The Clerk of Parliament

Parliament of Zimbabwe

Nelson Mandela/3rd Street

Box CY 298

Causeway

Harare

19 February 2020

**RE: My submissions on the proposed Constitutional amendment bill number 2**

**Dear Members of Parliament.**

As you work to review and vote on the Constitutional Amendment Bill No.2, I am writing to urge you to reject the proposal to extend section 124b of the Constitution on Proportional Representation quota system for female women Members of Parliament (PR-MPs).

As an aspiring Zimbabwean woman leader, I strongly feel that the proposed amendment is an unnecessary and inadequate means for achieving the gender parity mandated by the Constitution of Zimbabwe for, among others, the following reasons:

* Extending the PR quota system defers the achievement of gender equality in Zimbabwe by ten more years. The existing system has been in effect since 2013. After two full cycles of harmonized elections and numerous by-elections, the net number of women in elected leadership positions has decreased. For example, the number of women MPs directly elected into constituencies dropped from 26 in the 8th Parliament to 25 in the 9th Parliament.
* Political parties used the PR quota system to deny women (particularly young women) opportunities to compete for constituency seats. The system was abused by political party leaders mainly men to further divide women. The women were appointed on loyalty, bootlicking and factional basis, leaving out more deserving women. The system also failed to produce many new leaders as the older women Parliamentarians who had served for many years take 'retirement' in the PR 'safe seats”.
* The PR system is a huge burden on the country’s fiscus, and a waste of tax payers’ money as it leads to a bloated Parliament. Given the economic hardships facing Zimbabwe, the extra 60 seats on top of 210 are too many for the country and very costly.
* Statistically women are the majority (52.3%) of the population yet they are disproportionately represented in leadership and decision-making platforms. Women are currently occupying an average 15% of all leadership positions nationally.

Based on the above, it is clear that the proposal to extend the PR quota system is not only inadequate for increasing the number of women in leadership positions, but also undermines efforts aimed at achieving gender parity as mandated by the constitution. Therefore, it would be counterproductive to extend the section 124b.

What is needed is to fully implement sections 17, 56 and 80 of the Constitution which clearly provide for gender equality in Parliament and all other leadership positions that include community level leadership positions such as School Development Committees (SDCs), Health Centre Committees (HCCs), Village Development Committees (VIRDCO), Ward Development Committees (WARDCO) and also local government. These positions are critical for women to occupy as key developmental decisions that affect women and girls more are made at these levels.

The proposed constitutional amendment process provides a historic opportunity for the 9th Parliament to show leadership and commitment to achieving gender parity mandated by the Constitution. I trust that MPs know that Zimbabwean women are watching them and closely monitoring how they vote on this issue of paramount importance.

I sincerely hope my views shall be put into consideration.

Regards,

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**WALPE Member**

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