPEAKER:** Yes Honourable Leader.

**HON. ABDUL KARGBO:** Mr Speaker, you could have noticed that there were delays for our coming into the Well today and basically as the Leader on this side we want to make our position very clear Sir. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to express our deep disappointment over the continued silence from your office regarding our letter dated Monday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2025, in which we raised a grave concern about the conduct of the Clerk of Parliament and demanded his immediate resignation. It has now been over a month and you asked us for two weeks since that correspondent and we are yet to receive a courtesy of a response. This silence in the face of such a serious Constitutional and Institutional matter is unacceptable and it undermines the integrity of Parliament as an Institution that is governed by law, order, and impartiality. As stated in our initial letter the Clerk's action namely he declared an ambition to seek an executive position within a Political Party, while holding a Public Office and his publicly hostile remarks towards the Opposition Members of Parliament are a clear violation of Subsection 2[b] of Section 26 as well as Subsection 2 of Section 82 of the Constitution which undermines the expectations of neutrality and proper conduct of Parliamentary Staff. These bridges threatened the credibility and impartiality of Parliament, in view of your delay to respond or take action on this matter; we thereby inform you that as Opposition in Parliament we have resolved to suspend our participation in all Parliamentary sittings and Parliamentary activities until further notice. This principle stands not in defiance of Parliament but in defence of its integrity. We cannot in the face of good conscience continue to engage in proceedings while such a

fundamental bridge of public trust goes unaddressed. We urge your office to treat this matter with the seriousness it deserves and to respond without further delay. So I am just waiting for your response on this Mr Speaker and I and my team will leave this House.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much Leader of the Opposition. Indeed I received your letter addressed to me regarding the Clerk of Parliament, let me inform you at this stage I have had initial meetings with the Clerk of Parliament, the Leadership of the Sierra Leone People's Party within one week today you will get my response but I urge you Honourable Members of the Opposition Party not to suspend service to this Parliament until such time when you receive my response, give me one week you will receive my response to your concerns.

**HON. ABDUL KARGBO:** Mr Speaker, with due respect we always have for you, we do not want to go against that Mr Speaker, but remember initially you asked us for two weeks.

**THE SPEAKER:** Yes.

**HON. ABDUL KARGBO:** And without any delay or denial, we gave you the two weeks.

**THE SPEAKER:** Yes.

**HON. ABDUL KARGBO:** Mr Speaker, I want to assure you that our suspension was until further notice but I want to assure you that we will come after we receive your reply but for now we are left with no alternative, but to leave the Well Mr Speaker, Honourable Members let us find our way out.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Speaker, the Deputy Minister of Finance is standing in for the Minister of Finance. He talked to me quietly but you have spoken to her so I will like to amend the Order Paper so that we would continue the Business of the day.

**THE SPEAKER:** Okay before you do that let me tell you exactly what I told her.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Speaker, I beg we leave that one in camera.

**THE SPEAKER:** Oh, you want to leave that one in camera?

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Yes.

**THE SPEAKER:** Okay, before you do the amendment, Leaders of Sierra Leone People's Party [SLPP], can we meet briefly in my Chambers? Let us meet briefly in my Chambers.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Speaker, you are calling our Colleagues on the other side?

**THE SPEAKER:** No hold on; let us meet in my Chambers.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** We do not want to preempt you but we have not been treated with respect.

**THE SPEAKER:** No, let us meet in my Chambers.

**THE HOUSE STOOD DOWN AT 10:30 A.M.**

**THE HOUSE RESUMED AT 10:35 A.M.**

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Thank you Mr Speaker. Like I said before we had the break, I wanted to amend the Order Paper. Mr Speaker, with your leave let me amend the Order Paper, I want to expunge item 6 from the Order Paper for obvious reasons for the good of the House. I so move that item 6 be expunged from the Order Paper.

**THE SPEAKER:** Any Seconder?

**HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE:** I so second Mr Speaker.

**[*Question Proposed, Put and Agreed To*]**

**[The Motion to amend the Order Paper moved by the Leader of Government Business has been carried]**

**V. BILL**

**THE CHILD RIGHT ACT 2024**

**COMMITTEE STAGE**

**THE MINISTER OF GENDER AND CHILDREN'S AFFAIRS**

**[THE HOUSE RESOLVES INTO COMMITTEE]**

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Page 13? Page 14? Page 15?

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** Mr Chairman, are we still proceeding in the format where we stopped in certain areas?

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes [Interruption].

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** Is very important that we revisit that particular aspect, if at all we are going to agree to stick pins and move forward and then later on come to sticky areas.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** We stopped at different Clauses, so we can come back and have a review which I know the Chairman of the Legislative Committee can lead us to that.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Please guide the Minister to the relevant Clauses.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** If she has anything to talk to the House that has to do with this Bill, I want to give her the platform and then we continue with the Clauses.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes Madam Minister.

**DR ISATA MAHOI:** Thank you Mr Chairman. I have an appeal to make to this Honourable House in relation to the Bill that we are enacting in this Well of Parliament. Mr Chairman, Honourable Members, I bring you greetings from the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs and Child Protection Partners. Sierra Leone is a low income country with a population estimated in 2021 to be 8.4 Million of which about 3.9 Million are children under 18 years of age, 1.9 Million of whom are under 5 years according to United Nation Children Fund [UNICEF] 2023. A Child means a person below the age of 18 years as defined in the Child Rights Act 2007. Sierra Leone remains one of the countries with the highest prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation [FGM] or Female Genital Cutting [FGC] globally. According to the 2024, Demographic Health Survey 83% of women ages 15 to 24 years have undergone Female Genital Mutilation [FGM], with the majority cut before the age of 15. Female Genital Mutilation [FGM] is harmful practice that violates the rights of girls and deprives them of their health, dignity, and future potential. Female Genital Mutilation [FGM] often results in girls dropping out of school as girls are viewed as adults when undergoing the procedure and are expected to take on household responsibilities. Girls dropping out of school frequently lead to child marriage and teenage pregnancy, further disrupting their education together. Female Genital Mutilation [FGM], child marriage and teenage pregnancy form a cycle that undermines girls development and long-term opportunities. The economic consequences of this cycle are considerable; the high cost of Female Genital Mutilation

[FGM] procedure imposes a heavy financial burden on families, diverting scarce resources away from education, healthcare and basic household needs.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Hold on Madam Minister, I do not think that is what we asked of you to stick a pin at certain Clauses.

**DR ISATA MAHOI:** Okay.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** So we just wanted to have your idea on those areas.

**DR ISATA MAHOI:** I thought we needed to proceed so that is why I made this appeal before we proceed, but I got you now Mr Speaker.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes.

**DR ISATA MAHOI:** We are very much aware that we stopped at certain Clauses and for us to move faster, I beg this Noble House to be able to read the Bill as we have started and then come later to rectify them [Interruption].

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Hold on, we started by looking at the definition of Collective Violence.

**DR ISATA MAHOI:** Yes, that is in the Report.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Oh, that is in the Report?

**DR ISATA MAHOI:** Yes that is in the Report Sir.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Now we go to Page 10 of the Bill.

**DR ISATA MAHOI:** Page 15?

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Page 10, under page 10 we have Clause 19, 'boys and girls shall be protected from Negative Traditions and Norms'. Have we sorted that out?

**DR ISATA MAHOI:** Yes Honourable Chairman.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** On that day contention was on the use of the phrase "**Negative Traditions and Norms**" at some point they suggested the use of the word "**Practices**" which was also not accepted [Interruption].

**THE CHAIRMAN:** So where are we?

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** I have a suggestion or a rendition that I want to bring to this House.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Please do.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** The Report was not agreed on so that is why we kept debating it and that is why I am bringing this one up. Every child shall be protected from any system that results in unequal access to resources, unequal social status or unequal opportunities for their survival, development, and participation. The key word here is 'system' because we are talking about Negative "Traditions and Norms." It was not accepted so that is why I suggested "system" so in this case 'any system'.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Madam Minister, are we okay with that?

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** The debate on that day, the use of "Negative Traditions and Norms" so even a further definition was required so the debate went further and some suggested the word 'practices'.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** But what is wrong with practices?

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** That is the point; we debated on the word 'practices' for some time that is why we are moving away from that. We do not want to define it again that is why we are bringing alternatives [Interruption].

**THE CHAIRMAN:** The word 'practices' is okay.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** So because practices was not okay in the eyes of few or so many we went further to think about system, so that is where we are.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** No, system will not fit in appropriately.

**DR ISATA MAHOI:** Mr Chairman, what practices are we to define?

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** Then it should read, "Shall be protected from Practices and Norms."

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes we leave it like that.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** Again, I am not the one suggesting the word 'practices', I cannot qualify practices. What I read just now was talking about in case of any system.

**DR ISATA MAHOI:** Mr Chairman, are you suggesting that we take note of what you have read?

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** I am really been misunderstood here, what I read has not got anything to do with the word 'practices'.

***Suspension of S.O 5[2]***

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Proceed.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** On page 19, the Committee paid attention to the use of boys and girls from the Report.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Honourable Members, let us be true to ourselves "Boys and Girls shall be protected from practices and norms that create unequal access to resources," there is nothing wrong with that.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** Because we are clearly referring to practices that create unequal [Interruption].

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Of course, beliefs, norms, methods all of them.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** It is some kind of common understanding that boys are being prioritized than girls when it comes to education [Interruption].

**THE CHAIRMAN:** We all know what the issues are.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** So that is a practice that creates unequal access.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes, so Honourable Members, Practices is okay. Leader have you got anything against that?

**DR ISATA MAHOI:** Mr Chairman, we do not want to be misconstrued, we are not saying 'practice' is not okay; we want to be able to understand the context that is being used and let it be read again so we would understand the whole Section.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Let me read that again?

**DR ISATA MAHOI:** Yes please.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** 'Boys and Girls shall be protected from Practices and Norms that create unequal access to resources, unequal social status, and unequal opportunities for their development', there is nothing wrong with that.

**DR ISATA MAHOI:** In that case Mr Chairman, do you mind giving us examples of such practices.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** No, we do not need to give any example.

**DR ISATA MAHOI:** Because the definition is what we have not understood Mr Chairman.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Okay what you should be telling me, if you want a definition of practice then we can define practice.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Chairman, we should also bear in mind that we have a State that practice culture. For instance, if you go to Muslim tradition, you would not expect women to provide leadership for them. So when you now say all practices should be equal and we have traditions where naturally they prioritize men as against women not because they want to disadvantage them but it is their culture. For instance, if you go to the North, there are societies which are reserved for boys. So again we are eroding our own culture and this is a cultural and religious tolerance nation. [Interruption].

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Leader of Government Business that is not what we are saying.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** I just talked to the Chairman to do some renditions for us.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** Thank you very much Mr Leader. Mr Chairman, just a quick one where you read the 'Boys and Girls' earlier in the Report, we should change that to like 'every child' [Interruption].

**THE CHAIRMAN:** That is the same impression.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** We just want to be consistent, so let me read the aspect again.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Okay.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** Every child shall be protected from any act that creates no tradition, no practices. Now any act that creates unequal access to resources, unequal social status, and unequal opportunities for their development.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Well from what I heard from him, there is nothing we can do here that will address his concerns, as far as he is concerned boys and girls in certain traditions are not equal.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** Mr Chairman, this Honourable House has to be bold and tough in taking decisions.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Of course.

**HON. ABDUL SULAIMAN MARRY CONTEH:** Yes we have to proceed.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** You know Honourable Deputy Leader of Government Business; we are referring to children here, not adults. We are just referring to children; you cannot talk about children as you talk about adults, we are not talking about men and women, we said children, and they should all have unequal access that is what we are saying.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** I am just thinking as a parent, how will you feel that your child was excluded from certain benefits because of their gender?

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes, all of them should have equal access to everything.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** As a parent your children come home that they are refused certain benefits because of the category they fall which they never chose, in life we have voluntary groups and involuntary groups, those that we choose to belong to and those that we naturally belong to.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** We are not talking about adults; men and women, we are talking about children that they should all be treated equally that is the position of this particular Clause and nothing more.

**HON. MAHTEW S. NYUMA:** I think we did not stick to the point during the rendition in the Act, I was expecting you to stick on the point, because what you are saying now in this context you are referring to children, so you actually explained and stated the things we are looking for but you refused not to stick on the point. This Bill is purely for children [Interruption].

**THE CHAIRMAN:** We have moved away from traditions, and we have moved away from cultures.

**HON. MAHTEW S. NYUMA:** Now we are seeking the rights of our children.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes.

**HON. MAHTEW S. NYUMA:** So I think you have to read that Clause.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** I do not think there is anything wrong in that.

**HON. MAHTEW S. NYUMA:** We are talking about children not adults.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** Firstly, I will start with the side note, children to be treated equally, that is the bases. So going forward, any child shall be protected from any act that creates unequal access to resources, unequal social status, and unequal opportunities to their development [Interruption].

**THE CHAIRMAN:** It is just a matter of semantics, whether you say act, whether you say practice is almost the same, we are just playing with semantics. I am not really getting you; please do not even try that. I think the quarrel was against negative traditions; we have dealt with negative traditions. According to Members we do not have negative traditions in Sierra Leone. So we have tried as a House as best as we could to get rid of the negative traditions. Let me hear you if you have anything to say or you want me to read it in full?

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** I think if we are getting rid of traditions, I want to suggest that norms go with it and the act to stand on its own.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Okay, so read that out again.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** 'Boys and Girls shall be protected from any acts that create unequal access to resources, unequal social status, and unequal opportunities for their development'.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Of course, that is progressive enough.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** Children to be treated equal.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** That is extremely progressive. Now we move on to Clause 23.

**HON. FALLAH KENEWAH TENGBEH:** On the subject matter, I want to know whether we have any plan for our local institutions.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** And you are referring to Clause 23? We have crossed that already, we have dealt with that.

**HON. FALLAH KENEWAH TENGBEH:** Mr Chairman, the questions is have we modified it?

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes.

**HON. FALLAH KENWAH TENGBEH:** But then how are we going to make decisions for this same boys and girls we are talking about under the new modification scheme for us to have local people that will be looking after them. That is my concern Sir.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Madam Minister please respond.

**DR ISATA MAHOI:** If the Honourable House can pass or enact this Law when we develop the Regulations, so the Regulations will go in tandem with what is in the Law and this can be addressed.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Honourable Tengbeh, are you okay?

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** Mr Chairman, please let us have the new rendition for 21, because we expunge cultural practices the last time but let us have the actual rendition for Clause 21.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Clause 21, we were supposed to add penalty.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** Maybe to respond before adding the penalties from the Report we recommended that we delete the phrase "cultural practices."

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Under 21?

**HON. ABDUL SULAIMAN MARRY CONTEH:** Yes, and if you look at part of 21, which is now 19, it takes us back again to something like Section 20 of the Constitution, because they are almost the same. The only difference there is the cultural practices, so the new rendition she was asking for is that the child shall not be subjected to physical violence including torture, other cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment which dehumanizes or is injurious to the physical and mental welfare of the child, so the only deletion from there is cultural practices, the rest is almost as the same as what we have in Section 20 of the Constitution.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** And we were supposed to insert a penalty?

**HON. ABDUL SULAIMAN MARRY CONTEH:** Yes Mr Chairman.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Do you read that out? I think you dealt with that in you Report.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Chairman, we asked for penalties on two areas, there is a general penalty, which we disagreed that it should not be for all of that part but for a particular Clause.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Now in our view we came to consensus that the head of the Institution takes responsibility just like corporate bodies.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** So as we said there must be penalty for every Clause.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** I do not know where we are to stick penalty, we will like to hear the penalty.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Yes, Chairman let us get the penalty, you did not complete for the penalty.

**DR ISATA MAHOI:** As the Chairman is getting ready when he has just read Section 21 which is now 19; did I hear you saying it is exactly as what is in the Constitution Mr Chair?

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** Merely as exactly, let me just read that to you.

**DR ISATA MAHOI:** That is merely as what is in the Constitution, so my take Mr Chairman, if we already have what he is saying is in the Constitution we have to just check to bring it in the Act.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** What we have in the Constitution is no person shall be subject to any form of torture, any punishment, or other treatment, which is inhuman or degrading. Now what we have here goes beyond that 'not to be subjected to physical violence including torture, or other cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment which dehumanizes or is injurious to the physical and mental welfare of a child, whilst the Constitution was specifically talking about human and this one zoomed in to that of a child and added some other things. The only problem Members had with it was the cultural practices and that was deleted at the Committee Stage.

**DR ISATA MAHOI:** I certainly do not have problem with that, I was just very careful not to tamper with the Constitution.

**HON. QUINTIN SALIA-KONNEH:** Mr Chairman, I think we are in the open space, and so we must be careful. You know there are certain things we cannot discuss here, and there are certain things we cannot accept in the open, but yet they exist and looking at the text technically and the interpretation of the text reads there might be violations in certain areas. We cannot accept certain things and yet we cannot say no because accepting or saying otherwise we are technically going the extra miles to explain something.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** No, this is very specific there is nothing wrong with that.

**HON. QUINTIN SALIA-KONNEH:** Are children not human being? Is the Constitution not including children? Do we need to name the children specifically?

**THE CHAIRMAN:** We want this to be specifically in the Child Right Act.

**HON. QUINTIN SALIA-KONNEH:** Then we have to be careful Mr Chairman.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** How and why?

**HON. QUINTIN SALIA-KONNEH:** No, Mr Chairman these are things I cannot explain.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** It is alright Honourable Members.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Chairman he is shouting.

**HON. QUINTIN SALIA-KONNEH:** Sorry Sir, I hope I am not shouting.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** Mr Chairman, let me refer the Honourable Member to Subsection 1 of Section 20 of the Constitution I think if he reads that his problem will be solved.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Proceed.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Chairman, at the Committee Stage we also reiterated it in quoting Constitutional provisions [Interruption].

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Who altered the Constitution, the Chairman?

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Is not the Chairman, it is the Drafter so when it went to the Committee Stage people said let us just do the amendment.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** They did not alter the Constitution.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** That is what they did.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** The Constitution makes general provisions.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** For 20?

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes but in this case, you only violate the provisions of the Constitution, whatever you propose is against the spirit of the Constitution. This Clause is not against the spirit, in fact, this Clause is emphasizing that spirit being specific to children there is just emphasis they do not alter at all the Constitution.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Chairman, protection from inhuman treatment that is the side note of the Constitution.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes if you read that in the Constitution is clear.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** In tandem with 23, protection of children from sexual violence.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Is not against the spirit.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** A child shall not be subjected to physical violence including torture, or other cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and cultural practices [Interruption].

**THE CHAIRMAN:** We deleted the cultural practices.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** In the Constitution no person shall be subject to any form of torture, any punishment or treatment which is inhuman or degrading.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** This one is just emphasizing that spirit; it is not a violation of that Clause.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** It is an expansion of the Clause, so what they did Mr Chairman is to insert the word cultural practice.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes, we deleted that one.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** So we decided to use the text as you have said.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** To be inserted in the text?

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Of course.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Okay, it is not about alteration anymore.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** There is no alteration, so Mr Chairman we agreed that we add a penalty Clause.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Chairman, our children are our future, I have seen them monetarizing the punishment. So for me we should be talking about imprisonment so that we cannot have somebody who has accrued so much money and equating the punishment to certain amount of money. They are saying Fifteen Thousand Leones or two years imprisonment, for me I am proposing that we go for imprisonment straight off.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** We would come to that but Mr Leader the one you are talking about is the penalty earlier on that we deleted in Clause 15 because it has to do with Clause 11 which we have to modify because this is where you stressed on the fact that the Military should take responsibility. In fact, we even added that any person, group or authority including any state Officers of the Armed Forces or Paramilitary forces or other agents of the State who recruit security or facilitate or authorize the recruitment or use of a child in armed conflict can be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a term of imprisonment not exceeding fifteen years. That is what we are going to restore again in Clause 15 because it came as a result of Clause 11.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** So there is no insertion at 21?

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** For 21 we are suggesting or we want to bring "A person who contravenes Subsection 1 commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a term of imprisonment not less than Fifteen years or to a fine not less than Fifty Thousand Leones [Nle50,000] or to both fine and imprisonment.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Not less than fifteen years, that is too much.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** Not less than?

**THE CHAIRMAN:** That is too much, fifteen years.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** That is why we are here Mr Chairman to look at it exactly.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Let us give the Judges free hand to look at the seriousness of the offence.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Chairman, there was a model we adopted for certain penalties. There are areas we will give restrictions not less than or not more than, so in this context they are saying not more than.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** If you say not less than then they cannot even imprison somebody less than fifteen years, as long as they find you guilty not less than fifteen years, do you know what that mean?

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** I am saying for aggravated sexual harassment.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** But it is not sexual harassment.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Let us force them to start somewhere, we can say not less than five years.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** You know we are all men of the world I always take this [Interruption].

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Chairman, I just want to make this submission because this argument came heavily during the Sexual Offence Bill.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Honourable Members, we are all men of the world you know when we make Laws we have to be extremely careful. For instance, a father left his office he had very terrible day at his office and went home and the child does something and because of his temperament at the moment goes on to give the child heavy lashing because he has a particular bad day in the office. Can you say that father should be imprisoned for fifteen years? We are men of the world that is why we leave out these gaps for Judges to look at the seriousness of some of these offences properly when the evidences are led before the Judge, the Judge too being a man of the world can be able to assess. But the problem is that as long as that father is found guilty he is to go to jail for fifteen years, then in the process of protecting that child you are even destroying the future of the child because there will be no one to take care of that child that is why we leave out these latitudes for the Judge being a man of the world to assess the seriousness of some of these offences.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Yes, Mr Chairman I know giving latitude to the Judge to make a decision is right.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Somebody stood in this Well and he was the Attorney General at the time and they passed that law, "Misprision of treason" that was the law that killed him. Even when some Members of Parliament argued against him he pushed it through, that Law killed him. So we have to be very careful as Members of Parliament when we pass some of these Laws.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Chairman, if you want to compromise the Law you cannot say that for the Court and you cannot question the integrity of the Judge or the Magistrate but it has been the norm now not less than. That is why I am saying in the normal circumstances where there is complete trust you cannot go above certain limit. I am just looking at the consistence to what we adopted if we are still in line with what we did previously to what you have explained is okay but people questioned the jurisdiction or the integrity of this House.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** I think the more than is the most appropriate.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** Well in this case, we can go maybe for not less than two and not more than five.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** Because your argument was a very stronger one in protecting the child, you cannot also suffer the child.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Of course, the end of destroying the future of the child.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** So what we have on the Floor we are looking at not less than two and not more than five.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Chairman, we are talking about Institutional Punishment, the one you are referring to now we have not reached there yet. We are talking about leaders in the Military we should not give fine levied by money. Mr Chairman is saying let us have a frame nor less than two years but not more than five years. I think I agreed with that.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** The one in the Military that I read maybe we can also agree on that now because the suggestion was that one is not exceeding fifteen years because we are talking about recruiting to the Military.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Sorry Sir we have dealt with the one from the Military so this one is for the range of time so let us agree on the range of time.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** Not less than two years and not more than five years.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Chairman, he is right.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** But the monetary aspect we can also agree on the amount, because what I read was something about Fifty Thousand Leones [Nle50000].

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Chairman, I want us to put that one on the Floor, we do not mortgage the right of children, I sometimes frown at that. We are talking about children we want to institute moral standing into society. I just want to crave on your indulgence that we put that one on the Floor whether Members agree to have it monetary terms levied or purely imprisonment. I really do not want us to subscribe to monetary terms I beg to defer but put it on the Floor for us to vote. If they agree to have punishment levied both money and imprisonment so be it but I do not really want to subscribe to that.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Madam Minister what do you say?

**DR ISATA MAHOI:** I suggest we remove the monetary terms for this particular crime.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Mr Clerk please take note.

**DR ISATA MAHOI:** Mr Chairman, I reiterated that it is better to remove the monetary terms and remain with the term not less than two years but not more than five years. I thank you.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** It is alright.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** That is why I said we put it on the Floor, they are proposing and Mr Chairman like I said we are comfortable with that at least for the moment let us agree with her.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Clause 23?

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** For Clause 23, the Committee Report gave two options and they are debatable here at the Plenary, so I think it was against that background that we even brought in some extra information that we will also share

today that can help take a final decision on this aspect because what we had there was expunged in the first place because it has to do with Female Genital Mutilation [FGM] and then Collective Violence Reporting [Interruption].

**THE CHAIRMAN:** I am looking at Clause 23 of the Bill.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** It was 25 in the Bill that became 23 in the Report.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** We will come to that.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** But 23 is in the Bill, we only have to change instead of "use of children" to a "child."

**THE CHAIRMAN:** So that is okay?

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** Yes.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** So 25?

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** It is 25 on the Bill that became 23 in the Report that was where the Committee recommended two options for the Plenary to decide so even at the beginning of those discussions, option one had to do with Collective Violence which was defined and was not acceptable [Interruption].

**THE CHAIRMAN:** What do you have now?

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Chairman, I think we want to open Pandora box here again. Mr Chairman, you led us on that here comfortably and Madam Minister do you want to say something?

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes Chairman.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** I am still saying something Sir because we agreed on something.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** We did not.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** No, when we were talking about collective violence.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** We did not have a common position.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** On that one?

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** The one on the Report was not adopted that is what they are saying.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** No, we did not.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** We did not?

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** So, what is the present resolution?

**THE CHAIRMAN:** The Chairman can tell us.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** Now let us look at the Bill again.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Read out the provisions.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** 23 on the Bill has no issue.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** 25?

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** 25 the side note, protection from harmful practices, if you come to the Report page 8, protection from harmful practices be expunged, Clause 25 was expunged in its entirety.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Completely?

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** Yes, because it has to do with harmful practices.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** So do we maintain that?

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** Harmful practices was already deleted under interpretation.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** So we delete this one?

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** It was already deleted.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** I want us to deal with the Bill; the Bill is what we are dealing with now because if we begin to move in between the Bill and the Report there is going to be confusion.

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** Okay Mr Chairman.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Do we have any other problems around?

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** He should now give us the rendition for what you have said.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Do you have anything that you think can fit in here?

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** No am not confused. I do not have to read because we suggested after we deleted 25.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Okay what do you suggest?

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** It is there in the Report.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Okay read that out.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Chairman, we need one minute break.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** We do not need to go for break please. Option 1, 'no child shall be subjected to collective violence', collective violence was rejected flatly. Option two, 'it shall be an offence for any person, group or authority to perform, assist or facilitate any procedure that intentionally causes harm or alteration to the body of a person under the age of 18 but not limited to [a] the removal of cutting, this was also rejected. So do we have anything that we can use here instead of option one and option two?

**HON. ABDUL S. MARRY CONTEH:** Well that is what the Minister was saying.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** So Madam Minister do you have anything?

**DR ISATA MAHOI:** Mr Chairman, Honourable Members, I said initially I have a case to present before this Honourable House of Parliament.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes, Madam Minister let us hear you.

**DR ISATA MAHOI:** If I am given the time to talk about our children.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Okay now I give you the time to explain.

**DR ISATA MAHOI:** Thank you very much Mr Chairman. Mr Chairman, Honourable Members, I bring you greetings again from the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs and Child protection Partners. Sierra Leone is a low income country with a population estimated in 2021 to be 8.4 Million of which about 3.9 Million are children under 18 years of age and 1.9 Million of whom are under 5 years according to United Nation

Children Fund [UNICEF]. A child means a person below the age of 18 as defined in the Child Right Acts of 2007. Sierra Leone remains one of the countries with the highest prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation [FGM] globally according to 2019 Demographic Health Survey, which makes 83% of women age 15 to 49 years have undergone Female Genital Mutilation [FGM] with the majority cut before 18. Female Genital Mutilation [FGM] is a harmful practice that violates the rights of girls, deprives them of their health, dignity and future potential. Female Genital Mutilation [FGM] results in girls dropping out of schools as girls are viewed as adult undergoing the procedure and are expected to take on household responsibilities. Girls dropping out of school frequently lead to child marriage, teenage pregnancy and further disrupting their education, Female Genital Mutilation [FGM], child marriage and teenage pregnancy form a circle and undermine girl's development and long term opportunities. The economic consequences are considerable high cost of Female Genital Mutilation [FGM] procedure imposes a very heavy financial burden on families diverting scarce resources away from education, healthcare and basic household needs. Moreover, when girl's education is cut short, their ability to access formal employment significantly reduced leading to lower life time earnings and increase dependence on subsistence livelihood, at the national level this weakens the skills labour force, reduces productivity and perpetrates inter-generational poverty, the legal obligations and regional progress. Sierra Leone is a State to the Convention on the Right of the Child [the CRC], the African Charter on the Right and Welfare of the Child [The ACRWC] and Africa Union [AU] Protocol on the African Charter on Human and People's Right on the Rights of Women in Africa which is the Maputo Protocol. These Instruments clearly established that Female Genital Mutilation [FGM] violates the rights of health, dignity, protection from harmful practices and non-discrimination in line with this commitment the Medium Term National Development Plan of Sierra Leone is expected to take stronger action to protect girls from all forms of violence and abuse. Several Countries in the Region including The Gambia, Nigeria, Senegal, and Liberia have already taken decisive steps to ban Female Genital Mutilation [FGM] especially for children. Sierra Leone recent land mark law banning Child Marriage represents a key mile stone in advancing Child Protection and Gender Equality to fully implement this Law and achieve its intended impact. It is essential to also ban Female Genital Mutilation [FGM] for Children as Female Genital Mutilation [FGM] remains the primary driver of child marriage in Sierra Leone. Traditional Leadership and National momentum in 2024 a significant milestone was achieved when traditional leaders including 'Soweys' and Paramount Chiefs in all 16 Districts signed Memorandum of Understanding [MOU] with the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs pledging their support for a ban on Female Genital Mutilation [FGM]

for Children. These leaders acknowledged clear linkage between Female Genital Mutilation [FGM], Child Marriage, and Teenage Pregnancy affirming that child marriage cannot be effectively tackle without addressing Female Genital Mutilation [FGM]. Let me commend this 6<sup>th</sup> Parliament for passing into Law the Prohibition of Child Marriage Bill 2024. Sierra Leone has been commended all over the world for this great milestone, it is however important to underscore the nexus between Female Genital Mutilation [FGM], Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy our work is inconclusive in addressing harmful practices without passage of Child Right Bill which is considered the National Children's Law. This momentum offers critical opportunity for the Government of Sierra Leone to build on existing momentum and introduces Legislation that will provide clear legal protection for girls and create and enabling environment for them to thrive.

#### Culture, Right and Modernization

Banning Female Genital Mutilation [FGM] for children is not a rejection of culture rather; it provides the path to modernize traditional practices in a way that uphold national commitment and International Human Right Standard. It draws the necessary line to ensure the cultural expression does not cause physical or psychological harm. Honourable Members of Parliament, you have a vital role to play in this transformation because you are key in the development path that we are taking by supporting cultural sensitive programs, public education campaigns and community dialogues. Members of Parliament can help to bridge the gap between tradition and progress, so for this Law we are bringing here we consider it being a progressive Law that your role will help us achieve that. The call to action finalized the action plan on reduction of Female Genital Mutilation [FGM] in Sierra Leone which was drafted in 2015 and 2016 to serve as implementation plan as indicated in the medium term National Development Plan 2024 to 2030. One of our key policies action areas under children at page 78 in the medium term development plan is "Pass the Child right Bill and develop implementations for each regulation for its implementation and enforcement." Let us fulfill this promise I beg you in the name of God and for the love of our children in Sierra Leone. Before going to conclusion, there are recommendations here which we have shared this morning to all Members of Parliament here present that looks at Female Circumcision of a Child, the female circumcision of a child means the cutting or removal part of or all of the Female Genitalia and includes the practices of Clitoridectomy, excision and infibulations or other practices involve removal of part or the entire clitoris or labia of the female child.

1. No person shall subject a child to female circumcision or other rites of passage that are likely to negatively affect the Child's life, Health, Social Welfare, Dignity, or Physical or Psychological development.
2. Right for the female child; every female child has the right to be protected from sexual abuse and exploitation and gender based violence including rape, incest, early and forced marriage, female circumcision and Female Genital Mutilation [FGM], the circumcision of girls is prohibited.

Protection from all forms of violence- A child shall not be subjected to violence including torture, other cruel inhuman degrading treatment or punishment and practices which dehumanize or are injurious to the physical and mental welfare of a child. No person or a group of persons shall subject a child to physical, psychological, or emotional pain leading to injury or removal of any part of the body including the reproductive organs except for legitimate medical purposes.

Definition of Medical purposes- Legitimate medical purposes refers to any medical procedure carried out by a licensed medical practitioner which is necessary for the prevention, treatment or management of a recognized medical condition in accordance with accepted standards of care and practice, as outlined in National and International Medical guidelines complying with the World Health Organization, International Classification of Disease and International Classification of Violence Against Children.

Option three- Protection from Harmful Practices- This is what is in the gazette; a person caught or other authority shall not involve in a child in the participation of harmful practices including early marriage, child betrothal and Female Genital Mutilation [FGM].

In conclusion, Honourable Members of Parliament, let me appeal to this Honourable House to act with courage and unity and resolve to pass the Child Right Bill of 2025 and ban Female Genital Mutilation [FGM] for children, as this will send a powerful message that Sierra Leone is ready to protect its girls, modernize traditions and honour both heritage and human rights. Now is the time to join other African Nations to help enacting legal protection against Female Genital Mutilation [FGM] and demonstrate that children's Right and cultural identity can coexist without harm in Sierra Leone. I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Thank you Madam Minister. Honourable Members, as I sit here as the presiding officer, I know the issues are so clear, I want this House to accept today or if this House is going to reject today the issue is simple. Female Genital Mutilation

[FGM] has not been banned and there is no intention to ban Female Genital Mutilation [FGM] in this Bill.

**HON. WUYATTA BERNADETTE SONGA:** Thank you Mr Chairman. Mr Chairman, I am a mother of three with the oldest being 27 and the youngest being 16. Mr Chairman, this Bill is a very good Bill and today with your blessing we will pass this Bill but we are going to pass this Bill by expunging Clause 25 in the Bill and 23 on the Report. We have seen examples of countries but as Sierra Leoneans we are not ready for that yet. Let the Minister come after some time but for this moment let us pass this Bill because it is needed for our children but let us expunge that Clause. We are expunging that Clause does not mean the Bill is not good. The good things in this Bill are enough to protect our children. There is a tiny aspect we do not need it for now as a nation, we are not prepared for that and Mr Chairman we do not need to debate this Bill.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Can a Member please move?

**HON. WUYATTA BERNADETTE SONGA:** Mr Speaker we do not have to debate.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** I will give few Members of Parliament time to debate after that I want a Member to move and we go directly into vote. Let us put this thing into a vote, we have been on this for several months now.

**HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE:** Mr Chairman, I just want the Minister to know that while she was reading her speech, Members of Parliament were making undertone, please take it as a practice of the House and no hard feelings please. Nobody intends any ill motives please that is the practice. Thank you.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** It is alright.

**HON. VERONICA KADIE SESAY:** Thank you very much Mr Chairman. Mr Chairman, Honourable Members, I am a member and I went through the secret society. Mr Chairman, I want to differ from what my sister from Moyamba District explained here about the involvement and the signatures of our Paramount Chiefs. My own Paramount Chief did not sign and he was not there. I want to say thanks to the Minister because she did justice to what she wrote or what they have written. The Bill is good because sometimes some people are just cruel to children. In those days our parents did not send girls to school they sent boys but at the end of the day they are disappointed. We have already expunged some bad things in the Bill and she mentioned about other countries but thank God this is Sierra Leone. We have the Parent Bill and it is written

there 18 years and with the consent of the child. In this past December I joined my children those who are in the University and they are hale and hearty. I am representing my people in my Constituency let them hear me because that is the only time that women come together to jubilate and do the likes. We were not involved so to me let us expunge 25 and go strictly with the parent Act that states 18 years and with the consent of the child. Thank you very much.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Thank you very much Honourable Veronica Kadie Sesay, let me hear the Paramount Chief Meama Kajue, hold on please, Honourable Quintin Salia-Konneh I do not know what you want to say, this is a woman's matter.

**HONOURABLE QUINTIN SALIA-KONNEH:** I have something to say.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Be careful what you say in this matter, yes Honourable Meama Kajue.

**HON. HAJA FATMATA KOROMA MEAMA KAJUE:** Thank you very much Mr Chairman. I do not have much to say because we had an agreement long before this time that we are going to protect our children. We are going to protect this issue of what she is talking about but with 18 years and above and we are monitoring our 'Soweys' to see that they abide by that Law. I Haja Fatmata Koroma Meama Kajue did not append my signature to any of those things, if she is saying Paramount Chiefs all over the 16 Districts signed I did not sign. I know we have dealt with that long since and we have forgotten about that. We are monitoring our 'Soweys' to see that they do what they should do. We took oath for that so I do not think we have much to say about that except that she expunges Clause 25. I thank you very much Mr Chairman.

**HON. P.C DESMOND MAHAYEI KARGOBAI:** Mr Chairman, Honourable Members, in deed the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs made consultations with Paramount Chiefs and other stakeholders in the Districts but one Paramount Chief 's view is not enough to represent all the other Paramount Chiefs views. They were having stakeholders meetings at District levels so they were taking one Paramount Chief to consult with another. It was not a matter of signing, no body signed it was just consultation they spoke about the good aspect of the Bill and as all of us have seen there are a lot of aspects in the Bill that are good. So the good aspect we accepted by those who represented us but that does not mean we accepted the harmful practices. We are the heads of traditions and customs and we always protect it. I will make sure where ever I go I will protect the tradition and customs so therefore the harmful practices should be expunged. So whatever this House will agree on in terms of

expunging Clause 25 and 23 we go by that as Paramount Chiefs. Thank you Mr Chairman.

**HON. P.C MARRAH III THOR THOR SHEKU TERENAH TONGOS NEYA**

**KONKOROBA:** I am Honourable Alhaji P.C Thorgus of the great Falaba District, representing 13 Paramount Chiefs in Falaba District. To be sincere and honest with this Honourable House, the entire Paramount Chiefs in Falaba District will never sign any document relating to the matter that the Minister said in this Well of Parliament. So therefore we disagree and we are not going to sign anything concerning that. Thank you and it is a taboo to our tradition.

**HON. NENEH LEBBIE:** Thank you very much Mr Chairman. Mr Chairman, mine is a very short one, you know our Minister is a loveable character, and we have been with her for several months on this and we really appreciate her effort in trying to protect our children, but one thing we have told her severally is that if something has become a burning issue particularly all over this country let us make sure we expunge it. Madam Minister, I really want you to take me along like to Shenge and preach this message to your people let us see what will be their responses. If something is harmful Mr Chairman, can you hire dancers to come and celebrate with you during the initiation? If something is harmful, do I need to hire amplifiers or dancers to come and help me dance? It is not harmful, it is something we appreciate Mr Chairman. We appreciate it and we call our neighbours, we call relatives all over. When I want to initiate my children in December people will come and they will come with gifts. If something is harmful they will not encourage me to do it so I want the world to know that Sierra Leoneans will definitely not encourage anything that is harmful for our Children. We really appreciate what you want to do in protecting our children, let us just expunge 25 and believe you me this Bill will be passed today. I thank you.

**HON. P.C. KANDEH PARIA KAWALEH II:** Thank you very much Mr Chairman. Mr Chairman, Honourable Members, I am here to tell this House that Madam Minister and team indeed made a tour to us in Karene District but we told them right away that we are not going to accept this one they know about that Mr Chairman. In fact our meeting did not end properly because they wanted to insist to convince us but we declined and said no to it. So if they failed to deliver the message to you properly about how the meeting went in Karene District, we told them clearly that we are not going to accept Mr Chairman. So please let Madam Minister accept to expunge 25. Thank you.

**HON. P.C BAI FARAMA TASS BUBU NGBAAK IV:** Thank you very much Mr Chairman for giving me this opportunity and I also want to use this opportunity to

thank the Minister to make sure this Bill is passed here. I am sure it is in line of global trend as we are living in a global community where all of us believed that we are moving towards a trend to protect our children globally. We think we should be concerned about the physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing of our children and that is important. Secondly, she is aware of the fact that we are signatory to a lot of human right Conventions and it is within our right to ensure that she promotes what everyone else around the world is promoting and I want to give her a kudos for that. Indeed some consultations were done at the District level but I think that was not enough because she is taking a subset of the population to justify what she wants to put in the Bill, and here what could help is for us to have raw statistical data as to the percentage of women that are actually clamouring for what we are trying to pass here because at the end of the day we are the people's representatives. We are held responsible for whatever decisions we make here posterity has to judge us and therefore we have to be very careful. We are in line with all of the trends but we have to be mindful of those we are representing. We need a lot more consultations maybe along the line down the years it is possible that this Bill could pass but I know for sure at this particular moment there could be a lot of push back. If we try to force this one we would be doing our people a lot of disservice, and again we have already decided to expunge traditional practices. If we bring a Clause that is reinforcing those same traditional practices then I think it is incongruent with what we have already expunged. So I want to appeal to the Minister with a very good conscience to go back to the drawing board. I just want to crave that she bears with us, she is doing everything that she wants to do to protect our children and we congratulate her for that but this Bill is not timely, I do not think it will pass for now, I thank you.

**HON. FATMATA BINTU BOCKARIE:** Thank you Mr Chairman. Since this Bill came in this Parliament we have been looking at Clause 25 I have never said anything about this because it makes me feel bad. Mr Chairman, I want us to take away this particular Clause because it is really making me to feel very bad about it. If this Clause is not taking and it is approved in this Parliament our people would kill us [Interruption].

**HON. QUINTIN SALIA-KONNEH:** Mr Chairman, I will advise the Member of Parliament to concentrate on the Bill, we are Members of Parliament, our business here is to make Law. There is no way we would make Law and our people will kill us, please just concentrate on the Bill.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes proceed.

**HON. FATMATA BINTU BOCKARIE:** Thank you Mr Chairman. I want to ask the Minister what about those children that run into our bushes? Are we going to leave them? We will not leave them because they are the ones that have accepted to go there. Mr Chairman, please it is not yet timely for this one, let us leave it because this is not timely yet. We would really want Mr Chairman for you to stop this one for this moment for today as you have said either it goes through or not but for me I am not interested. Thank you.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Thank you very much, Honourable Quintin Salia-Konneh, you are the last person to debate today.

**HON. QUINTIN SALIA-KONNEH:** Thank you very much Mr Chairman. Mr Chairman, without any iota of phantasmagoria, I want to state that this particular Bill could have been a very good one but when the Minister read the script she got me more confused because the provisions in these scripts are quite different from our understanding in the Bill. My mother was about 7 when she became initiated and she lived up to 85 years before she died. My grandmother was at 11 when she became initiated and she lived up to 90 years. I got circumcised after 8 days yet I am very much healthy and very prepared for anything. So this whole idea of allowing other people condemning our tradition is what is disturbing me. Every country has their own traditions and if we allow people to condemn what we believed in as our tradition then it will be telling on us. The more reason I am very much bitter with this whole concept because this is our tradition and any attempt to condemn it, it brings us down. If you look at the White People, they have Gayism yet they are not condemning it.

Mr Chairman, as I said this Bill would have been a very bad one had it not been for attempt to take us in the pond and out of the pond because we have totally said "Traditional Practices must be avoided" but in this document given to us this morning we are seeing aspects and fragments of them again coming which means their true intent is what is here and not what we are discussing. So as a way forward Mr Chairman, Honourable Members, I want to subscribe that we totally flush 25 and where possible we should not discuss it again and I also want to advise that we put a stop so that we technically look at the provisions so that we do not make mistakes. We are Honourable Members and tomorrow we might not be in this House and if we make wrong decisions now tomorrow when we might have retired these things will come to chase us and do not forget if you do not search for problems the problem technically will not come to you. So that is why let us be careful when talking about these things they are very sensitive. I am a traditional man, my Paramount Chief is not here but he called me to say the Paramount Chiefs from Kailahun did not subscribe to any signing.

They have some discussions and those discussions were loose discussions. On that note I rest my case.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Thank you Honourable Quintin Salia-Konneh. I would have asked for a Motion to be put on this matter for a permanent rest but unfortunately you all know that the Opposition is not in the Well at the moment. I would want the Opposition to be here so that we all take a bipartisan vote on this particular matter so that tomorrow we would not have one political party saying we were not involved. We have to wait for the Opposition so that we have a bipartisan vote on this particular issue and I would also want to listen to them.

**HON. QUINTIN SALIA-KONNEH:** Mr Speaker, the Minister is just a channel; she has listened to Members of Parliament. She is a bit confused because she wants to have a clarification. I think let us allow her to know where the clarification is at this time.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes Madam Minister let us hear you.

**DR ISATA MAHOI:** Thank you very much Mr Chairman. Mr Chairman, when Honourable Veronica Kadie Sesay was speaking she said there is a parent Law and she even asked a question why did we bring Clause 25 because Clause 25 in fact is in the parent Law which says for person 18 and with the consent of the child and person above 18 and with the consent of the child. Which Law that says that because I want to learn from this Honourable House [Interruption].

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Is alright we will get on to that.

**DR ISATA MAHOI:** Thank you Mr Chairman. I want to make clarifications on the consultations that were held and we know that there are 190 Paramount Chiefs because of some limitations that we had during the consultations we decided to bring Paramount Chiefs from every District and we brought together with them the 'Soweys' that are also heads in their particular Chiefdoms that were present. The Gender Committee was invited, the Legislative Committee and I am very much sure of what I am saying. We also have documentations, we have videos, and we have pictures that show that most of these people were consulted. Even with that we also have a communiqué that was signed and even during the consultations it was made clear to me. In Kenema District, I was told by one of the Heads of the 'Soweys' that says in 2015 they had signed a communiqué already and that communiqué is still in existence and that communiqué is what they are practicing and what they believed that "Children above 18 or people above 18 years are the ones that are to be initiated into Female Genital Mutilation [FGM]." I am just trying to clarify because this Bill that we are talking

about here is looking at how we are going to protect our children and also encourage those that are 18 years and above for Female Genital Mutilation [FGM]. That is what this Bill is saying and it is not contrary Mr Chairman. It is nothing different and the mistake that was done by the Drafter in Clause 25 we did not qualify the age of a child in that particular Clause which states 18 [Interruption].

**THE CHAIRMAN:** We have Laws that deny children.

**DR ISATA MAHOI:** I believe that the Ministry together with our partners we are not saying anything contrary. We are ready to protect our Customs and Traditions. We are not looking down on our customs and traditions rather what we are saying is how to protect our children that are below 18 years and already the Honourable Member of Parliament also said that in 2015 they signed a communiqué and it is with that signed communiqué that we operated, and this is why we brought this Bill that is also stating that "No Child Under Age 18 Years." It means somebody above 18 years should be the one that is subjected to Female Genital Mutilation [FGM]. I rest my case.

**HON. QUINTIN SALIA-KONNEH:** Madam Minister you have heard the views of the Paramount Chiefs here, and you have heard the views of the Members of Parliament. Mr Chairman said we are waiting for the House to be fully constituted; you still have a role to play until we get there at the next allotted date but please you have listened and this is not time for argument. You know everybody's view at this moment please work on the views until the next adjourned date. Thank you very much.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Yes Honourable Wuyatta Songa, you wanted to say something?

**HON. WUYATTA BERNADETTE SONGA:** I was just going to say we can be here for the whole year we have just said what we needed to say and that is not going to change. Mr Chairman, that is the position of the women in this Parliament and that is the position of the women in Sierra Leone.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Honourable Members, I think we have dealt with all the sticky points now we are going to pass part one 1 to five, Clauses 1 to 46, save Clause 25 to stand part of the Bill. We are going to stick a pin at 25 we will reserve the vote on 25 until the full constitution of the House. So we are going to pass part 1 to 5, Clauses 1 to 46 save Clause 25 to stand part of the Bill, we will not say with the exception of Clause 25.

**HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE:** Mr Chairman, you initially said we need to wait for the Opposition; can we please wait for them?

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Madam Minister, I wanted us to stick a pin at 25 but according to the House we should wait for the full constitution of the House to put 25 to vote before we proceed. Madam Minister, you are released in the first place, do we have announcement?

### **The House Resumes**

**HON. JULIANA ALIEMATU FATORMA:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I stand on S.O 23. I want to thank the Speaker for his intervention in my case. I believed he is a very good Speaker and he is ready to save us in times of problems. On Monday I was evicted from my house I have built for 22 years ago. I have never had a problem with anybody living in that house. It was difficult to get Mr Speaker after they have thrown all my things out of the house but the sooner Mr Speaker heard about that he made a call straight away and they moved away from my house. Mr Speaker, I want justice because I was so distressed in fact my pressure went up. They threw all my property out of the house. They did not only throw my things out, they opened my boxes and they opened places they were not supposed to open. I was really disgraced in that community. I felt so bad when a young man went to my house to ask me are you really a Member of Parliament or you are working in Parliament? I told the young man being a Member of Parliament or working in Parliament is the same thing but really the community is getting hard on me for the thing that happened, so I want this House to look into my case.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** It is alright.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Speaker, I was able to talk directly to the Honourable Member through her phone and with the Undersheriff that was sent to her house and I also called the Inspector General of Police.

**THE SPEAKER:** Who got the judgment?

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** There is a complication there because I do not also want in future, it appears as if we do not want to seek the interest of our Colleagues. There is some family misunderstanding which I cannot tell so we were able to talk to the Undersheriff and he showed some amount of understandings. Mr Speaker, we should institute an investigation looking at the instruction from the Undersheriff because they went too far to interfere into her personal belongings. I really want to institute an investigation to know from the Undersheriff especially the IG how they normally go about evicting people from their houses by getting Orders from the Court. It was really disgraceful. Mr Speaker, I think we need to have a proper Committee set in place

although this is not the appropriate time but I will ask her to do the needful. Mr Speaker, I am begging you through your good office let us institute proper investigation for this so we cannot have a repeat of such nature.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** It is alright.

**HON. P.C KANDEH PARIA KAWALEH II:** Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, in connection with our bridge in Karene up to this point nothing is being done towards that bridge and now it rains heavily everyday Mr Speaker [Interruption].

**THE SPEAKER:** The Deputy Leader of Government Business is the Chairman of Works Committee.

**HON. P.C KANDEH PARIA KAWALEH II:** This one is very serious Mr Speaker, please do something towards that bridge Mr Speaker or else that road will cut off.

**THE SPEAKER:** I want you and the Chairman of Works Committee together you can summon the Director General of SLRA to come and explain all of your concerns. The Chairman of Works Committee you have to treat this matter extremely seriously.

## **Announcement**

Honourable Members of the Transparency and Accountability Committee are invited to a very important meeting immediately after sitting at Room 105 New Administrative Building, office of the Chairman.

**HON. QUINTIN SALIA-KONNEH:** Honourable Members of the Sierra Leone People's Party [SLPP], are invited to a meeting on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2025, at 12 Noon at Committee Room 1.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**MR SPEAKER ADJOURNED THE HOUSE TO TUESDAY 1<sup>ST</sup> JULY, 2025 10: A.M.**

**PROMPT.**

**THE HOUSE ROSE AT 1:00 P.M.**

