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PRESS RELEASE

Cabinet Brief

Belmopan. 14th July 2022. 10:05 a.m.

The Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Hon. John Briceño, met in regular session on 12th July 2022.

- Cabinet was updated on initiatives being undertaken by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology and enthusiastically supported a proposal to increase the age of compulsory education from 14 to 16, recognizing that while this change will lead to other legislative and policy changes, it is a critical move to help to prepare Belizean students for life.
- Cabinet was also informed and supported the Ministry of Education's proposed multi-layered approach of the *Belize Education Upliftment Project: Together We Rise*, which will focus on providing specific targeted interventions to four schools in the Southside Belize City.

In addition, Cabinet was informed of the Belize National Curriculum Framework 2022, which has been developed after months of consultation and focused effort. The highest priority of the new Framework is to build competency in students from pre-primary through to secondary levels. The 2022-2023 academic year will serve as a pilot and transition year for schools.

Cabinet also supported the Ministry of Education in the specific areas and projects that have been identified by the University of Belize as part of the developmental requirements necessary for it to meet its national mandate.

- Cabinet approved the strengthening of the Women and Families Support Department of the Ministry of Human Development, Families and Indigenous Peoples' Affairs to improve access and service delivery to ensure comprehensive support services to women and families and provide a strengthened response to domestic violence. This initiative will include the hiring of additional personnel to assist vulnerable groups that may be experiencing a range of social issues.
- Cabinet approved the introduction of legislation to amend the Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters Act, and regulations thereunder, to remove legal deficiencies and more effectively implement the Common Reporting Standards on the automatic exchange of financial information in tax matters further to commitments with the European Union.

- Cabinet gave its approval for the Ministry of Tourism to apply to become a member of the United Nations World Tourism Organization, the world's leading agency that is dedicated to the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism.
- The Minister of the Public Service, Constitutional and Political Reform, and Religious Affairs briefed Cabinet on the results of the vetting process by the Chief Elections Officer for the petition on the Cannabis and Industrial Hemp Control and Licensing Bill pursuant to Section 2(4) of the Referendum Act. Of the 20,112 petitions submitted, 18,891 or 10.07 percent of the total number of registered electors were accepted, thus triggering a referendum. Cabinet is satisfied that the democratic process was followed and welcomes the opportunity to hear from the electorate on this issue.
- The Minister of Health & Wellness informed the Cabinet of the presence of the BA.2 and BA.5 COVID-19 subvariants in Belize, indicating that persons with these subvariants are presenting varying degrees of symptoms, ranging from runny nose, sore throat, headache, tiredness, cough, body aches and fever.
- Cabinet was provided with an update on the status of vaccinations. Currently, there are more than 210,950 vaccines on hand. As of 11th July 2022, 227,461 persons or 52.8 percent had received at least one dose of the vaccine and 217,269 or 50.9 percent have been fully vaccinated. Of the population ages 12 to 17 years, 31,918 have received two doses of the vaccines. To date, 49,805 booster shots have been issued.
- Finally, Cabinet approved the removal of all public health measures at points of entry, but cautions that in light of the presence of the BA.2 and BA.5 subvariants in Belize, vaccines remain the best protection against severe disease and death from COVID-19.

Ends