

Parliament okays patients rights B

By Henry Sekanjako and Nicholas Wassajja

Parliament has okayed Busiki County MP Paul Akamba to introduce a Private Members' Bill entitled, The Patient's Rights and Responsibilities Bill, 2017.

Presenting a motion for the introduction of the Bill to Parliament yesterday, Akamba noted that the Bill is aimed at improving the quality of healthcare services received by the patients and to empower patients to participate in the process of seeking or receiving health care.

"Honorable Members, I implore you to support this law, to protect patient' rights in Uganda," Akamba told the MPs as he defended the Bill.

According to Akamba, currently, the country lacks a law governing patients' rights and obligations in the health sector, adding that if passed into law, the patients' rights and responsibilities Bill would cover the gaps.

"Many patients go to the clinics, health centres or hospitals for treatment, but they do not know what their rights and responsibilities are. If the Bill is passed into law, it will make it easier for the patients to respond to doctors,



A male patient (right) and female patients sharing a ward in Kaliro Hospital. The patients rights Bill will address the privacy issues at health centres and hospitals in the country. File photo

or health workers if they are treated harshly," Akamba said. The Patients' Rights And Responsibilities Bill 2015 was first introduced by former Kigulu South MP Milton

Muwuma during the Ninth Parliament. However, the process hit a snag after the MP failed to secure a certificate of financial implication for consideration of

the Bill by Parliament. Seconding the Bill, David Abala, the Ngora County MP, said: "The Bill will help people who are being detained in health facilities because they

cannot pay bills get justice." The Bill empowers health consumers to demand high quality healthcare, promote the rights of patients and to improve the quality of life of all



MP Paul Akamba, the sponsor of the patients rights Bill

Ugandans. It also lists the rights and the responsibilities of people using health services.

According to health activists, if passed into law, the Bill will promote the rights of patients whose rights have been violated by some health practitioners.

"The Bill places the patient at the centre of care, empowers the patient welfare and implores health workers to lead the advocacy of patients' rights," Moses Talibita, legal officer Uganda Health Users' Committee Organisation (UNHCO) said.

Talibita noted that the proposed law builds trust and confidence in the health system, by making it easier for patients to be involved in their own healthcare.