

**LEAD DEBATE ON A BILL FOR ACT TO AMEND THE COMPULSORY,
FREE AND UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION AND FOR CONNECTED
PURPOSES ACT, 2004 (SB. 324)**

SPONSORED BY SENATOR ALIYU WAMAKKO

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, permit me to lead the debate on the general principles of the compulsory, Free, Universal Basic Education Act, 2004 (Amendment) Bill, 2016.

This Bill was read the First Time on 8th November, 2016.

The Bill seeks to amend section 11(1)(a) & (2) of the Principal Act, by increasing the Federal Government's block grant of not less than 2% of the Consolidated Revenue Fund to 3%; and reducing the States commitment in accessing the funds from 50% to 10%.

Mr. President, my Distinguished Colleagues, the state of our basic and secondary education system no doubt, is in a deplorable condition. Significant number of Nigerian children today, are not yet enrolled in schools and do not have access to basic education t say the least. Most of them are roaming the streets, subjected to child labour, abuse and molestation. There has been increasing concerns about the negative effects of this condition to our national development, given that education is the bedrock of any development whatsoever. Recall Distinguished Colleagues that on Thursday May 26th 2016, Senate as an institution representing the masses, strongly raised the concern on this appalling and deplorable state of basic and secondary education in Nigeria, during exhaustion in Nigeria, during an exhaustive debate on a Motion commemorating the Nigeria Children's Day in May 27. It equally mandated Committee on Education (Basic and Secondary) which I chair, to ascertain the implementation level and challenges of the Universal Basic Education Act, in solving these problems.

The Compulsory, Free, Universal Basic Education Act, 2004 was primarily enacted to provide free, compulsory, and universal basic education for every Nigerian Child of primary and junior secondary education. It equally places responsibility on Education Stakeholders in Local Government Area (LGAs) to ensure parents/custodians perform that duty, and contravention of that duty

by parents/custodians attracts different degrees of sanctions to be enforced by a Magistrate Court or any State Court of competent jurisdiction.

Distinguished Colleagues, in order to actualize this right of free universal basic education, Section 11 which this Bill seeks to amend provides for the financing of the implementation of the Universal Basic Education through Federal Government block grant of not less than 2% of its Consolidated Revenue Fund; funds or contributions in form of Federal guaranteed credits, and local and international donor grants, to be generally administered and disbursed by Universal Basic Education Commission, through the State Universal Basic Education Board. However, States can only qualify for the Federal Government block grant if they contribute not less than 50% of the total cost of projects to be executed.

It is a known fact Distinguished Colleagues, that most States do not have access to this Federal Government Block Grant (either fully or partially), due to inability to meet their commitment to the fund and therefore cannot adequately and effectively achieve the intents of this Act. This was equally acknowledged by the Minister of Finance during her briefing, on the Monetary/Fiscal Policies adopted to salvage the current economic situation, before the Senate on Thursday 21st July, 2016, where she solicited for the support of National Assembly to amend the Universal Basic Education Act, by reducing the States' commitment in order to enable them access the already trapped, and subsequent funds in the Central Bank of Nigeria derived from the Federal Government Block Grants.

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, I therefore solicit your support in the consideration and passage of this Bill, which seeks to amend the Principal Act, to strengthen States to meet their commitment to the Federal Government Block Grants, and enable States and the Universal Basic Education Commission fully implement and actualize the compulsory and free universal basic education, for all children of primary and junior secondary school age in the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Thank you for attention and support.