

Nehawu, throws its weight behind NHI – The Citizen 8 October 2019

The union wants to embark on a countrywide education programme on NHI and the people's right to healthcare.

Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) largest affiliate – the National Health, Education and Allied Workers' Union (Nehawu) – yesterday threw its weight behind the government's National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill, pledging to make submissions to parliamentary hearings on the legislation.

Parliament has extended public submissions and comments on the NHI Bill from individuals and organisations until November 29.

The 274,000-member strong Nehawu, which also announced a programme of action on the NHI during a media briefing, said the legislation sought to create a single purchaser, universal health coverage and an integrated health system.

Nehawu general secretary Zola Saphetha said the union's submissions to parliament would be backed by a pledge "carrying signatures of scores of our members and the broader working class – calling for decisive implementation of the NHI Bill and the transformation of the healthcare system".

As part of a campaign to deepen public knowledge on the Bill, Saphetha said the union has requested Cosatu to convene a tripartite alliance summit on the NHI – soon expected to be passed into law by President Cyril Ramaphosa. Saphetha said Nehawu's programme of action included:

- Embarking on a countrywide education programme on NHI and the people's right to healthcare.
- Mobilising union members and working with Cosatu, progressive student organisations and other allied formations to defend the NHI.
- Campaigning for the implementation of the national policy imperatives on the NHI in all provinces, including the hiring of more nurses and other medical workers in vacant posts.

"The successful realisation of the NHI as a health financing mechanism requires the integration of the entire health system, including the private health industry and independent providers," Saphetha said.

The recent report of the Competition Commission's Health Market Inquiry depicted "a shocking state of affairs in the much-vaunted private health industry".

Nehawu has called for stringent action to be taken by the Competition Commission against those fingered in the illegal profiteering in the health industry.

