



MINISTER OF LABOUR AND SMALL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Level 6, Tower C, International Waterfront Centre
No. 1A Wrightson Road, Port of Spain, Republic of Trinidad & Tobago
Tel. No. (868) 625-8478: Fax: (868) 624-9126 : website:[http:// www.molsmed.gov.tt](http://www.molsmed.gov.tt)

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The Honourable Bridgid Mary Annisette-George
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Office of the Parliament
Speaker's Chambers
Level 2, Tower D
The Port-of-Spain International Waterfront Centre
1A Wrightson Road
Port of Spain

Honourable Speaker

**Re: First Report of the Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration
on an Inquiry into the Current Level of Violence Among Students in Schools (with Particular
Focus on Physical and Cyber Bullying)**

I refer to your letter dated January 25, 2017, on the captioned subject.


I have examined the First Report of the *Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration on an Inquiry into the Current Level of Violence Among Students in Schools (with Particular Focus on Physical and Cyber Bullying)*. I have also taken note of the recommendation which has been identified for the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development (MLSED) to develop a policy of time-off for employees to attend PTA meetings.

Please note that the MLSED seeks to promote work-life balance and protect the rights of workers with family responsibilities in accordance with the provisions of relevant international labour standards. However, I wish to indicate that I am not in support of developing a policy of time-off for employees to attend PTA meetings at this current time. This is in light of the grave challenges many organizations are currently facing with regard to the economic and financial situation and a number of other pressing issues for which policy and legislative changes are required such as retrenchment and unemployment. Additionally, the MLSED is currently expending significant human and financial resources aimed at strengthening the industrial relations framework through the review and modernization of key pieces of labour legislation, in consultation with stakeholders. This process involves a holistic examination of the rights and responsibilities of employers and workers and how the best balance can be achieved.

In light of the above, I wish to kindly recommend that action on the development of a policy of time-off for employees to attend PTA meetings be deferred until an appropriate time when such an issue can be fully examined and analyzed.

I take this opportunity to commend the *Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration on an Inquiry into the Current Level of Violence Among Students in Schools (with Particular Focus on Physical and Cyber Bullying)* on the important work it has undertaken.

With Kind Regards,


Jennifer Baptiste-Primus
Minister