



THE EFF STATEMENT ON THE PASSING OF THE NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE (NHI) BILL IN PARLIAMENT

Wednesday, 14 June 2023

The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) notes the passing of the National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill by Parliament on the 13th of June 2023 as a catastrophic development in the midst of the ongoing collapse of the public health sector.

The NHI in rhetoric, sets out to right the wrongs of inequality, access to healthcare, and delivering universal healthcare coverage, while in essence it is far from those aspirations.

On countless occasions the EFF has highlighted problematic clauses within the bill and its fundamental position on the developing of a national funding pool. This is precisely because the health system of our country does not need an NSFAS style funding system to resolve the crisis of debilitating healthcare that plagues our country.

The NHI Bill will see the funding of all our health needs being centralised and suppliers (general practitioners, private hospitals, public hospitals) catering to the needs of our people, and payment of services being administered from the national funding pool of the NHI.

This system is unsustainable as we have seen with numerous programs of the ANC government that ease the corrupt desires of politicians and the private sector. In its true form, the NHI is an overt admittance by the ANC government of its failure to build a working health system for our people. They have thus resolved to outsource healthcare and our people's wellbeing to the private sector.

At the centre of the private sector's priority, with regard to healthcare, is the ability to source profit. This priority of the private sector will not diminish only because the government is now the customer. If anything, it will be aggravated as the internal systems developed in the NHI Bill are not cognisant of this, nor are they able to provide a sustainable solution to this.

A concerning requirement of the NHI is what is termed the referral system. With this clause, it insists that all persons should go to their nearest health facility for medical intervention. This means that people living in rural areas, townships and informal settlements will still be subjected to the diabolic state of public hospitals and clinics, whilst the affluent and those in cosmopolitan areas will have the utmost benefit due to their proximity to private institutions.

All the while, the money meant to better our infrastructure and increase the work force of the public health system will be utilised to pay off the invoices lodged by the private facilities. This will be a further challenge as all payment systems of the government are already compromised and see suppliers not being paid timeously.

Furthermore, it is unconstitutional for a bill to dictate that the only way for our people to get medical intervention is on the basis that they are registered users of the NHI. The inability to be a registered user, or the choice to not be a registered user should never mean the dissolution of a basic human right to accessing healthcare. There is no bill that should have the power to strip away the right to healthcare. This right is protected by our Constitution.

Furthermore, the failure of the existing Ombudsman system that analyses facilities is overburdened and this will result in facilities not receiving certificates. As a result, they will be unable to enter in agreement with the state. In instances that this is overlooked, the quality of healthcare afforded to our people will continue to be in jeopardy and the state will suffer the cost of these instances financially.

The EFF maintains that the only genuine way to ensure that access to quality healthcare is resolved, is the intentional focus on prevention and primary healthcare.

To this effect, the EFF tabled a private members bill, the National Health Amendment Act bill that would see clinics open for 24 hours, 7 days a week.

This bill, however, was rejected by the ANC and the DA who have no interest in ensuring that our people in destitute and remote areas receive due medical intervention as and when they need it.

The EFF is of the firm view that the NHI is yet another avenue by the state to surrender critical services to a private sector, whose sole priority is the accumulation of profit. It will have no material impact on the lives of those who suffer the inhumanity of collapsing public healthcare, and will only further entrench the existing inequalities between private and public healthcare institutions.



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