

Transcript of remarks by SLW on new initiatives on improving people's livelihoods and Employment (Amendment) Bill 2019

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, on new initiatives on improving people's livelihoods and the Employment (Amendment) Bill 2019 after attending a radio programme this morning (January 15):

Reporter: Dr Law, you have said in the proposal the Government will combine the two Old Age Living Allowances together. How is that financially sustainable?

Secretary for Labour and Welfare: The major consideration of the Old Age Living Allowance is that it has an income limit. Also, it has an asset limit, although this time we proposed to raise the asset limit to \$500,000. We do consider in the long run with people's growing savings, including the Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes, the percentage of senior people who are eligible for the Old Age Living Allowance will drop slightly and slowly. So, in terms of the long-term sustainability, it is a challenge but it should be surmountable.

Reporter: Can you clarify one more thing? Earlier, you were talking about whether you will withdraw the motion on moving the maternity bill to the Legislative Council Panel on Manpower. Can you clarify so you won't be withdrawing that motion?

Secretary for Labour and Welfare: I will not withdraw the motion (under Rule 54(4) of the Rules of Procedure that the second reading debate on the Employment (Amendment) Bill 2019 be adjourned, but the Bill, instead of being referred to the House Committee, be referred to the Panel on Manpower).

Reporter: Why is that? Also, what is your reaction to other people's reactions to your move over the past few days? Most of them have said it will set a bad precedent for other controversial bills or laws in future.

Secretary for Labour and Welfare: I guess if you look back to the history of the Legislative Council, rules are made and changed over time. If you see who breaks the rules or practices of the Legislative Council, I don't think it is the Government. What we are trying to do today is to see what can be allowed within the rules, regulations and procedures. If that can be done and actually permitted by the Legislative Council, why not? So, the reason I did apologise for moving the motion is not for the nature of the motion or the content of the motion, but just for the fact I have not consulted my colleagues before my decision. I have apologised for that, but I still consider my decision at that critical moment is the right move. Thank you.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)