



A Bill entitled

“The National Identification and Registration Act, 2020”

By

**The Most Honourable Andrew Holness, ON MP,
Prime Minister**

**To the Houses of Parliament
81 Duke Street**

on

**Tuesday, December 15, 2020
at 2:00 pm**

Madam Speaker,

You may recall that in September, I had indicated to this House my intention to introduce legislation addressing national identification. Today I table a Bill shortly entitled “the National Identification and Registration Act, 2020” (“the Bill”).

Madam Speaker, the Bill makes provisions for a voluntary and secure national identification system for Jamaica which has the utmost potential to positively transform the efficacy and transparency of interactions between the State and the citizens and residents with significant additional positive effects for private businesses.

The Bill will serve as the legal basis for the establishment of a robust, efficient and effective National Identification System underpinned by a legal and regulatory framework that supports safe, secure and reliable verification of identity information for citizens of Jamaica and persons ordinarily resident in Jamaica.

It will allow for the strengthening of identity security, reduction of identity fraud and the simplification of bureaucracy.

Madam Speaker, subsequent to the Supreme Court Ruling dated April 20, 2019 on the National Identification and Registration Act, 2017, the Government has taken steps to revise the National Identification and Registration Policy of 2016 and develop a new Bill in compliance with the Supreme Court Ruling. The Policy now provides for:

1. A voluntary national identification system that will provide a secure, reliable, and convenient means of identification for citizens and persons ordinarily resident in Jamaica;
2. The administrative structure and the powers and functions that are necessary for the establishment and maintenance of a national identification system;
3. A robust and coherent legislative framework to treat with the collection, processing, storage, retention, usage, and protection of personal data;
4. The protocols, procedures, and systems for identity verification, monitoring and compliance; and
5. An independent oversight body.

It should be noted, Madam Speaker, that the following principles guided the revision of the policy which was instructive in the creation of this Bill:

1. Participation of eligible persons in the National Identification System must be **voluntary**;
2. **Only biographic and biometric data that is absolutely necessary to ensure the efficacy of the process will be taken** having regard to the need to establish a secure identification system for individuals to use in the conduct of their daily lives;
3. **Identity information is the property of the individual concerned** and their informed consent is required for it to be collected, stored and used by anyone;
4. The identity information which any individual provides voluntarily must be accorded the **strictest level of security**; and
5. The establishment of secure and accurate identity information databases must ensure to the benefit of everyone and accordingly, **reasonable provisions must be made to restrict unauthorised access by third parties.**

Madam Speaker, I am tabling the Bill and referring it to the Joint Select Committee of Parliament for detailed review.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I wish to emphasize that this Bill seeks to improve the efficiency in establishing and verifying identity, thereby improving business processes and service delivery and enhancing the Government's ability to implement a coherent e-government strategy and support national security.

Its promulgation will contribute to the achievement of crucial "Vision 2030" goals including adequate social protection, security and safety, effective governance, an enabling business environment, a technology-enabled society and improved national competitiveness. Most importantly, the Bill is indicative of this administration's responsiveness in ensuring that the rule of law is observed and that the rights of the people are protected. The Bill, Madam Speaker, reflects this administration's commitment to make laws for the peace, order and good governance of Jamaica.