

Jamaicans Urged to Participate in Abortion Consultations

The Minister of Health, has called on Jamaicans to get actively involved in the abortion consultations now underway.

He said that the public's views and recommendations will inform the deliberations of the Joint Select Committee of Parliament, which is considering the final report of the Abortion Policy Review Advisory Group. "I want you to be actively involved, I want you to participate so that we can have some fulsome discussions, and give the (Joint Select) Committee something to mull over," he told the packed audience at the first island wide consultation held on Wednesday (Jan. 20) at the Montego Bay Civic Centre. He said that the review process has been taking place since 1975, and hopefully, the present committee will make some final recommendations, which can inform a national abortion law. Members of the Joint Select Committee were on hand to listen to and make note of the opinions and recommendations of the participants. Two more consultations will be held, and then the committee will have a chance to assess all the recommendations it has received, which will guide the relevant legislation to be drafted for implementation. Minister Spencer expressed the hope that the Joint Select Committee can finish its work and forward its recommendations within this legislative year. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that there are 35 illegal abortions per 1,000 women in Jamaica annually. Illegal abortions are seen as a major contributor to the increase in maternal deaths over the past eight to ten years.