



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

## Ministry of Social Development and Family Services

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

Tuesday, 17 November 2020

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Priority: HIGH**

#### **Minister Cox and ABAVI meet to discuss concerns and future plans**

In a thrust for greater engagement and closer collaboration and partnership with NGO's and civil society organizations, Minister of Social Development and Family Services, Senator the Honourable Donna Cox has met with some members of the Advocates of the Blind and Vision Impaired (ABAVI). Among the various matters raised at the meeting were concerns by the organization in relation to their coexistence with the Trinidad and Tobago Blind Welfare Association (TTBWA).

Minister Cox, joined by Permanent Secretary Sheila Seecharan, Chief Technical Officer Mr Michael Reid, Senior Legal Officer Mr Sheldon Cyrus and Advisor to the Minister, Ms Miriam Jacobs met with the ABAVI's Valerie Toussaint-Antoine, Patrick Romano and Jennifer Daulat-Araujo at the Ministry's CL Financial Head Office on Monday 16th November, 2020.

During the meeting, the group expressed what they termed the dissatisfaction with some of the administrative and financial activities of the TTBWA indicating that some of the activities are not in conjunction with the TTBWA's constitution. Minister Cox indicated that the mandate of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services is to ensure that no group, individual or family is left behind. Minister Cox indicated that it is against this background that the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services will thoroughly address some of the concerns brought forward by the group. Minister Cox also indicated that she intends to have a subsequent meeting with the Trinidad and Tobago Blind Welfare Association towards a speedy resolution.

The ABAVI is a non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of the well-being of persons who are blind and visually impaired. The organization promotes blindness awareness among members of society. ABAVI also seeks ways to include persons belonging to this community into every aspect of society. The organization also hosts key events such as "Blind People Can Cook Too" as well as an Annual Calypso Competition which is a cultural performance show with songs and music written and performed by blind and vision impaired persons. ABAVI was incorporated on September 30, 2016 and was officially launched on December 3rd, 2016.

Minister Cox will continue to meet with other NGO's and Civil Society Organizations in the coming weeks in efforts to obtain their support for a multi-faceted and responsive social service delivery system.



*Closer Collaboration – Minister of Social Development and Family Services, Senator the Honourable Donna Cox meet with members of the Advocates of the Blind and Vision Impaired at the Ministry’s Head Office on Monday.*



*Minister Cox joined by the Ministry's Executives meet with Advocates of the Blind and Vision Impaired to discuss some of their concerns.*



*Minister Cox joined by Permanent Secretary Sheila Secharan take a photo with members of the Advocates of the Blind and Vision Impaired following the meeting.*

**-END-**

**For more information: -**

Communications and Education Unit  
Ministry of Social Development and Family Services  
CL Financial Building, 39-43 St. Vincent Street, Port of Spain  
(T) 623.2608 EXT 5402/5432/5405 (F) 623.8496  
(E) [cceu@social.gov.tt](mailto:cceu@social.gov.tt) (W) [www.social.gov.tt](http://www.social.gov.tt)