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Parliament Enacts into Law the Citizenship Amendment Act 2017

The Parliament of Sierra Leone on Wednesday 5th July 2017 amended the bill entitled “The Citizenship Amendment Act 2017”.

The bill amends the Citizenship Act of 1973 to take into consideration the amendment made to the Citizenship Act in 2006 providing for citizenship by birth to be granted through the mother.

Presenting the bill to Parliament, the Minister of Internal Affairs, Pallo Conteh, submitted that “for far too long our female folks have not been captured in the Citizenship Amendment Act of 2006”. He said section 5 of the Act (of 1973) was to be repealed and replaced by the following new section; “Every person born outside Sierra Leone on or after the nineteenth day of April 1971 of a father or mother who was or would but for the death of the person, have been a citizen of Sierra Leone by birth....”

He informed Parliament that, the object of the bill is to amend section 5 of the Citizenship Act of 1973 to take into cognizance the amendment made to the Citizenship Act in 2006, wherein citizenship by birth can now be granted directly through the mother. He said the new clause proposes the insertion of the word “**mother**” to take into consideration the 2006 amendment.

In her contribution on the amendment, Hon. Jariatu Smith welcomed the initiative of government in giving the right to Sierra Leonean women who have children with foreign fathers to become Sierra Leoneans, whilst Hon. PC Bai Kurr Kanabarah Sankah II, referred to the amendment as “clean”. He called on the Internal Affairs Ministry and the Immigration Department to address the issue of people who have Sierra Leonean Passports but are not Sierra Leoneans.

In concluding the debate, both the Majority Leader, Hon. Leonard Fofanah and the Acting Minority Leader, Hon Sidi Tunis welcomed the idea of government in accepting children of Sierra Leonean women with foreign fathers that are now Sierra Leoneans. Both Leaders pleaded with the Internal Affairs Ministry to address the issue of Sierra Leone Passports in the hands of foreigners.

After the bill had gone through the first, second and third readings it was finally passed into law.