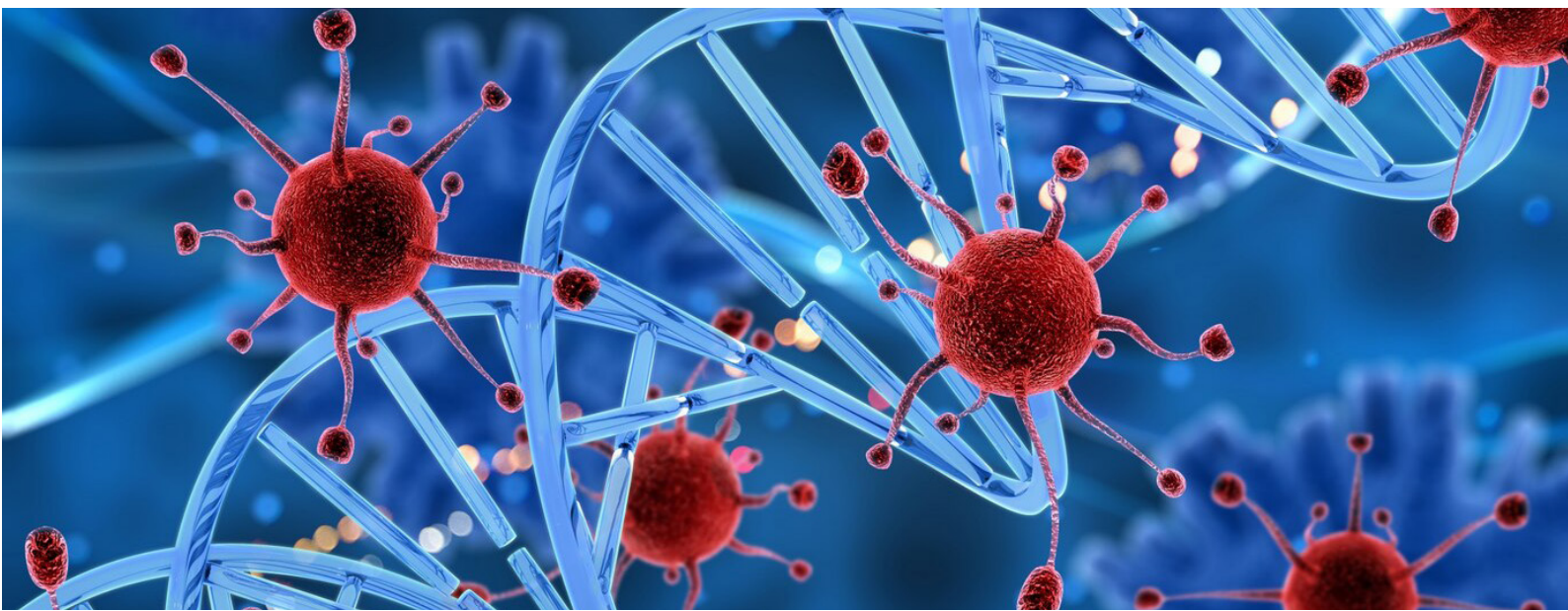


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## A BILL FOR AN ACT FOR THE MANDATORY INCLUSION OF TEACHINGS ON BREAST AND CERVICAL CANCERS INTO THE CURRICULUM OF ALL SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA BILL, 2023 (HB. 501)

Sponsor: **Hon. Julius Ihonvbere**

### 1. Objectives of the Bill

The primary objective of this Bill is to incorporate breast and cervical cancer education into the curriculum of senior secondary schools in Nigeria and enhance awareness, prevention, and early detection of breast and cervical cancers among young people. This Bill also seeks to ensure comprehensive training for Civic Education teachers and establish an effective monitoring and compliance mechanisms for the implementation of the Bill.

### 2. Introduction

Breast and cervical cancers are significant public health issues in Nigeria, with many cases going undetected until advanced stages due to lack of awareness and preventive education.

Globally, breast cancer is the leading type of cancer with an estimated 2.3 million new cases and 685,000 reported deaths in 2020. It has also been reported that Nigeria currently holds the highest breast cancer mortality rate in the globe. The Breast Cancer Association of Nigeria (BRECAN) identifies breast cancer as the leading cause of death among Nigerian women. However, early detection examinations can help improve the chances for early detection of breast cancer and reduce mortality rates. Breast cancer awareness and education needs to start early, among girls and teenagers, to bring about a change in knowledge, attitude, practices and early detection.

Cervical cancer on the other hand, is said to disproportionately affect women in lower middle-income countries (LMICs). It is the second most common female cancer in women aged 15



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to 44 years in Nigeria and it is reported that about 12,075 new cervical cancer cases are diagnosed annually in Nigeria (estimations for 2020). Projections by public health experts reveal that cervical cancer deaths by 2025 in Nigeria will rise by 63% for those who are 65 years, and by 50% for those who are more than 65 years.

Because vaccinations against HPV (Human Papillomavirus), the sexually transmissible causative virus of cervical cancer, are neither universally available nor affordable to women in lower middle-income countries (LMICs) like Nigeria, it leaves health education campaigns as an important and realistic preventive measure.

Early education on these cancers is essential for reducing their prevalence, mortality rate, impact and associated stigma. By learning about risk factors, symptoms, and screening methods, young people and students will be empowered to take proactive steps towards prevention and early detection.

Recognizing the importance of integrating such knowledge into the education system, this Bill proposes the inclusion of teachings on breast and cervical cancers into the Civic Education curriculum for senior secondary schools across Nigeria. This initiative aims to equip students with essential knowledge about these cancers, thereby fostering a more informed and health-conscious society.

### 3. Key Provisions of the Bill

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- **Mandatory Curriculum Inclusion:** The Bill provides that the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) is to ensure that senior secondary schools in Nigeria include the compulsory teaching of breast and cervical cancers prevention and awareness in their curriculum. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) is an agency of the Federal Government responsible for formulating and implementing educational policies in Nigeria.
- **Implementation and Liaison:** The Bill puts the National Senior Secondary School Commission (NSSEC) in liaison with

the Ministry of Education in the various States in charge of ensuring compliance and implementation throughout secondary schools in Nigeria. This is to be achieved through the Universal Basic Education Board (UBEC). It also provides that the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), in collaboration with the National Orientation Agency is to monitor implementation and oversee the effectiveness of the program.

- **Teacher Training:** The NERDC, in partnership with the Nigerian Cancer Society (NCS) is responsible for providing suitable training programmes for civic education teachers in order to effectively deliver a robust curriculum on the teaching of breast and cervical cancers in secondary schools.
- **Compliance and Penalties:** The NERDC is required to work through the States' Ministries of Education to ensure schools comply with the program. The Bill also provides that penalties for non-compliance by schools will align with existing regulations for similar curriculum requirements.

### 4. Observations and Recommendations

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- a. **Implementation and Monitoring:** Effective monitoring mechanisms must be put in place to ensure that the teachings on breast and cervical cancers are adequately integrated into the Civic Education curriculum. While collaborations between NERDC, NSSEC, UBEC, and the NCS is crucial for successful implementation and monitoring, further collaboration with healthcare professionals can make cancer prevention education for students impactful. Again, Clause 3 of this bill makes provision for state ministries to ensure compliance with the program but fails to specify the enforcement mechanism for Federal Unity schools which do not fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education in the States. This omission may create an enforcement gap and disparity in the curriculum of these schools. It is recommended that the Federal Ministry of Education in collaboration with State Ministries

of Education should ensure compliance with the program by all Schools in the Federation to ensure uniformity of curriculum across board.

- b. National Reach:** The Bill ensures nationwide implementation, covering all senior secondary schools across Nigeria's 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). By enforcing cancer prevention education nationwide, all students across the country receive standardized and comprehensive cancer prevention education, regardless of their location or socio-economic status. It also maximizes impact and strengthens the collective effort to combat cancer on a national scale.

#### 4. Conclusion

The Mandatory Inclusion of Teachings on Breast and Cervical Cancers into the Curriculum of all Senior Secondary Schools in Nigeria Bill, 2023, is a proactive legislative measure aimed at fostering early awareness and prevention of breast and cervical cancers through education. By incorporating this into the curriculum, youths are empowered to make informed decisions about their health and well-being, thereby significantly impacting cancer awareness, prevention, and early detection.

Critical issues raised in this bill, such as effective implementation, continuous monitoring, and comprehensive training for educators, are essential for the success of this initiative. This approach will further encourage collaboration among Federal and State government agencies, by ensuring a coordinated and effective approach to cancer awareness and prevention across the federation. Overall, this Bill represents a significant step towards enhancing public health education and preventive care in Nigeria's educational system.

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**NB:** This bill was passed by the House of Representatives on Wednesday, 6th March 2024. See: <https://placng.org/i/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/House-of-Reps-votes-and-proceedings-Wednesday-6-March-2024.pdf>



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