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Date: 28/01/2025 3:41 pm (GMT-05:00)

To: Clerk's Office <clerk@japarliament.gov.jm>

Cc: editors@gleanerjm.com

Subject: Amendments to the Jamaican constitution not warranted at this time.

The Clerk of the Jamaica houses of parliament.

Madam clerk,

The recently tabled bill for the constitutional amendment is a large and complicated document is available online.

I would not have been aware that a public comment period was available, if I had not seen an advertisement in the Sunday gleaner dated 26<sup>th</sup> January 2025 stating that the period for comments on the proposed as "The Constitution (Amendment0 (Republic) Act, 2024" ends on the 29<sup>th</sup>. I subsequently made a call to the parliament regarding this short period for public comment and was advised that the document was tabled in parliament in the month of December 2024, and it was expected that anyone who wished to make comment had the opportunity to do so from that time. I was also advised during this call that the notice for "public comment" advertisement was issued at first instance on January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025, and the comment period to end January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2025. This period of 10 calendar days from the first publication of this notice in the public written media is insufficient and I do not recall hearing any announcement on radio or television advertising regarding requests for comment from the public this year, and more significant, is the fact that most Jamaicans do not read either the daily or weekend newspapers. So, any comment based on the advertised public comment period on the tabled bill will be minimal if any is received at all.

Ten calendar days for public comment on a bill with such significant implications for governance in Jamaica, is insufficient, and I believe that more time should be allowed for realistic comment from the public, and the lack of real public consultation and information throughout the process has not allowed any timely and meaningful input before it was tabled, making the comment process practically useless, therefore negating any idea of consultation on the process.

Since the present government has made changing the constitution to a republic form of government an imperative of their administration, it should have been accompanied by a significant effort to include and inform the public during the process. Additionally, the town hall concept employed by the government has been ineffective because it does not allow for a free flow of information and is limited in its reach due to its format. Many Jamaicans have practical thoughts on governance but are not heard from and therefore not considered. The members of parliament might have been tasked to go into their constituencies to explain the reasoning behind the constitutional change and what the change entails.

Finally, what is the point of changing the current constitution when most Jamaicans have no idea how the current one affects our present governance. It appears to me that a change at this time will not improve the governance, education, or infrastructure of the country. So, for me the current constitutional reform operation is a waste of time, which will not improve our economic, social or physical circumstances. The newly created ministry might be better served to undertake an education activity to reach out to all Jamaican citizens explaining the current constitution and its effects on our governance, and if they cannot do this, then the ministry of education should take up this activity.

The current CRC as it is called, has so far failed in its stated mandate to educate the public, and before any change is made to this new form of government, we need more and better explanations of the current constitutional system.

Regards

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