

SINT MAARTEN (PHILIPSBURG) - Richinel Brug says teachers should not be held hostage in their current salary scales. As a person vying for legislative office, Brug proposes an amendment to article 2 of the “Bezoldigingslandsbesluitonderwijs”. This amendment would allow teachers who are stuck in their current salary scale, to go over to the next scale. The “Bezoldigingslandsbesluitonderwijs” is the National Decree containing general measures that regulates the remuneration of teachers on Sint Maarten.

As indicated in previous public statements, Brug believes that it is high time our Frontline workers, first responders and Essential workers get the respect and appreciation they deserve. Brug promised to not only highlight the current challenges this group and many other groups on Sint Maarten face, but also bring tangible (legislative) amendments that will immediately bring some level of alleviation to our people. Brug explained, that teachers are the only civil (and semi-civil) servants on Sint Maarten who do not have their own salary scales that specifically focus on the functions within the Education sector.

“Regular civil servants and the majority of law enforcement personnel have their own salary scales. Regular civil servants have the opportunity to enter Government in for example scale 6 or 7 and work their way up, based on experienced gained and educational programs followed, once vacancies open. Same can be said for civil servants such as Police officers, Firemen and Coast Guard officers, just to name a few. While the system for these types of civil servants is certainly not perfect, contrary to our teachers, there is a path to financial growth and career development.”

“Our Education sector is the only sector that punishes its employees for gaining continues knowledge and experience. Every year our teachers are expected to complete a number of trainings. However, our teachers do not receive any type of financial compensation for the knowledge gained. In any other sector one would come into consideration for a raise in salary or a promotion to a higher function. In our Education system a teacher can be stuck in the same salary scale from age 38 until retirement age that is currently set at age 65, while the Sint Maarten Country Package speaks of an increase to age 67.”

Brug explained, that in reality there is no reason teachers should be held hostage in their current salary scale. The “Bezoldigingslandsbesluitonderwijs” is a National Decree containing general measures, which means: its legislative route for amendments is much shorter than that of National Ordinances. In other words: this amendment, if the will is there, can be made reality within a span of four (4) to six (6) months.

Brug concluded: “Just as the Unified Resilient Sint Maarten Movement (URSM), I strongly believe that Education is the key to developing our people, in doing so, developing a country that will be able to stand on its own feet. Our teachers are the ones responsible for molding the minds of our future leaders. Allowing our teachers to continue to grow and be paid for their experience will boost their morale, curb brain-drain in the Education sector, and more importantly raise the image of the teaching profession on Sint Maarten.”

“It is my hope that sooner rather than later parents put back the teaching profession on the same pedestal as the Doctor and the Lawyer.”