

NHI Bill defended, supported, and welcomed by NEHAWU – The South African 7 October 2019

The union also welcomed the extension of the period for the submission of comments by the public on the bill.

With regards to the [National Health Insurance](#) (NHI) Bill, the [National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union](#) (NEHAWU) held a press conference on 7 October 2019 revealing its plans to defend the legislature.

The conference was held at 14:00 at the Protea Hotel Parktonian at 120 De Korte Street, Braamfontein in Johannesburg. The organisation revealed that they were fully backing and defending the NHI.

NEHAWU welcomes the NHI Bill

NEHAWU also welcomed the publication of the NHI Bill. They supported the legislation which they said, “seeks to create a single purchaser, universal health coverage and integrated health system.”

The union was also pleased with the extension of the period for the submission of comments by the public on the bill. The government has extended the date to 29 November 2019.

The organisation revealed:

“As NEHAWU, we shall make our contributions in the deliberations in Parliament, across the provincial legislatures, and in the broader national debates in support of the NHI. Simultaneously, we are creating a platform for the voices of our members and working people in general to be heard in their support for the principles and the objectives of this legislation for the NHI, in the midst of this debate that is dominated by the right-wing elite.”

National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union

The union promised to submit a “pledge carrying signatures” from their members and the working class. The pledge would call for the implementation of the bill which would transform the healthcare system.

The union's NHI programme of action and its commitments

The organisation also announced a programme of action on the NHI Bill with the wish to hail healthcare as a human right.

NEHAWU committed to:

- Launch an education programme on the NHI Bill and the people's right to healthcare
- Mobilise members and work with the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), student organisations, and other allied formations to defend the bill
- Campaign for the implementation of the national policy imperatives on the NHI in all provinces
- Campaign for more nurses and other medical workers in vacant posts to be hired
- Push for the placement of the Community Health Workers on PERSAL, related benefits, and improvements in the infrastructure and quality service delivery

The Health Market Inquiry

The union noted that the report from the Competition Commission's Health Market Inquiry revealed a "shocking state of affairs" in the private health industry. They also "condemn the wide-scale profiteering that is taking place across all the key components of this industry."

The organisation lamented how non-profit medical schemes were driven by for-profit administrators. NEHAWU shamed them for continuously raising premiums while reducing benefits.

NEHAWU addresses the three leading hospital groups

The union shared its displeasure with "the three giant monopoly hospital groups" holding and controlling the market share. They also noted how General Practitioners (GPs) and specialists in the private sector had "abandoned the ethical code of doing their work in the best interests of the patients."

NEHAWU vowed to fight against profiteering in the private health industry. They also called on government to "break-up monopolies and counteract the escalation of medical aid premiums."

The launch of the Health Anti-Corruption Forum

The union welcomed President Cyril Ramaphosa launching the health sector anti-corruption forum on 1 October 2019. The aim of the forum is to fight fraud and corruption in the health sector.

Although NEHAWU welcomed the forum launch, they stated that it was "bizarre that labour as an imperative constituency has been excluded in the forum." The organisation revealed that they'd written to the president to demand theirs and other unions' inclusion in the forum.

The union shared that they would be “submitting a number of cases that must be investigated by the forum as a matter of urgency.” Their main focus would be the corruption that occurred while the former Premier of the North West was in power.

What the union hopes the NHI will achieve

NEHAWU also hopes the NHI Bill will stem out the alleged corruption occurring at the National Health Laboratories Services (NHLS) and forensic pathologist services. These services were said to be allowing people to pay to have their deceased released quicker.

The organisation also said:

“NEHAWU calls on this forum to also focus on ending the pervasive outsourcing of clinically critical functions and others such as catering, security, IT, cleaning, etc.”