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Opposition Says Damning Health-Related Advisory by US is an Indictment on the Jamaican Government

Kingston, Jamaica. January 24, 2024: The Shadow Minister of Health and Wellness, Dr. Alfred Dawes, is raising serious concerns in response to the unprecedented travel advisory issued by the United States government, advising its citizens to reconsider travel to Jamaica due to the alarming state of the country's public healthcare system. Dr. Dawes is emphasizing the gravity of this advisory, describing it as a sobering wake-up call for all Jamaicans. He said, "While previous advisories from the US have primarily focused on crime and safety, this new development exposes the substandard healthcare services that Jamaican citizens endure, with potentially damning implications for the country's tourism sector."

Dr. Dawes is criticizing the Ministry of Health's response to ongoing calls from the Opposition, Civil Society, and concerned individuals for substantial actions to improve the public health system. "Our calls have consistently been met with PR generated feel-good narratives aimed at creating a deceptive illusion of progress rather than implementing essential reforms." Such responses, according to Dr. Dawes, have resulted in inadequate services and facilities for the public. He urged the government to, "address the national embarrassment and consequences of the advisory responsibly, as this cannot be dismissed as mere political maneuvering."

Expressing disappointment in recent government decisions, including their disregard for the working arrangements for healthcare workers, the Shadow Minister is calling for comprehensive reform in response to the evolving nature of health demands. He is proposing immediate action, including adequate financing, human resources reform, reduction of bureaucracy within the Ministry of Health and regional health authorities, elimination of wastage, and enhanced accountability in procurement and facilities management. "The Opposition remains committed to collaborating, offering ideas, and assisting in implementing a system that serves the interests of all citizens," assured Dr Dawes.



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Drawing parallels with previous travel advisories related to crime that the Government used to justify states of emergencies, the Shadow Minister pondered if the addition of health concerns to the advisory might necessitate a declaration of a state of emergency in healthcare. While acknowledging the shame in relying on a foreign advisory for the government to prioritize its citizens' well-being, Dr. Dawes is welcoming any potential improvements resulting from the current situation.

The Shadow Minister is also expressing concern about the Ministry of Tourism's response to the advisory, particularly regarding the recommendation for travellers to Jamaica to have medical insurance, including medical evacuation insurance. He is questioning how this could impact travel costs to Jamaica, especially at a time when other destinations with better healthcare facilities are intensifying their marketing efforts.

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