



PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

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PRESS RELEASE



PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON BASIC & SENIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION

The Parliamentary Oversight Committee on Basic and Senior Secondary Education is the Committee responsible for overseeing the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) with all the departments and agencies attached to it. We monitor and supervise their activities and also hold them to account on behalf of the people.

Since February, 2024, when the issue of WAEC Portal and CASS entries started to become a major problem, the Committee (which is comprised of SLPP, APC and Paramount Chief Members of Parliament representing the people) has been closely monitoring and effectively engaging WAEC, the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education and the various associations of school heads separately, and, sometimes bringing them together in meetings to discuss and come up with solutions to the problem.

The Committee was in full knowledge of the fact that after the expiration of the initial nine months period of CASS-1 entries (November, 2022 to July, 2023), the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education intervened and succeeded in getting WAEC to reopen the CASS-1 Portal up to 3 more times and the BRS Portal up to 3 times as well, for all the remaining defaulting schools to upload their entries.

Also, in March, the Parliamentary Committee was in close touch with MBSSE as it continued to make frantic efforts with several appeals through phone calls and written correspondences to WAEC International to get the Portal reopened for the last time, but without success. A last ditch attempt by the Minister himself, in the first week of April was flatly rejected on the grounds that, for the past several years Sierra Leone has been the only one, out of the five WAEC member countries, that has been defaulting in its examination

candidates' entries, and then coming up each time to beg to be allowed to make late entries. "Enough is enough" was the message to us. Hence, the implementation of a Plan-B became imperative.

Plan-B for the genuine candidates that have been left out of the May/June Examination.

After exhausting all avenues to get WAEC International to reopen the Portal for one more "last time" without success, the Parliamentary Committee and the MBSSE tried to negotiate for our affected genuine candidates to be accommodated in the August WASSCE Examination Series which Ghana is taking at present; but that also did not work. WAEC said it was too late as they had already completed all arrangements and preparations for those examinations. This leaves Sierra Leone with only the November/December WAEC Examination Series as the remaining nearest and earliest option for our affected children.

In the current prevailing circumstances and material moment, the Parliamentary Oversight Committee fully understands the emotional stress, worries, concerns and anxieties of all parents/guardians over the fate of our affected children who have been caught up in this WASSCE CASS-1 and BRS upload quagmire. As your committed elected representatives in Parliament, we are working assiduously with the MBSSE and WAEC to speedily put together a Plan-B in order to enable those affected children, who are genuine school-going candidates with legitimate BECE results (enrolled in government approved schools) to take their WASSCE this year under the November/December WASSCE Series.

The MBSSE and the Committee are doing everything humanly possible to enable these same candidates to also take their examinations at no cost to parents/guardians, and for the government to bear the full cost of the examination fees.

Total number of genuine candidates left out for the May/June WASSCE

According to WAEC data, 146,179 candidates from 816 schools (public and private) have been successfully registered for the May/June 2024 WASSCE Examinations.

However, the total number of genuine school-going candidates with legitimate BECE results that have been left out cannot honestly be ascertained for now, because many of the lists submitted by some of the schools are adulterated with so many irregularities and abnormalities ranging from:

- SSS-2 children being entered for the examinations with fake BECE results;
- schools having double WAEC codes with entries against both codes;
- schools having variations between their SSS-3 numbers in the Annual School Census and the numbers submitted to WAEC as candidates for the examination;
- repeaters, including over 30-year old adults being entered for the examination; and
- ghost schools with ghost candidates that are yet to be located and verified.

Hence, all numbers being quoted and doing the rounds in the media regarding children that have been left out of the examinations are merely wild speculations, distorted exaggerations and malicious allegations; and should be discountenanced as such by all well-meaning Sierra Leoneans.

The MBSSE is continuing to reprocess and verify the various lists of schools and names to ascertain the veracity of the legitimate schools and candidates affected. As your representatives that you elected, the Parliamentary Committee urges all members of the public to patiently wait for the MBSSE to complete and conclude the process, and come up with the true numbers of genuine and legitimate schools and candidates, which will hopefully happen soon.

Severe penalties await all defaulting and unscrupulous school heads, as well as all officials of the MBSSE and WAEC that allegedly connived to deprive our legitimate school candidates and caused unwarranted stress to them and their parents and guardians, and, in the process, to also tarnish the image and undermine the achievements of the government, and the Free Quality Education Programme.

Signed

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Hon. Alpha Fodie Madie Jabbie

Chairman, Parliamentary Committee on Basic and Senior Secondary Education