

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Miller Calls for Traditional Caymanian Tolerance, Harmony and Unity

In the wake of Friday's (September 4) enactment of the Civil Partnership Law by Governor Martyn Roper via section 81 of the Cayman Islands Constitution Order 2009, the Member of the Legislative Assembly for North Side, Mr. Ezzard Miller, has called for the Cayman community to come together in unity.

"It is time now to put this partnership issue behind us and move forward in the traditional Caymanian spirit of tolerance, harmony and unity. In the process, I am sure we will find common ground to work together in the best interest of the Cayman Islands," Mr. Miller says.

"The truth is sexual orientation has never been a source of widespread public contention over the years. Most of us believe in the Christian value of refraining from standing in judgement of decisions people may make in their private lives," Mr. Miller said, adding: "Nevertheless, many of us have recognized that, while taking pride in that value, we live in a changing world that demands recognition of rights and compliance with law."

Among those voting on 29 July for the passage of the bill, Mr. Miller explained that he had done so for the following reasons:

"I have been supporting civil partnership legislation to bring the Cayman Islands in compliance with our Constitution and with the European Charter on Human Rights for the last 10 years.

During the many conversations over that ten-year span, "I had come to the realization that the introduction of this legislation is not as inconsistent with the concerns and ethics of the Christian community as one would think," Mr. Miller said, laying out four important provisions in the new legislation that are important standards and requirements for the Christian community. These include the--

1. protection of the definition of marriage between a man and woman;
2. retention of the Constitutional definition of “marriage”;
3. provision for marriage officers to opt out of performing same sex ceremonies; and
4. safeguarding of the rights of churches to disallow same-sex marriage ceremonies in their houses of worship.

Mr. Miller said that he was further moved to support the bill because it provides the same benefits for same sex couples as for heterosexual couples, a goal that must be logically shared by many people with a sense of fairness, regardless of their religious persuasion.

Beyond these considerations, the North Side MLA said that in moving against passage of the bill, the Legislative Assembly had failed to act on three very serious legal obligations:

1. conformity with section 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights.
2. compliance with section 9 of the Cayman Islands Constitutional Order 2009.
3. fulfilment of the declaration by the Cayman Islands Appeals Court to establish a legal framework functionally equivalent to marriage.

“Despite these inescapable local and international obligations for change and the gains for the churches in the newly enacted legislation, I do understand that the heart of the matter for some members of the Christian community was their uncompromising position on same-sex marriages,” the Member said.

While he respected that, Mr. Miller said, as a legislator he was charged with upholding the Islands’ Constitution and international conventions.

“In that context I had to stand for what was in the best interest of the Cayman Islands.”

To that end, Mr. Miller said, he had submitted 16 amendments to the Governor to tailor the legislation as suitably as possible to the Cayman Islands culture and mores.

“Since publication I am happy to see that at least some of those amendments have found their way into the final legislation.

“As we move past this inevitable benchmark in the history of our development in conformity with local and international standards, I trust and pray that the population can now unite and work together to alleviate the many social problems facing these beloved islands we call home,” he added.

“I call on the whole community to channel our energies into collaborating on overcoming some of the threats to the peace and harmony of our community,” Mr. Miller challenged, pointing to the increasing incidence of social and domestic violence, child abuse, and mental health-based disputes and others dominating our news in recent times.

“I encourage all of us as individuals, institutions, businesses and government to move towards more concerted partnerships in devising and supporting comprehensive programmes to halt the progression of these trends and to bring healing, tolerance, and harmony to our communities.”

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