

Roll-out nation-wide public hearings on NHI --

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DA MP says Bill is riddled with problematic elements and has gaping loopholes

DA calls on Parliament to rollout nation-wide public hearings on the NHI Bill

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The DA calls on National Assembly Chair of Chairs, Cedric Frolick, to budget and plan for an extensive public participation process for the National Health Insurance Bill in the next coming weeks. The Bill is now before Parliament to deliberate on and take into account public inputs before the clause by clause analysis of the legislation.

This Bill, which will see the nationalization and over-centralization of the health system, has far-reaching consequences for each and every South African. That is why it is critical that the public participation process sees every entity, interest group, civil society and ordinary citizens make inputs into the legislative process.

The NHI Bill is riddled with problematic elements and has gaping loop holes which are yet to be answered and resolved. These include:

- No sustainable funding model for the implementation of the Bill;
- There are unvetted powers given to the Minister of Health which would see him appoint the board that will manage the multi-billion-rand NHI Fund;
- The role of the provinces as the implementing arm of healthcare in the country is still unclear and the model proposed will see health services being managed nationally which would inevitably mean poorer services to the people of South Africa;
- The additional tax burden on South Africans is cumbersome for a population that is oppressed by a poor performing economy and crippled by joblessness;
- The role of medical aid schemes is yet to be defined and South Africans will be left with no choice but to rely on an already over-burdened and broken health system;
- Treasury seems to be at odds with the Department of Health around the additional multi-billion-rand injection needed to rollout some of the elements of the Bill;
- The legislation will see the establishment of various district-level entities which will bloat the public service further and create bureaucratic blockages in the system. Ultimately it is the people of this country who will suffer and not receive the health services they desperately need.

South Africa needs Universal Healthcare. The system in place needs to reform and bridge the unsustainable levels of inequality in the country. However, there are sustainable ways to go about this which require a fiscally responsible approach.

That is why the DA has proposed an alternative to NHI, the Sizani Universal Healthcare system. This approach would rollout universal healthcare within the current budget envelope; invest and improve the public health system so that people are at the center of any reform; implement a subsidy which would afford every South African access to the very best of both public and private facilities; retain the current healthcare workers in our public and private health industries and not establish another State Owned Enterprise which will be prone to corruption.

The DA calls on all South Africans to make their voices heard. We cannot allow the ANC government to plunge the health system into the same destructive path that all public entities have been on in the country.

In aid of this process, the DA has created a platform on which South Africans can make their submissions and lodge their objections which will be handed over to Parliament. This petition can be accessed on: <https://www.stopthenhi.co.za/>

The DA will not be deterred in our fight against this destructive Bill. South Africans must join the fight and be afforded the opportunity to engage with Parliament on this piece of legislation in all 9 provinces.

The future of the South African health system and indeed the economy relies on our ability to stop the NHI Bill in its tracks.

Issued by Siviwe Gwarube, DA Shadow Minister of Health, 1 September 2019