

# **Govt is responsible for sick healthcare system – AfriForum – Politicsweb 12 September 2019**

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## **AfriForum on NHI: Government is responsible for sick healthcare system** *12 September 2019*

As part of AfriForum's campaign against the destructive bill on national health insurance (NHI), the civil rights organisation submitted its commentary on 12 September 2019 at the Houses of Parliament. AfriForum also requested representatives of the portfolio committee on health to provide the civil rights organisation with the dates and venues of the public participation process of this bill.

The government – and specifically the department of health – has, to say the least, a poor track record in terms of the spending of taxpayers' money and managing government-controlled entities. The department can therefore not be trusted with the more than R446 billion annually (AfriForum's calculation of what NHI will cost) needed to manage the healthcare of the whole country's people.

According to the Auditor-General's (AG's) 2017/2018 audit report, just more than half of national departmental budgets are allocated to the Departments of Health, Education and Public Enterprises, as well as to the implementation of key programmes to ensure the health and well-being of citizens. Yet, these three departments show the worst results. The provincial departments of health fared even worse and are, according to the AG, in a terrible state. The provincial health departments' total deficits for this period amount to R8,4 billion. "It is therefore evident that far-reaching interventions in provincial health departments are necessary. NHI is, however, not the way to achieve this. Minister Zweli Mkhize should rather focus his attention on getting the health department's house in order. This includes the appointment and training of skilled medical personnel, the upgrading of existing government hospitals and clinics, as well as reducing unauthorised, irregular and wasteful expenditure," says Natasha Venter, AfriForum's Campaign Officer for NHI.

According to Venter, government should in fact be wary of programmes like the NHI, as these exert more pressure on an already precarious state healthcare system. "A supplementary system, according to which people can choose to 'buy' private healthcare if they can afford to, in fact alleviates pressure on government's limited resources. This should in practice improve the level of healthcare for everybody. Unfortunately, there are fundamental flaws in our public healthcare system: misappropriation and unaccountability. Until this is resolved, the country's healthcare system will remain sick. Taxpayers can no longer be forced to foot the bill for government's failures."

*Issued by Carina Bester, Media Relations Officer, 12 September 2019*