



FAMILY FRONTIERS

## Persatuan Kebajikan Sokongan Keluarga Selangor & KL (PPM-011-10-24072020)

Association of Family Support & Welfare Selangor & KL (Family Frontiers)

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### **Equal Citizenship for Malaysian mothers - A Brighter Future for Some, But Not All**

Family Frontiers and the Malaysian Mothers' Network celebrate the passing of the amendment that grants Malaysian women the equal right, as Malaysian men, to confer automatic citizenship on their overseas-born children. This historic milestone marks a significant stride in the pursuit of gender equality. We extend our gratitude to the Government and members of the Dewan Rakyat who supported Malaysian mothers' equal citizenship rights and look forward to its passage through the Dewan Negara.

*"We are all proud Malaysians today. Today's vote for progress is long overdue. This amendment will significantly alleviate the emotional and bureaucratic burdens faced by countless Malaysian mothers who have long struggled with the uncertainty and stress of their children's citizenship status. It ensures that children born abroad to Malaysian mothers can now enjoy the same rights and privileges as those born within the country, fostering a sense of belonging and security,"* said Family Frontiers President Adlyn Adam Teoh.

However, this victory would have been much sweeter had the amendment been made retroactive, ensuring that all affected Malaysian mothers and their children would benefit. While we acknowledge the Home Minister's commitment to processing current applications under Article 15(2), the amendment continues to exclude children who have yet to apply and those who have surpassed the age of 18, including some whose mothers have passed away.

*"It's devastating to many mothers and children that this amendment isn't retroactive. My children and many others like them will not automatically be Malaysian simply by virtue of being born before this amendment has passed. The Malaysian government should work to put a workaround for these children and their Malaysian mothers,"* conveys Pamela Yeh, a mother still waiting for her teenage daughter to be recognised as Malaysian.

Children born before the amendment enters into force will also be excluded, and Family Frontiers strongly calls on the Government to ensure there will be no delays for the actual implementation of the constitutional change.

Equally concerning are the three regressive amendments that remain bundled with the progressive amendment for mothers. These include the removal of automatic citizenship for children of stateless local-born Permanent Residence holders, the lowering of the age limit to apply for citizenship from 21 to 18, and the revocation of citizenship for foreign wives if their marriage is dissolved within two years of gaining citizenship.

It is deeply disappointing that while making strides towards equality, the Government has chosen to eliminate Constitutional pathways to citizenship.

Our work does not end here. Family Frontiers will closely monitor the implementation of the new law and policies. Additionally, the Government must establish pathways to citizenship for children of Malaysian women excluded by the non-retroactive nature of this amendment and implement clear, robust policies to protect children of stateless local-born Permanent Residents as their automatic citizenship pathway has been removed. We stand ready to support the Home Ministry in addressing these issues and remain hopeful that the Government will continue to work towards a Malaysia where every child is treated equally under the law.

Our heartfelt thanks go out to all our supporters, especially the Malaysian youth, civil society organisations, and dedicated partners like the Malaysian Citizenship Rights Alliance (MCRA) and the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG), who have stood with us throughout this journey.

To the Malaysian mothers who worked tirelessly to ensure no other woman endures the same inequality and injustice—you have been the backbone of this movement. Your commitment, and support for one another through this long process have brought us to this moment. To everyone who supported our campaign: every post, word of encouragement, and act of solidarity brought us closer to this achievement.

Together, we pledge to continue this journey, ensuring that every child of a Malaysian parent, whether biological or adopted, can secure citizenship in a reasonable time frame, regardless of the gender or marital status of the parents or the child's place of birth.

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