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MEDIA STATEMENT

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MEDIA STATEMENT FROM THE SA HEALTH PROFESSIONALS COLLABORATION (SAHPC)

SA HEALTH PROFESSIONALS COLLABORATION DISAPPOINTED BY NCOP HEALTH COMMITTEE'S LACK OF ADEQUATE CONSULTATION AND REVIEW OF NHI BILL

Johannesburg, 28 November 2023 – South African Health Professionals Collaboration (SAHPC) - a newly formed national group of 9 medical and allied healthcare practitioners' associations representing more than 25,000 dedicated private and public sector healthcare workers - is disappointed that the NCOP Committee on Health and Social Services has not made any amendments to the NHI Bill. It also says the NCOP Committee failed to adequately consult or consider submissions made by numerous clinician bodies, whose primary objective is to safeguard the future of healthcare in the country.

This follows the NCOP Select Committee on Health and Social Services final vote on the NHI Bill on Tuesday, 21 November 2023, where, despite objections, 8 of the 9 provinces voted in favour of the NHI Bill. It appears that comments and recommendations were not sufficiently taken into account in the final committee vote and therefore, the SAHPC urges the NCOP plenary to send the Bill back to the Committee on procedural grounds, when it votes on the NHI Bill on 29 November.

The SAHPC, which includes family medicine GPs, specialist doctors, dentists, and allied healthcare workers, is deeply concerned about the unintended consequences that are likely to arise from the hasty adoption of the NHI Bill in its current format.

The potential consequences of rushing through the NHI Bill without critical amendments are far-reaching and will further undermine the country's ability to deliver quality healthcare to the very patients it seeks to protect. The SAHPC does not believe that this version of the Bill is in the best interest of patients, who are at the heart of any healthcare system. The Bill will also have severe repercussions for the economy and the country's long-term economic sustainability.

Simon Strachan, a spokesperson for the SAHPC says: "The NHI Bill recommends a complete overhaul of the country's healthcare sector. While reforms to the public and private healthcare sectors are urgently needed, there is too much at stake for the country's healthcare system to get the NHI wrong. We are concerned that the Bill's hasty progression through the legislative process, without taking into account the diverse perspectives and expert insights delivered through numerous prior expert submissions, is a lost opportunity to put the country on a pathway to quality healthcare for all."

In the same way that healthcare workers' primary responsibility is to their patients, we believe that Parliament's chief responsibility is to the people of our country. This required a thorough interrogation of the NHI Bill to ensure that the final product is workable and affordable and that it improves the quality and sustainability of available care. We do not believe that the Bill, in its current format, achieves this.

The SAHPC remains committed to collaborating with policymakers and stakeholders to contribute valuable insights that will shape a healthcare system that serves the best interests of every South African.

Ends

Note to Editors:

South African Health Professionals Collaboration members:

- South African Private Practitioners Forum (SAPPF)
- South African Medical Association (SAMA)
- Federation of South African Surgeons (FoSAS)
- South African Dental Association (SADA)
- South African Society of Anaesthesiologists (SASA)
- Unity Forum of Family Practitioners (UFFP)
- South African Orthopaedic Association (SAOA)
- South African Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (SASOG)
- Radiological Society of South Africa (RSSA)

The NCOP plenary will vote on the NHI Bill on Wednesday, 29 November 2023.

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