

SAPPF NHI POSITION STATEMENT

Dear Members

The Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Health has on 26 May 2023 adopted the National Health Insurance Bill (NHI). The NHI Bill will now be debated in the National Assembly.

The private sector is integral to the delivery of quality, affordable and accessible healthcare in South Africa. Private Healthcare Professionals (HCPs) play an integral role in the delivery of healthcare. As HCPs we are acutely aware of the inequalities in access to healthcare. We are further acutely aware of the critical need to improve the infrastructure and service delivery within the public sector. We are eager to participate in processes that will improve access and thus realise universal quality healthcare.

It is important at this point to note that, following the period of public input on the NHI Bill and representations to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Health, the very minor amendments to the NHI Bill have not addressed any of the points of concern raised by SAPPF and other stakeholders during their presentations to the committee and have not changed the impact that the NHI Bill will have on the delivery of private healthcare. Section 33 of the NHI Bill states:

Role of medical schemes

33. *Once National Health Insurance has been fully implemented as determined by the Minister through regulations in the Gazette, medical schemes may only offer complementary cover to services not reimbursable by the Fund.*

Limiting the capacity of medical schemes to fund healthcare reduces the opportunity to improve access and infringes on the rights of people to make choices about how and where they access healthcare. This section does not promote collaboration between the public and private sectors but rather undermines this. The private sector has tools and resources that are able to increase access to care by contracting with the state. To achieve this and be sustainable, the private sector must be able to run independently with free choice of patients to access private healthcare and for medical schemes or insurance companies to provide funding.

The provision of health care must not be seen and dealt with as an isolated entity. Every facet of life and business has an impact on health and healthcare delivery. The NHI Bill, a funding model for a single-payer / single-provider of healthcare, will have an immeasurable negative financial impact on the National fiscus, at a time when the economic climate in South Africa is dismal, corruption in every sphere including healthcare is constantly being uncovered,

loadshedding is crippling the economy and national infrastructure is crumbling. To proceed with its introduction at this time is irresponsible.

As part of the national health asset, private HCPS are willing and able to assist with the provision of healthcare to the public sector. This will allow the provision of necessary healthcare services to lighten the load on the public sector. NHI is not required to achieve this.

SAPPF unequivocally supports the right and need for universal access to quality healthcare. We do not support the NHI Bill.

Regards,

SAPPF Board of Directors & Simon Strachan (SAPPF CEO)
