



MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

by

**Mr. Dennis Lister III, MP
Junior Minister of Justice**

“Conclusion of Public Consultation on Jury Reform”

Friday, 27th February 2026

Mr Speaker:

I rise today to inform this Honourable House that the Ministry of Justice has now formally concluded its public consultation on comprehensive jury reform.

While the public consultation period closed on January 31st of this year, we completed our final in-person engagement session on Wednesday, when the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice, Senator the Honourable Kim Wilkerson, and I met with sociology students at Bermuda College. That session marked the culmination of an extensive public engagement exercise designed to ensure that Bermudians from all walks of life had an opportunity to contribute to the future shape of our jury system.

Mr Speaker, this national conversation has been deliberate, inclusive and far-reaching.

In addition to the online consultation hosted at forum.gov.bm, which was open for written submissions from November 3rd 2025 until January 31st 2026, the Ministry undertook a series of in-person meetings in

collaboration with parish councils across the Island. We completed community consultations with:

- Sandys Parish Council
- Southampton Parish Council
- Warwick Parish Council
- Paget Parish Council
- Hamilton Parish Council

I attended each of these meetings alongside the Attorney-General. These sessions demonstrated a clear public interest in how our jury system operates and how it may be strengthened to reflect Bermuda's unique social and legal environment. These meetings provided residents with the opportunity to engage directly with us regarding the proposals, to ask questions, and to share their perspectives. We are extremely grateful for the assistance of the parish councils and their executive for facilitating and hosting these discussions.

Mr Speaker, in addition to broad public engagement, the Ministry also undertook direct and structured consultation with key justice system stakeholders. We engaged with members of the Judiciary, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, and the Criminal Bar to ensure that the operational, constitutional, and practical implications of the proposed reforms were carefully examined by the professionals who they would most affect. Their perspectives have been invaluable and will form a crucial foundation as to how the policy shapes up as we move forward.

Mr Speaker, beyond parish and professional engagement, the Ministry placed particular emphasis on hearing from young people.

The Attorney-General, accompanied by myself and Mr. Keivon Simons, Law Reform Policy & Strategy Counsel, met with a group of prefects at CedarBridge Academy to discuss civic participation, the justice system and the importance of jury service. The Attorney-General also appeared

online and on radio programmes including The Daily Hour, HOTT 107.5 and Power 95 to broaden public awareness and encourage participation, as well as solicit live commentary from the community.

The engagement with students at CedarBridge Academy and the concluding session with Bermuda College sociology students reflect a deliberate effort to ensure that young Bermudians — future jurors, voters, legal practitioners and policymakers — were not merely observers, but active contributors to this reform dialogue.

Mr Speaker, as outlined in the original ministerial statement delivered in the Senate at the launch of this consultation, the proposed reforms were comprehensive and addressed both criminal and civil jury processes.

For criminal trials, the proposals included:

1. Reducing the number of jurors from twelve (12) to eight (8), with potential exceptions for the most serious offences, and adjusting majority verdict requirements accordingly.
2. Allowing medical exemption without court appearance.
3. Increasing the maximum age for service to 75, with an opt-out for those aged 70–75.
4. Expanding eligibility beyond the Parliamentary Register, subject to maintaining the principle of a jury of one's peers.
5. Relaxing restrictions for individuals with certain criminal convictions to promote rehabilitation.
6. Reducing the number of persons required to form a jury panel.
7. Increasing jury compensation to reflect modern economic realities.
8. Granting judicial discretion to excuse jurors based on employer requests.
9. Reducing automatic exemptions to strengthen equality in jury selection.

10. Allowing jury separation after deliberations have begun, subject to safeguards.
11. Modernising statutory language relating to persons with disabilities.
12. Enabling persons with disabilities to serve with technological assistance.
13. Providing for judge-only trials in limited and exceptional circumstances, subject to constitutional considerations.
14. Exploring AI-assisted juror vetting tools to enhance transparency and integrity in jury selection.

In civil proceedings, the consultation sought feedback on:

1. Introducing alternate jurors;
2. Aligning peremptory challenges with criminal practice;
3. Clarifying procedures for judicial summations and deliberations on liability and damages; and
4. Granting judges discretion to continue trials following the death or discharge of a juror.

Mr Speaker, the consultation phase has now closed. The next step is for the Ministry to gather and synthesize the comprehensive feedback received from all segments of the community — including members of the public, students, the Judiciary, the DPP's Office, and the Criminal Bar.

That analysis will inform the development of a clear policy position for consideration and approval by Cabinet.

Once Cabinet has settled its position, the Government will share that policy framework with the public, together with a transparent explanation of the reasoning underpinning the decisions taken. It is our intention to communicate those positions in the near future.

Mr Speaker, this process has been about strengthening public confidence in our justice system and ensuring that it remains capable of meeting

contemporary demands. The jury system remains a cornerstone of civic participation in the administration of justice, and any reform must preserve fairness, efficiency, inclusion and legitimacy.

I wish to thank the Attorney-General, our justice sector partners, parish councils, educators, students, members of the media and all Bermudians who participated in this important national conversation.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.