

AfriForum labels NHI scheme 'unconstitutional' — News 24 18 November 2019

Lobby group AfriForum says the implementation of the National Health Insurance (NHI) scheme is unconstitutional, adding that it will cause local doctors to emigrate.

Addressing the media in Pretoria, the organisation's spokesperson on NHI, Natasha Venter, said AfriForum had compiled a report on the implications of the implementation of NHI.

Venter said all nine provincial departments of health in the country have misused more than R5.8bn.

"These nine departments were all guilty of irregular, fruitless, wasteful and unauthorised expenditure. Altogether, wasting over R5.8bn during the 2017/2018 financial year. This information was obtained from the annual reports of the nine departments of health in the country," said Venter.

She said she was worried that should the government continue with the NHI Bill, doctors will choose to practise overseas.

"According to our report, Section 27 of the Constitution only provides for access to healthcare. Nowhere does it indicate that the State is obliged to provide healthcare to everyone. In fact, if the government's intervention hinders this access, it is unconstitutional.

"When one considers the current state of affairs in the Department of Health, the State most definitely doesn't have the capacity to provide healthcare services to the whole country. It will therefore be unconstitutional for the State to effectively take control of the private healthcare sector," said Venter.

She accused the government of blaming the poor quality of public healthcare on the private healthcare sector and those who have medical aid funds.

"In reality, these people are being prejudiced by the State interference and misappropriation. Their taxes are already being misused by the Department of Health and they are resented by government when they purchase private medical services at their own expense.

"Furthermore, it is largely government's fault due to the overregulation of the sector, that private medical care is so expensive," Venter said.