

NHI - Tshwane residents rally behind Bill but express public healthcare challenges – News24 22 February 2020

While most of the Tshwane residents who attended a public hearing on the National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill, rallied behind the proposed universal healthcare system, they highlighted daily challenges with public healthcare.

The parliamentary committee on health conducting the hearings on the Bill, visited Soshanguve on Friday for the first leg of the Gauteng hearings.

According to a statement issued on behalf of the chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Health, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, most participants highlighted their support for the Bill and some called for its immediate implementation.

However, despite a clear showing of support for NHI, several people highlighted daily challenges they faced when visiting public healthcare facilities in their communities, the statement read.

Some raised issues such as long queues, a medication shortage and dilapidated primary healthcare facilities. Others raised the high cost of private healthcare and ever-increasing medical aid premiums.

"The pain of an inefficient healthcare system, both private and public, has been highlighted in the majority of the previous public hearings that the committee has conducted on the Bill," Dhlomo said.

"While the NHI is bound to resolve some of these challenges, there must be a concerted effort to ensure the provision of quality healthcare service across the board even when NHI is incrementally rolled out."

Funding for NHI model

Participants who opposed the Bill also raised their uncertainty about the funding model for the Bill, especially in light of the increasing bailouts to state-owned entities that continue to struggle to provide quality services, the statement read.

Dhlomo, said that he was appreciative of all the views expressed.

He added: "We must always be conscious that we are naturally unique and therefore have different views on issues. We must listen to each other respectfully, especially to opposing views as we might learn something from the very opposing views."

The committee recommitted itself to listening to all the views presented, because it believes the views will ensure that the Bill is strengthened.

Wrapping up the Soshanguve leg of the hearings, Dhlomo said "we have heard the people of Tshwane and as the committee, we will consider and deliberate on all the views expressed."

On Saturday, the committee continued with hearings at the Chief Mogale City Hall in Kagiso.

- *Compiled by Alex Mitchley*