

Tuesday March 1<sup>st</sup> 2022

Barbados Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition lauds creation of NCD Ministerial portfolio

The Barbados Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition is extremely pleased with the new government's inclusion of a Minister specifically dedicated to addressing the Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) health crisis on the island.

The Coalition views this as an important step in turning the tide against this growing health issue and offers congratulations to newly appointed Minister of Health and Wellness Ian Gooding-Edghill and his Minister of State, Dr. Sonia Browne, who holds responsibility for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and NCDs.

Responsible for just under 85 percent of the island's deaths, NCDs and their wider financial and social impact on society must be battled on all fronts including that of policy, and the Coalition remains committed to working with the respective Ministers, and the wider government in designing better health and nutrition policies to ensure that the future of our nation is truly a healthier one.

Reacting to the news, the Coalition's Chairman and Heart and Stroke Foundation of Barbados (HSFB) Policy Champion Mr. Suleiman Bulbulia said with millions of dollars spent annually on counteracting the effects of NCDs, it was vital for the spotlight to be placed on healthier lifestyles.

"We have been hoping our message would resonate with the powers that be with regard to childhood obesity and NCDs amongst our population, so we are extremely pleased that government is paying attention, and we are looking forward to working with the new minister and her team to push for a greater awareness of healthier lifestyles and the necessary legislation for this," he expressed.

Also lauding the creation of the new portfolio, Chief Executive Officer of the Heart Stroke Foundation of Barbados Mrs. Michelle Daniel stated, "We are heartened by the selection of a dedicated Minister of State in the Ministry of Health and Wellness with respect to NCDs and we really look forward to engaging with her in terms of discussing the importance of her mandate to the overall health and wellness of the nation."

Currently, research indicates that 66 per cent of adults are overweight, and 33 per cent are obese, while one in three children in Barbados is overweight or obese. In addition, one in five adults has diabetes.

**The Coalition is a cross-section of health-based and non-health civil society organisations (CSOs) and concerned individuals and works with schools, parents, community partners and government agencies to target the improvement of healthy nutritional options for children.**

**-The End-**