

Traditional healers have a bone to pick with NHI – The Citizen

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They claimed the government had ignored their role as traditional leaders, despite the fact that people were dying in hospitals.

The government-initiated National Health Insurance (NHI) has been lauded as a great development towards achieving equitable healthcare, particularly for the poor, but traditional healers believe they have been marginalised from the new dispensation.

This emerged from the public hearings undertaken by the portfolio committee on health countrywide to get input on the NHI Bill.

The healers said the Bill, which aimed to achieve universal access to quality healthcare services in accordance with section 27 of the constitution, did not include their services.

Traditional healers in Mpumalanga expressed their concern to the committee during its visit to Thembisile Hani and Nkomazi local municipalities this weekend.

Committee chairperson Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo said the traditional healers told the committee that the Bill was a progressive move, but they claimed the government had ignored their role as traditional leaders, despite the fact that people were dying in hospitals.

They were concerned that the services of traditional healers were being sidelined.

Dhlomo, a medical doctor and former health MEC in KwaZulu-Natal, said the traditional healers suggested that for the Bill to be successful, it should be inclusive of all forms of treatment. This included indigenous medications as there were traditional communities that believed in using these, they said.

The broader community warned against spending money on implementing the NHI at the expense of essential services like infrastructure, water and sanitation.

They said that inasmuch as they were looking forward to the implementation of NHI, government must ensure that other services did not falter.

Dhlomo assured the people that all their views and questions would be thoroughly considered after the hearings, when the committee would be dealing with the Bill in parliament.

The committee began taking written submissions last month. The closing date was set for November 29.

The committee moved to Gert Sibande district municipality for more hearings yesterday.

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