

Press Statement

Family Frontiers Welcomes Policy Review on Employment Rights for Foreign Spouses

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For Immediate Release

Family Frontiers welcomes the Home Minister's recent acknowledgment in Parliament to a question posed by YB Dr Taufiq Johari (PH-Sungai Petani) of the need to revisit policies governing the employment rights of foreign spouses in Malaysia. This long-overdue review signals a critical step toward addressing the socio-economic challenges faced by binational families, an issue championed by Foreign Spouses Support Group the pioneer organisation who have been campaigning for rights of non-citizen spouses over a decade and now Family Frontiers.

Despite foreign spouses' contributions to their families and communities, restrictive policies, such as the "prohibition on employment" clause in the Long-Term Social Visit Pass (LTSVP), have left many unable to secure jobs, contribute to household incomes, or gain financial independence. Between 2020 and 2024, only 11.4% of non-citizen wives applied for work endorsements—a clear indicator of the barriers posed by the current framework.

The impact of these policies disproportionately affects women in binational marriages, leaving non-citizen wives financially dependent on their Malaysian spouses. This dependency not only undermines their autonomy but also increases their vulnerability to abuse and exploitation. Malaysian women married to foreign spouses face similar challenges, with employment restrictions on their husbands exacerbating financial strain, mental health challenges, and family instability.

Family Frontiers urges the Home Ministry to consider the following recommendations in its review of policies affecting foreign spouses:

1. **Remove Employment Restrictions:** Eliminate the "prohibited from employment" clause on the LTSVP and grant immediate work authorization upon marriage registration.
2. **Simplify Processes:** Streamline and standardize the endorsement process, allowing spouses to work across states without unnecessary delays or job-specific restrictions.
3. **Extend Labor Protections:** Include non-citizen spouses under labor laws, granting access to benefits such as SOCSO and EPF to ensure workplace security and equity.
4. **Address Gender Inequality:** Align Malaysia's policies with its commitments to gender equality and human rights under international frameworks such as CEDAW and the SDGs.
5. **Strengthen Family Stability:** Facilitate access to professional licenses, financial services, and housing for foreign spouses to enhance family wellbeing and Malaysia's social cohesion.

The government's acknowledgment of these issues represents a step forward, but comprehensive reforms are urgently needed to ensure binational families are no longer marginalized. Recognizing the right to work for all spouses is not only a matter of human rights but also an economic opportunity for Malaysia to tap into an underused pool of skilled labor, potentially alleviating the brain drain that has seen a significant outflow of educated Malaysians seeking better opportunities abroad.

We strongly encourage the Home Ministry to engage stakeholders, including Family Frontiers, affected families, and other civil society organizations, in shaping inclusive policies that protect and empower binational families.

About Family Frontiers

Family Frontiers is the pioneer organisation working to promote and strengthen the rights of binational families in Malaysia. Our organization is committed to ensuring that no family is left behind, advocating for policies that uphold equality, dignity, and justice for all.

For media inquiries, please contact: