

# A BILL

FOR

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A PUBLIC PETITIONS WEBSITE AND TO PROVIDE FOR ITS  
MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS

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BE IT ENACTED by the National Assembly of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as follows:

## **1. Establishment of the Public Petitions Website**

- (1) There shall be established an official Public Petitions Website (hereinafter referred to as "the Website"), to facilitate the electronic submission, management, and publication of public petitions.
- (2) The Website shall be established as a subdomain on the existing website of the National Assembly as *petitions.nass.gov.ng*
- (3) In the event that the subdomain *petitions.nass.gov.ng* cannot be established, the Website shall be established on an alternative domain or subdomain, as determined by the Public Petitions Administrative Board (hereinafter referred to as "the Board"), with the same purpose and functionality.

## **2. Purpose of the Website**

- (1) The purpose of the Website shall be to establish an official website for the submission and management of public petitions, ensuring public access to the legislative process and responsiveness in the legislature.
- (2) The Website shall process and respond exclusively to non-accusatory petitions.

## **3. Functionality of the Website**

- (1) The website shall provide an online form for the submission of public petitions, allowing users to attach relevant prayers, documents and evidence.

- (2) Each petition submitted shall undergo a verification process to ensure authenticity and adherence to submission guidelines.
- (3) The website shall include a public dashboard where petitions and their status can be viewed by any user.
- (4) To ensure the integrity of the petition process, the Website shall include anti-fraud and duplicate signing prevention mechanisms.
- (5) Each user must authenticate their identity before submitting or signing a petition.
- (6) The system shall automatically detect and prevent duplicate signatures and flag any suspicious activities for review.
- (7) An audit trail shall be maintained for transparency, and penalties set out in this Bill shall be imposed on users found committing fraud.

#### **4. Development of the Website**

- (1) The development of the Website may be undertaken either in-house, by the relevant ICT department of the National Assembly, or outsourced to an external contractor, at the direction of the Board.
- (2) In the case of outsourcing, the selection of the contractor shall be conducted in compliance with applicable tender protocols and procurement laws to ensure transparency, efficiency, and value for money.

#### **5. Management and Operation**

- (1) The Website shall be managed and operated by the National Assembly ICT Department or outsourced to an external contractor, at the direction of the Board.
- (2) The Website shall be maintained in accordance with industry standards for security, accessibility, and user experience.

#### **6. Public Access and Use**

- (1) The Website shall be accessible to all citizens and residents of Nigeria without charge.
- (2) User data submitted through the Website shall be protected in accordance with the Nigeria Data Protection Act, 2023.

## 7. Determination of Thresholds

- (1) The Board shall establish specific thresholds for the number of supporters required for petitions to be considered at various levels of action.

## 8. Review of Thresholds

- (1) The Board shall periodically review the effectiveness of the thresholds and may recommend adjustments to ensure that the petition process remains accessible and responsive to public concerns.

## 9. Treatment of Petitions Based on Thresholds

- (1) **Initial Consideration Threshold:** Petitions that receive support below the initial threshold, as determined by the Board, shall not be considered for debate in the respective House. Such petitions may be acknowledged, without further action.
- (2) **Debate Threshold:** Petitions that meet or exceed the initial threshold but do not surpass the advanced threshold shall be considered for debate in the respective House. The Board shall ensure that these petitions are scheduled for discussion in a timely manner.
- (3) **Advanced Legislative Threshold:** Petitions that meet or exceed the advanced threshold shall trigger the introduction of legislation or a resolution by the respective House. The Board shall facilitate the drafting of the necessary legislative instruments and ensure their prompt introduction for consideration by the House.

## 10. Power to Seek Remedies

- (1) The legislature is empowered to seek and recommend appropriate remedies across all branches of government in response to petitions.

This authority includes:

- a. **Investigations:** Requesting or initiating investigations into the issues raised by the petitions.
- b. **Legislative Proposals:** Proposing new legislation or amendments to existing laws as necessary to address the concerns raised.
- c. **Administrative Actions:** Recommending or advocating for changes in administrative practices or policies.
- d. **Judicial Actions:** Requesting judicial review or action where applicable, in line with the legislative process and authority.

## **11. Establishment of the Public Petitions Administrative Board**

- (1) There is hereby established the Public Petitions Administrative Board responsible for overseeing the management, operation, and strategic direction of the Website.
- (2) The Board shall ensure the effective and transparent functioning of the Website, safeguard against fraud, and uphold the principles of integrity and accountability in the petition process.

## **12. Composition of the Board**

- (1) The Board shall consist of a Chairman and the following members:
  - (a) Two (2) representatives from the Public Petitions Committee of the House of Representatives.
  - (b) Two (2) representatives from the Public Petitions Committee of the Senate.
  - (c) Two (2) representatives from the National Assembly Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Department.
  - (d) Seven (7) individuals elected from the private sector who do not currently work, and have never worked, in the public sector.
- (2) The Board shall comprise:
  - (a) At least two (2) members under the age of 35.
  - (b) At least two (2) members over the age of 35 but under 70.
  - (c) At least two (2) members who are female.
  - (d) At least two (2) members who are male.
  - (e) All members must possess university qualifications.

## **13. Nomination of Board Members**

- (1) Any member of the public may nominate candidates for the Board by submitting the names and relevant qualifications of their nominees by email, phone, letter, social media or other relevant means to the The Chairman of the current Public Petitions Committee of the House of Representatives (hereinafter referred to as “the Chair”).
- (2) The open nominations for Board membership shall be widely advertised.
- (3) The nomination period shall be open for 14 days, during which the public may submit and review nominations.

- (4) If the total number of nominations exceeds one hundred (100), the Chair shall truncate the list of nominees to one hundred (100) based on the earliest date of submission.
- (5) Nominations shall be prioritized according to the date and time of their submission, with those submitted earlier being retained.

#### **14. Election Management**

- (1) The Chair shall be responsible for managing and overseeing the election process for the Board members.
- (2) The Chair shall ensure that the nomination and voting procedures are conducted in a fair, transparent, and efficient manner.
- (3) Following the nomination period, an online polling tool, such as Survey Monkey, shall be utilized to conduct a public vote to elect members of the Board.
- (4) The public shall be able to access the polling tool through a widely advertised secure link.
- (5) Each eligible voter shall be entitled to cast one vote per category of membership (e.g., Public Petitions Committees, ICT Department, Private Sector) during the voting period, which shall be open for 7 days.
- (6) The online polling tool shall include verification mechanisms to ensure that each vote is authentic and that there are no duplicate votes.
- (7) The results of the election shall be made publicly available through advertisements.

#### **15. Appointment**

- (1) The candidates who receive the highest number of votes in their respective categories, in descending order of votes and up to the number required to be elected for that category, shall be appointed as members of the Board, subject to verification of eligibility.
- (2) In the event of a tie, a run-off election shall be conducted using the same online polling tool.
- (3) In the event that a candidate is found ineligible after election, their election shall be declared void, and a new election shall be conducted to replace them in accordance with the provisions of this Act.

## **16. Vote of Confidence**

- (1) After the new Board members are elected, the Chair must receive a vote of confidence from the newly elected Board members to continue in their role as the Chair. If the Chair does not receive a majority vote of confidence, an alternative Chair shall be appointed by the newly elected Board.

## **17. Tenure**

- (1) Each member of the Board shall serve a term of two (2) years, with the possibility of reelection after each term, up to a maximum of five (5) terms.
- (2) Any member of the Board may by notice to the Board resign his appointment.
- (3) In the event of a vacancy on the Board, a new member shall be elected in accordance with the provisions of this Act.

## **18. Roles and Responsibilities**

- (1) The Board shall provide oversight and strategic guidance to the management of the Website, ensuring that it operates in accordance with the provisions of this Act.
- (2) The Board shall monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of anti-fraud measures and propose improvements as necessary.

## **19. Meetings and Decision-Making**

- (1) The Board shall meet at least once every quarter and may hold additional meetings as necessary.
- (2) A quorum for Board meetings shall consist of at least seven (7) members.
- (3) At a meeting of the Board, each member present shall be entitled to one vote.
- (4) Decisions of the Board shall be made by a simple majority vote of the members present. In the event of a tie, the Chairperson shall have the casting vote.

## **20. Funding and Resources**

- (1) The Board shall establish a fund (hereinafter referred to as “the Fund”) for the performance of its functions under this Act
- (2) There shall be paid into the Fund:
  - (a) a take-off grant as may be appropriated by the National Assembly;
  - (b) donations, gifts, grants, aids, endowments and voluntary contributions;
  - and
  - (c) such other money or assets that may accrue to the Board.
- (3) There shall be chargeable to the Fund:
  - (a) the cost of administration of the Board;
  - (b) any other expenditure, approved by the Board, for the purposes of performing the functions of the Board under this Act.
- (4) The Fund of the Board shall be managed in accordance with the rules made by the Board

## **21. Remuneration and Allowances**

- (1) Members of the Board shall not be entitled to remuneration or allowances.
- (2) Members shall not be reimbursed for any expenses incurred in the performance of their duties on the Board.

## **22. Code of Conduct**

- (1) Members of the Board shall adhere to the highest standards of ethical conduct and avoid any conflicts of interest. Members must disclose any potential conflicts to the Board in a timely manner.
- (2) Members shall maintain the confidentiality of any sensitive information they access in the course of their duties.

## **23. Oversight and Reporting**

- (1) The Senate and House of Representatives shall oversee the operations of the Board to ensure compliance with this Act.
- (2) The Board shall submit an annual report to the Senate and House of Representatives detailing the website's performance and operations, including the number of petitions received and processed, and any issues related to fraud prevention, public engagement and system performance.

## **24. Penalties**

- (1) Failure of the Board to comply with the provisions of this Act may result in fines, administrative sanctions, and, where applicable, the Board members responsible may be liable to arrest and prosecution in accordance with the law.
- (2) Any individual found guilty of committing petition fraud shall be subject to a maximum fine of ₦10,000.
- (3) Any individual found guilty of wilfully tampering with petition data, so as to alter the result of a petition, shall be subject to a maximum sentence of one (1) month imprisonment.

## **25. Enforcement**

- (1) Enforcement of this Act shall be carried out by the Nigeria Police Force (hereinafter referred to as “the Police”), which shall be responsible for investigating and prosecuting violations, including petition fraud and tampering with petition data.
- (2) The Police may collaborate with relevant legislative committees and the Board to ensure comprehensive enforcement and compliance with the Act.

## **26. Interpretation**

In this Bill, unless the context otherwise requires

"The Website" refers to the official online platform established under this Act for the submission, management, review, and publication of public petitions.

"Administrator" refers to the Board, responsible for the operation, maintenance, oversight, and enforcement of the rules governing the Website.

"Public Petition" refers to a formal request submitted by a user through the Website, seeking action, intervention, or attention from relevant authorities on a particular issue of public concern.

“Petition Fraud” means any act of tampering, falsifying, or manipulating petition submissions, including the submission of duplicate signatures, with the intent to distort the petition process or influence legislative action.



"User" refers to any individual or entity that accesses the Website for the purpose of submitting, supporting, or reviewing Public Petitions.

"Non-Accusatory" refers to petitions that do not identify or implicate any individual or entity as an accuser or defendant. Such petitions are intended to raise issues, concerns, or requests without assigning blame or seeking punitive action against specific parties.

"Identity" refers to an email address or phone number.

"Online" refers to transmission of data over the internet

"Advertised" refers to information publicized through multiple channels, including but not limited to, national newspapers, official government websites, social media platforms, and other relevant media outlets.

"Widely Advertised" refers to advertising to the public through multiple channels, including but not limited to, national newspapers, official government websites, social media platforms, and other relevant media outlets.

## **27. Short Title**

(1) This Bill may be cited as the "Public Petitions (Establishment) Bill, 2024."