

LEAD DEBATE ON A BILL TO MAKE PROVISIONS FOR THE PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE AND COMPLAINTS COMMISSION (ESTABLISHMENT) BILL 2021

Sponsor – Senator Suleiman Abdu Kwari

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to lead the debate on the need for a bill to provide for the establishment of the Public Interest Disclosure and Complaints Commission and other related matters.

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Public Interest Disclosure, also known as Whistle Blowing, is a critical component in the current administration's anti corruption war and therefore needs a clear and unambiguous legal framework for its implementation.

The 8th Senate had attempted to pass the whistle blower and witness protection in one bill, but general consensus and best practice recommends that the bill be unbundled.

Recently, the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, inaugurated a committee to determine why agencies meant for scrapping were entrenching themselves and new ones still being created, despite the crippling burden of our treasury.

As lawmakers, we have the prerogative of creating institutions of relevance, but we ought as well be mindful of the financial implications on our economy.

In this instance, it is therefore compelling and convincing that unique and innovative legislations, which seek to expand the mandates of existing institutions with already, established administrative and operational infrastructure within their jurisdiction.

This is the guiding principle of this bill as it seeks to expand the existing provisions in the Public Complaints Commission Act 1975, to enable it accommodate public interest disclosure.

Therefore, this bill, when passed into law, will repeal the Public Complaints Commission Act 1975 and reenact the Public Interest Disclosure and Complaints Commission Act 2022.

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, this bill has 15 Parts covering the legal and institutional framework, management and protection of disclosers.

Parts 1 and 2, provide for the objectives of the bill and the establishment of the Public Interest Disclosure and Complaints Commission (PIDCC).

Parts 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 provide for the actual management of disclosures, the office of the Chief Executive, funds of the Commission, definition and mode making disclosures as well as its procedural requirements, protection and complaints.

Parts 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 make provisions for the referrals, protection programme, immunity, rewards and compensation, while Parts 14 and 15 deal with offences, penalties and procedures for legal proceedings.

Mr. President, my Distinguished Colleagues, I hereby seek your support in the passage of this bill into law, as I firmly believe this is the right thing to do for this great nation and the generations to come.

I so move.