



Government of Bermuda
Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

by

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United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities and
Human Rights Day
Friday, December 5th, 2025

Good morning, Mr. Speaker, Honorable Members, and fellow Bermudians,

I rise today in recognition of the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities, observed annually on December 3rd. This day serves as an important reminder of our collective responsibility to promote and protect the rights, dignity, and full inclusion of persons with disabilities across our society.

This year's international theme, "Building a Sustainable and Resilient Future for All: Advancing Disability Rights Through Inclusive Development," aligns closely with the Government of Bermuda's ongoing work to strengthen accessibility, equality, and meaningful participation for all residents.

Mr. Speaker, persons with disabilities continue to face barriers that are not a reflection of their abilities, but of the systems, environments, and attitudes that surround them. Accessibility is not merely about infrastructure—it is about ensuring

equitable access to education, employment, healthcare, justice, transportation, and civic participation.

As a government, we are committed to advancing reforms that address these realities. This includes improving data collection, supporting policy and legislative development, encouraging cross-ministry collaboration, and increasing public awareness. These steps are essential to creating a Bermuda where every person, regardless of ability, can live independently, participate fully, and reach their highest potential.

Mr. Speaker, our commitment aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which call for inclusive societies, reduced inequalities, and opportunities for all. Bermuda embraces these principles, recognizing that our strength as a community depends on ensuring that no one is left behind.

Today, I acknowledge the advocacy, resilience, and contributions of persons with disabilities and the many organizations, caregivers, and families who support them. Their voices continue to guide our efforts and remind us that inclusion is not optional—it is a moral obligation and a human right.

Mr. Speaker, as we mark this important day, I encourage all residents, employers, schools, and community partners to join us in fostering greater accessibility, challenging stigma, and building a Bermuda that is welcoming and inclusive for everyone.

Mr. Speaker, together with the Human Rights Commission (HRC), Ageing & Disability Services (ADS) will be hosting a public movie screening at Bermuda College on 14th December, 2025. The featured film, *Crip Camp*, uses humor, heart, and rich archival footage to tell the story of a groundbreaking summer camp whose attendees helped spark the disability rights movement in the United States. The film honors activism, community, and the ongoing pursuit of disability inclusion.

Crip Camp was co-directed and co-produced by Nicole Newnham and Jim LeBrecht, with executive producers Barack and Michelle Obama. The film was motivated by LeBrecht's personal experience as a disabled teenager at Camp Jened, which profoundly shaped his life and inspired the disability rights movement.

Jim LeBrecht, who was born with spina bifida, attended Camp Jened in the 1970s. This summer camp for teens with disabilities gave him a sense of freedom, community, and empowerment. His personal experiences there inspired the film, which shows how the camp helped spark the disability rights movement.

Mr. Speaker, the documentary has been praised for its powerful storytelling and historical importance. It won the Audience Award at Sundance in 2020. Critics note that it motivates viewers to think about activism, inclusion, and civil rights. Reviews highlight that it is not just inspirational, but a reminder of how grassroots movements can change society.

Mr. Speaker, in the new year, the Human Rights Commission will host a Lunch & Learn session focused on the important subject of reasonable accommodation. Ageing and Disability Services has been invited to contribute to this presentation, sharing valuable insight into the types of reasonable accommodations available in Bermuda. These include adaptive equipment, assistive supports, and existing services that promote accessibility and ensure meaningful participation for persons with disabilities across our community.

Bermuda's Human Rights Act 1981 requires employers and service providers to make "reasonable accommodation" for persons with disabilities, meaning steps must be taken to remove barriers and ensure equal access. This standard is based on international best practices, such as those outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and emphasizes individualized adjustments rather than one-size-fits-all solutions. The upcoming Lunch & Learn will highlight these methods, showing how they not only meet legal obligations but also strengthen inclusion and community engagement, giving participants practical strategies they can apply.

Mr. Speaker, as part of strengthening collaboration and public education, Ageing and Disability Services and the Human Rights Commission are exploring the development of quarterly joint events aimed at raising awareness, promoting inclusion, and supporting greater understanding of disability rights and responsibilities across the community.

These activities reinforce the Government's commitment to fostering accessibility, challenging stigma, and building a Bermuda that is inclusive and equitable for all persons with disabilities.

Human Rights Day

Mr. Speaker, Human Rights Day is celebrated annually worldwide on December 10th, to commemorate the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted 77 years ago by the United Nations General Assembly. Each year Human Rights Day has a theme, this year's theme is “**Human Rights, Our Everyday Essentials**”, which aims to highlight how human rights are fundamental, positive, and attainable through daily choices and actions, which influence aspects of life from the safety and happiness of individuals to equality and justice for all as set out our Human Rights Act 1998.

Mr. Speaker, I emphasize key messages to put this year's theme in perspective to show how human rights are a constant and essential part of our daily lives, rather than an abstract concept:

1. Everyone has the right to live and be protected from harm
2. Everyone is equal and should never be treated unfairly because of who they are
3. Everyone has freedom of speech, beliefs, movement and privacy
4. Everyone deserves justice, due process, and protection from abuse

5. Everyone must have access to education, healthcare, work and a decent standard of living

Mr. Speaker, In the words of Nelson Mandela, “To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity”. I challenge members of our community to expand their knowledge of human rights by contacting the Human Rights Commission for information on human rights. I encourage members of our community to take this knowledge and put it into action by making better decisions, such as showing others respect despite their differences. The government alone cannot ensure human rights are attainable, unless we work collectively by committing to making better daily choices and actions towards each other.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I would like to take this opportunity in advance to wish all a Happy Human Rights Day 2025!

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker.**