

Health Minister Dr. Wilhelmina Jallah's Speech Delivered While Taking Office on Tuesday, March 27, 2018 @ The Ministry of Health Auditorium.



Honorable Peter Coleman Chair of the committee on Health for the Senate, Honorable Saah Joseph Chair of the committee on Health for the House of representative, my fellow deputies, our partners present, (UNFPA, IRISH AID, UNICEF, WHO) members of the press , Ministry of Health staff, my family and friends, distinguished ladies and gentlemen.

I am very grateful and humbled to be here today to serve our nation as the next Minister of Health. To the President and the Vice President of the Republic of Liberia, I express my heartfelt gratitude and I am truly honored to be appointed to serve the Liberian people as Health Minister.

Most of all, I would like to thank the almighty God for preparing me and for giving me this special opportunity to serve and make a difference in the lives of our people when it comes to health. Today is a very special day for me. All of my life from the time I was a little girl I had one dream and that dream was to serve humanity. I developed the passion to become a doctor when I was very young, because I always wanted to take care of sick people and to make sure that people remain healthy. My passion to serve humanity and to make sure our people are healthy is the reason why I accepted the appointment by His Excellency, President George Weah.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my predecessors, the legislature, and donors and partners for the progress made within the healthcare system over the past several years. The 14-year civil war and the recent unprecedented Ebola epidemic crippled our fragile healthcare system thus further depriving the people of Liberia the opportunity to receive adequate healthcare. Notwithstanding despite all that our citizens have been through during the civil war and with the deadly Ebola virus, one thing is for certain. We are a resilient people and therefore with our partners and all other stakeholders including honorable legislators I am certain that our healthcare system can become what it needs to be so that the people of Liberia receive the necessary healthcare service that they deserve. As health Minister I promise and commit myself to serving and protecting the lives of our citizens so that they remain healthy throughout the country and so that when they are ill or in need of healthcare service they will indeed receive adequate and quality care in every single county.

We all know that it is not going to be an easy ride to building a resilient healthcare system under this pro-poor government, but what I am certain of is that with all the right measures in place, together we all can deliver the best healthcare system for all Liberians.

Our current challenges are enormous ranging from healthcare workers pay and benefits to high infant and maternal mortality rate. The lack of proper road infrastructure to many places especially within the southeast is a huge challenge which deprives the citizens from gaining access to adequate healthcare. Our situation with providing drugs on time to every healthcare center and pharmacy is also a challenge. The lack of medical supplies and equipment, healthcare infrastructure throughout the country, specialized medical services, proper diagnosis, tertiary care units, great customer services within the healthcare delivery system are all some of the major challenges that I am prepared to deal with and find solutions to with the help of my dynamic qualified staff, members of the legislature, as well as donors and partners and all other relevant stakeholders. I commit myself to working tirelessly to ensure that all Liberians and residents receive quality care that is affordable.

My vision and priority over the next 150 days will focus on the following:

- Healthcare workers salary, benefits and capacity building
- Availability of Drugs supply and the entire supply chain system
- Infant and maternal mortality
- Mental health
- Regulations and policies that will provide access to and drive a resilient healthcare system in every county

- Proper funding for priority programs, salaries, and various healthcare initiatives

The issue with our healthcare workers is a very major issue because if we do not have the right incentive and benefits for our healthcare workers it will be very difficult to have a motivated staff to build a resilient healthcare system. Over the next several weeks I will work with my staff to deal with the issues of ghost names on the payroll in order to make room for those deserving healthcare workers that should be included on the payroll. I will also look into the issue with salary disparity, and work with legislature and partners to make sure we have proper funding over time so that all those working get paid we will look into scholarships and make sure that deserving and qualified people are the actual recipients of the various scholarships programs available.

Secondly WHO records show that Liberia still has a long way to go with dealing with infant and maternal mortality. I look into various measures, regulations and policies that will improve the mortality rate for mothers and infants when it comes to

The issue with drug supply has been an ongoing issue for a very long time and this must be dealt with. Drug theft, out-of-stock, expired drugs and drugs that should not even be on the market will be looked into so that we develop and strengthen policies and regulations to resolve this matter. We will look into automation and accountability and deal with those who break the law when it comes to drug theft and other related matters.

Our supply chain system must be strengthened and we will look into the best way to improve and implement a very good supply chain system not just for drugs but for other medical supplies as well

Another major shortcoming within our healthcare delivery system is to deal with the issue surrounding mental health care services. I will work with all relevant partners and stakeholder to see how we can build a new rehabilitation center and put in the proper measure to improving and expanding mental health

Last but the not the least is the issue with proper funding to meet all the healthcare needs of our citizens. I will work with you honorable legislators and with partners and other stakeholders to ensure that the budgetary support and all necessary financing is available to implement our vision and objectives for building a resilient healthcare system. Over the next six to twelve months I plan to look into measure to extending services to arrears that have no healthcare centers and I plan look to improving specialized care. As we know we have a lot of work to do and it will take time to reach our goals. I cannot do all this alone. I am very excited about what I know is possible and about what we will achieve over the next several weeks.

I once again want to thank all those well-wishers and all those who supported me during my confirmation process. I look forward to working with my dynamic team here at the ministry and across the country. I particularly want to once again thank the legislators for confirming me and form making it possible to stand before you today. I am deeply honored to serve the Liberian people. As I always say a health Nation is a wealthy nation.

I look forward to working with everyone including our donors and partners and members of the press to ensuring that we make the vision of building a resilient healthcare system become a reality.

I thank you.