



MEDIA STATEMENT

Support for the Amendment of Act 342: Law as an Important Measure to Control Outbreaks

As the President of Persatuan Pakar Perubatan Kesihatan Awam Malaysia (PPPKAM), I would like to express our strong support for the proposed amendments to Act 342. The bill will incorporate specific provisions from the Emergency Ordinance (Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases) (Amendment) 2021 and the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Regulations 2022. While these provisions have proven useful during the pandemic, a more comprehensive Act is needed to ensure the country's effective legal standing to face future pandemics.

We understand the concerns raised by some quarters, and it is crucial to underscore the importance of public awareness and perception in infection control. Individual responsibility is not just critical, but empowering, in preventing the spread of diseases. Health education and awareness should be the first line of a prevention strategy, with law enforcement used only when necessary and during critical situations.

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the critical need for urgent public reactions and compliance with infection control measures. The fines proposed in the amendments aim to ensure swift and decisive action in the face of serious pandemics. The urgency of the COVID-19 crisis required immediate and robust responses to contain and manage the outbreak effectively.

It is crucial to remember the severity and urgency of the COVID-19 pandemic, where timely actions were essential in preventing widespread transmission and saving lives. The proposed amendments to Act 342 are designed to establish the necessary legal

framework to support such urgent actions, underscoring the need for a structured and systematic approach to crisis management during future pandemics. This approach will provide reassurance and confidence in our ability to effectively manage future health crises.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there were instances where corporate bodies failed to abide by isolation orders, social distancing measures, and face mask mandates, insisting their employees come to work. This led to more positive cases and major outbreaks, which were more difficult to curb, increasing morbidity and mortality.

Every organisation needs to take responsibility for preventing the transmission of outbreaks. Companies should prioritise safety and life in critical circumstances above profit and business. By working together, we can control outbreaks and reduce morbidity and mortality.

PPPKAM firmly believes that these amendments must be approved as soon as possible. The primary issue is the urgent need for enforceable laws supporting rapid and effective responses during public health emergencies. The safety of our public health is at stake, and it requires a legal foundation that empowers authorities to act swiftly and decisively.

We urge all stakeholders to consider the importance of these amendments in strengthening our public health response capabilities. The lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic should guide us in preparing for future health crises, ensuring that we have the legal tools necessary to protect the health and well-being of our population.

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