



Government of Bermuda
Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

by

The Hon. Tineé Furbert, JP, MP

Advancing Disability Inclusion

Friday, 29th May 2026

Mr. Speaker,

I rise today to speak about an issue that goes to the heart of who we are as a country: how we treat persons with disabilities, how we remove barriers to full participation the community, and how we build a Bermuda that truly works for everyone.

For too long, persons with disabilities in Bermuda have told us, clearly and consistently, that despite existing laws, they continue to face discrimination, exclusion, and barriers that many of us never have to consider. Barriers in public spaces, employment, education, housing, transportation, digital access, and public services to name a few.

To be clear, **Mr. Speaker**: disability inclusion is not about charity. It is not about accommodation as an afterthought. It is about dignity, rights, fairness, and respect.

Mr. Speaker,

When Bermuda adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, we made a statement to the world—and more importantly, to our own people—that persons with disabilities are entitled to full inclusion, equal opportunity, and real participation in every aspect of public life. That commitment was not symbolic. It was a call to action.

Listening to the voices of persons with disabilities and their families has made one thing abundantly clear despite the existence of legislation designed to protect the rights of people with disabilities this is not enough. We are aware improvements must be made as person with disabilities continue to experience discrimination and are faced with systemic barriers that impact full and equal participation in society. This is supported by the Human Rights Commission Disability Inclusion Report titled *Nothing about Us, Without Us* by underscoring the need for sustained improvements.

This Government is committed to taking decisive action to move from promise to delivery by advancing two pathways concurrently: strengthening and amending existing legislation, while also establishing standalone legislation through a comprehensive Disability Act.

Mr. Speaker,

One pathway prioritises more immediate legislative gains, delivering earlier and tangible benefits for persons with disabilities, while the other provides for comprehensive, system-wide reform of existing standards. This second pathway will require a longer timeframe for the development and implementation of new legislation. It has also been determined that, alongside the advancement of both legislative pathways, a dedicated disability unit will be established.

This disability unit will be a foundational component in driving disability inclusion across Government and throughout our society.

Mr. Speaker,

During the initial phase, the priority is developing the scope and role of the disability unit and establishing the appropriate legal framework that would provide a clear, enforceable statutory mandate to coordinate, monitor, and proactively drive disability inclusion across the public and private sectors. The disability unit will be staffed by a Programme Manager and an Education and Accessibility Officer. The Programme Manager will assist with the development and implementation of Standards and Guidance to systematically address societal barriers to inclusion. The Education and Accessibility Officer will work to assist stakeholders with implementing accessibility standards, and lead education campaigns to improve public awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities, inclusion and what inclusion looks like in employment, customer service, public spaces, transportation, and how we communicate information.

Mr. Speaker,

Ageing and Disability Services will continue to advance amendments to the Human Rights Act 1981 (HRA), such as the enhancement of the definition of disability, in addition to identifying, aligning and coordinating proactive enforcement standards under the disability unit within the legislative framework of the HRA. This ensures our domestic frameworks aligns with international standards and reflects a modern and more effect approach to inclusion. However, any disability related amendments to the HRA must be developed in consultation and

coordination with existing initiatives underway by the Human Rights Commission.

Mr. Speaker,

Disability inclusion is not the responsibility of one ministry alone. It touches housing, health, education, transportation, planning, employment, financial assistance, and digital services to name a few. That is why this work is deliberately cross-ministerial. We are breaking down silos and building shared ownership across Government

Just as importantly, this work is being guided by a principle that has been voiced clearly and repeatedly by the disability community:

“Nothing about us, without us.”

Persons with disabilities are not passive recipients of policy. They are experts in their lived experiences. Their voices must help shape how systems are designed, how services are delivered, and how standards are enforced.

Mr. Speaker,

Let me also say this: *inclusion benefits all of us* and this is why it was extremely important over the past year for Ageing and Disability Services to engage in internal and external consultations with stakeholders, so this policy direction has the input needed to make the meaningful impact for change.

Mr. Speaker,

Our vision is clear a Bermuda where persons with disabilities can live, work, learn, and participate fully, without unnecessary barriers, without

exclusion, and without having to fight for basic access and equal opportunity.

That is the direction this government is committed to taking to ensure we strengthen and empower persons with disability to be fully included in all aspects of life in Bermuda, so no one gets left behind.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.