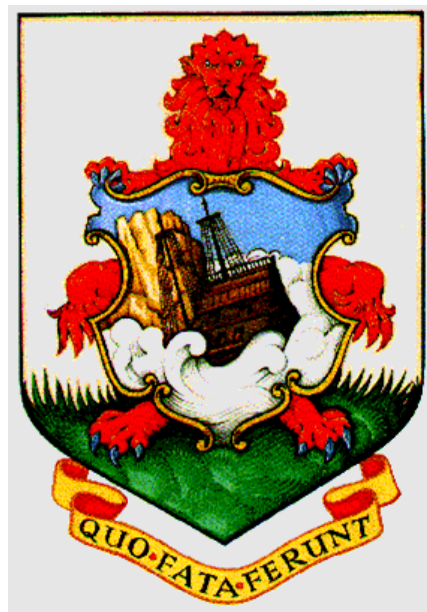


MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Implications of International Travel Restrictions on Access to Overseas Medical Care



Prepared for

The Honourable Kim N. Wilson, JP, MP
Minister of Health

July 10th, 2026

Mr. Speaker,

I rise today to address a matter of significant importance affecting Bermudians who require essential medical treatment overseas but find themselves unable to travel because they are subject to international travel restrictions, commonly referred to as “stop lists”, which may arise from a variety of circumstances.

Mr. Speaker,

While Bermuda provides high-quality healthcare locally, certain specialized treatments, including advanced cancer care, cardiac interventions, organ transplantation, and complex surgeries—often require referral to specialist institutions overseas. When an individual is prohibited from entering the country where that treatment is available because of a past criminal conviction, the consequences can be profound and may directly affect their health, wellbeing, and quality of life.

Mr. Speaker,

These consequences are not limited to those seeking medical treatment themselves. International travel restrictions may also prevent an individual from accompanying a spouse, parent, child, or other loved one who must travel overseas for urgent or life-saving medical care. For many patients, particularly children, the elderly, or those facing serious illness, the presence of a trusted family member provides essential emotional support, assists with medical decision-making, and helps navigate complex healthcare systems. Being unable to accompany a loved one during one of the most difficult periods of their life can place additional emotional strain on both the patient and their family and may result in significant practical and financial challenges.

Mr. Speaker,

It is important that the public understands the nature of these restrictions. Entry into any foreign country is a privilege and is governed by the laws of that sovereign nation. For example, the United States may refuse entry, in some cases permanently, to individuals whose criminal history renders them inadmissible under U.S. immigration law, including certain controlled substance offences and other criminal offences. These determinations are made solely by U.S. immigration authorities based on an individual's personal circumstances. They are not decisions made by the Government of Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker,

The public should also be aware that a conviction which is regarded as "spent" under Bermuda's laws may nevertheless continue to be considered by U.S. immigration authorities when determining admissibility. The Government of Bermuda cannot overturn, influence, or intervene in decisions regarding an individual's eligibility to enter another country.

Mr. Speaker,

For those affected, there is a process to apply for a travel waiver. However, this is a discretionary process that can take many months and, in some cases, more than a year. While an interview may be expedited in exceptional circumstances, the required security and background

screening must still be completed. Consequently, a travel waiver should not, and cannot, be relied upon for urgent or emergency medical travel.

Mr. Speaker,

When a patient requiring urgent treatment cannot travel to the destination where the most appropriate care is available, alternative overseas treatment options must be explored. However, arranging treatment in another jurisdiction can result in significant delays, increased logistical complexity, and substantially higher costs, all at a time when timely access to care may be critical. In some circumstances, alternative treatment options may simply not be available within the timeframe required.

Mr. Speaker,

This issue serves as a powerful reminder that the choices we make today can have consequences that extend far beyond the immediate moment. A criminal conviction may not only affect employment opportunities, educational prospects, or international travel for business and leisure; it may also limit access to life-saving medical treatment, prevent someone from supporting a loved one during a serious illness, and create barriers at times when family presence matters most.

Mr. Speaker,

The decisions made in youth or early adulthood, often without consideration of their long-term implications, can continue to affect an individual decades later. A single poor decision may have lasting consequences for one's health, family responsibilities, and ability to respond to life's unforeseen challenges.

Mr. Speaker,

I therefore encourage all residents, and particularly our young people, to carefully consider the long-term consequences of their actions. Protecting one's future means preserving opportunities—not only the opportunity to work, study, and travel, but also the ability to access essential healthcare when needed and to stand beside those we love during their greatest time of need.

Mr. Speaker,

The Government will continue to support residents in accessing medically necessary care wherever possible. However, we must recognize that decisions made by foreign governments regarding entry are beyond Bermuda's control. Protecting one's future ability to travel internationally for healthcare, family responsibilities, and other important life events is, in many respects, a matter of personal responsibility.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

