



**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
TO THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
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PROTECTION OF PUBLIC OFFICERS

12 December 2025

Mr Speaker and Honourable Members, I rise today before this Honourable House to share a matter of grave concern – the increasing incidence of bullying, harassment and assaults directed towards Public Officers as they fulfil their duties. These troubling behaviours manifest in various forms, including physical attacks, intimidation both in the workplace and online, and even the reckless sharing of personal information with calls to incite aggression against public officers.

Mr Speaker, the public service is guided by a commitment to enhance the lives of the people of Bermuda and one of its core values is to be customer centric. Notwithstanding, the Government must also ensure that those serving the public can do so without fear for their safety and wellbeing.

Mr Speaker, while the media captures some incidents of high-profile assaults on public officers, many incidents occurring within the Service do not rise to the level of media scrutiny and remain unreported. These matters which generally take the form of stalking, harassment, or threats of physical harm, are typically addressed through internal proceedings.

Mr Speaker, in recent months, the public service leadership team participated in a workplace safety forum to address the growing concerns and gain insights from the Police and Attorney-General's Chambers on managing safety issues in the workplace.

While the department of the majority of citizens who interact with Government departments is of a high standard, there exists a small percentage who have acted in ways that have harmed and threatened the safety of dedicated public officers. This is not acceptable.

Mr Speaker, in response, the public service is intensifying its efforts to protect its employees and to maintain the highest standards of safety in the workplace. Several customer facing departments have already added physical security, virtual security enhancements, and strengthened safety protocols.

Comprehensive Occupational Health and Safety Audits across all departments and field operations, coordinated by our Occupational Safety and Health Officer are now in progress. These audits involve on-site assessments and systematic reviews of policies, procedures, and workplace environments to ensure risks are identified and additional safeguards or training are implemented where required. Our aim is to empower every public officer to take personal responsibility for identifying risks in maintaining a safe work environment, and to embed safety as a core workplace value.

Mr Speaker, the Government recognises that a hallmark of a thriving democracy is the freedom of speech. Both the public and media have the freedom to exercise their rights to criticize the Government, its services, and the decisions made. These freedoms and rights are protected under the Bermuda Constitution Order. However, when the nature of dialogue associated with these freedoms, either via traditional or social media, rises to the level where individual public officers are being called out, threatened, and intimidated in a manner akin to bullying and harassment - proactive measures must be put in place.

Mr Speaker, allegations against individual public officers shared via traditional media or social media can cause reputational damage and psychological harm to the targeted public officers, their families, and negatively impact the morale of the Public Service. A recent cyberbullying incident against a public officer for example, required Police reports and official letters to cease and desist. Unfortunately, this was not an isolated incident.

Mr Speaker, against this backdrop the public service has introduced The Public Officer Adverse Publication Protocol. This Protocol outlines how the Government will swiftly and effectively address malicious or unsubstantiated allegations made against officers in their official capacity and provide support to those impacted.

It is important to clarify that this Protocol supports officers in their professional roles but does not extend to personal actions or to legitimate criticism of official decisions issued as part of their duties.

Mr Speaker, the Government, as an employer, will protect the well-being of its employees. It has a duty of care. A duty of care by an employer means taking all reasonable steps to ensure the health, safety, and wellbeing of employees while they are at work.

This Government wants public officers to know that their safety is of paramount importance. Public Officers who are serving the people of Bermuda should feel safe and not fear threats to themselves, their families or their property as they execute their duties. The Public Service leadership is working hard to respond to these threats robustly, while balancing the public's freedom of expression.

In closing, Mr Speaker, this Government will be deliberate and strategic in implementing enhanced safety initiatives following the completion of the safety audits so that our Public Officers are not distracted by fear and can work with an unwavering focus on enhancing the lives of the people Bermuda.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.