

LEAD DEBATE THE THEATRE ARTS PROFESSIONALS REGULATORY COUNCIL BILL (SB. 681)

Sponsor: Senator Victor C. Umeh, OFR (*Amambra Central*)

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, thank you for the opportunity to lead the Debate on the General Principles of the Theatre Arts Professionals Regulatory Council ((Est, etc) Bill, 2018.

You will recall that this Bill was read for the first time on the Thursday, 24th May, 2018.

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, the Bill essentially seeks to provide for the establishment of the Theatre Arts Professionals Regulatory Council to be charged with the responsibility of regulating and managing Theatre Arts Professionals in Nigeria. It also seeks to enthrone professionalism over quackery and touting as well as enhance appropriate standards, ethical code of conduct, training and retraining of Theatre Arts practitioners.

The Bill is well structured to revolutionize the practice in Nigeria and therefore seeks to define the framework for an institutionalized structure and platform for Theatre Arts Professionals. To achieve this, the Council when established will among other things:

- Determine the standard of knowledge and skill to be attained by persons seeking to be Theatre Arts Practitioners in Nigeria;
- Establish and maintain a Register of Members and the publication of list of such members;
- Set an enforceable code of ethics and standards for registered members
- Regulate and control all aspects of the practice in Nigeria; and
- Establish, maintain and update a list of registered members in Nigeria with routine vetting of their processes, products and services.

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, the Theatre as an entertainment enterprise has become a major revenue earner all over the world and indeed contributes significantly to Nigeria's GDP.

It is also a major platform through which the culture and traditions of any nation can be promoted, projected, preserved and sustained. It also offers a lot of ingredients

for image making and image laundering for our corporate identity in the comity of nations.

With the current security and identity challenges facing the Nigerian nation, the place of the Theatre as an identity and peace builder, cannot be over-emphasized.

An industry with such huge potentials for peace building and economic development cannot therefore be left unregulated for moonlighters to use as a subversive weapon. Used appropriately, the Theatre has the potential to cultivate the Nigerian dream and help give this nation a sense of patriotism and pride as Hollywood did for the USA, Nigeria at present can be said to still be under cultural imperialism because of a lack of a viable regulatory framework for the practice of Theatre Arts in Nigeria.

This therefore, makes the Theatre Arts profession an all comers venture hence the very negative image that is being painted of Nigeria as a country of ritualists and fraudsters. This can be arrested and the right image, projected to the outside world, if the profession is regulated so that practitioners must attain a minimum level of skill set before practicing.

The effectiveness of any profession resides in the competence of its operators and the ideals of its contribution to National Development.

It is observed that our Theatre industry with its operations has consistently come under critical searchlight in recent time; its major drawback has been with the quality of its practitioners, content of productions, technical efficiency and business potency.

It is against this background that it has become necessary to pay close attention to the training and practice of Theatre Arts in Nigeria if our nation must derive maximum benefits from the multifaceted economic, social and cultural potentials of Theatre Arts.

It is to this effect that the **Theatre Arts Professionals Regulatory Council** bill is being proposed to ensure effective regulation of the Theatre Arts training and practice in Nigeria. When passed and fully operational, the following significant benefits are derivable:

- a. A Regulated Theatre Industry will properly position the Profession to be in the vanguard of the fight to re-engineer the Nigerian nation and reawaken patriotic zeal in the citizens through portraying the Nigerian dream in our artistic endeavours;
- b. There will be clear determination of what standards of knowledge and skills are to be attained by persons seeking to become members and or practice the profession as well as clear guidelines on how to improve those standards from time to time in line with global trends;
- c. It will guarantee employment for the students and apprentices trained as Theatre Artists and sustainable livelihood for our colleagues working in the public and private sectors as artists;
- d. It will also elevate the Theatre profession to the same level as other chartered professions in Nigeria like the Nigerian Medical and Dental Council, Council for Legal Education, Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria, Council for the Regulation of Engineering in Nigeria, etc. This will be in line with international best practices;
- e. It will secure the future of the Theatre profession as a respected profession where training and mentorship matter. It will provide harmonized platform to train and upgrade existing hands in the industry;
- f. There will be effective quality control towards the integrity of the Theatre Profession This will make censorship of otherwise harmful artistic products, easier;
- g. The council through its activities will rekindle patriotic zeal and civic responsibilities in Nigerians, while exporting the best of our ideals as a great nation to the outside world; and
- h. The council will also promote national integration, ethical re-engineering, oneness in nationhood, and creative enterprises for economic gains.

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, this bill has no financial implication on the Government as the Council will rely on dues and annual subscription of Members.

I urge you all to support the Second Reading.

Thank You.