

LEAD DEBATE ON A BILL FOR AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL AGENCY FOR THE RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT OF PERSONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AND FOR OTHER RELATED MATTERS (SB.255)

SPONSOR: SEN. BETTY APIAFI

I thank you Mr. President and my Distinguished Colleagues for the honour and privilege of leading this debate on **A Bill for an Act to Provide for the Establishment of a National Agency for the Research and Management of Persons with Special Needs and For Other Related Matters.**

The Bill was read for the first time on the floor of the senate on the **5th of December, 2019.**

The bill seeks to create an Agency charged with the responsibility for Research activities, initiating projects and programmes aimed at improving the Social, Economic, Mental and Physical wellbeing of persons medically diagnosed with disorders that have *special needs*.

By special needs we mean persons afflicted with:

1. Down's Syndrome;
2. Autism;
3. Cerebral Palsy;
4. Dyslexia;
5. Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
6. Bipolar Disorder;
7. Albinism and hypo-pigmentation;
8. Hydrocephalus/Neural tube disorders;
9. Psoriasis;
10. Vitiligo;
11. Lupus;
12. Scleroderma;
13. Severe Atopic Dermatitis;
14. Lamellar Ichthyosis;
15. Sickle Cell Disorder:
16. Thalassemia;
17. Haemophilia;

18. and any other related medical disorders as may be diagnosed by Medical Experts;

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BILL:

The Bill is a straight forward Bill that is divided into twenty three (23) sections seeking to establish this important Agency to cater for Citizens who have been medically diagnosed with disorders that require special attention in line with current Global best Practices.

Some of the highlights Include:

Section 1, which seeks to establish for Nigeria a National Agency for the Research and Management of Persons with Special Needs and give supervisory powers to the Federal Ministry of Health.

Section 6, which states the major functions of the Agency to Co-ordinate various research, programmes and projects, Collaborate with other Agencies, advise on all social protection activities of government related to any special needs field and Maintain a data bank which are all aimed at improving the health, social and economic well-being of persons with special needs

Section 8 which deals with the structure of the agency to allow it to cater to various disorders listed as special needs cases. It divides the Agency into two (2) Directorates and four (4) departments.

Section 18, which gives powers to The Minister of Health to give directives of a general or special character to the Agency relating its functions.

The Bill also has Schedule dealing with the supplementary provisions relating to the Governing council established under this Bill.

CONCLUSION:

This Bill is a crucial step towards addressing the plight and hardship of Citizens with Special needs in Nigeria.

I therefore seek your support for this Bill.