

## **MEDIA STATEMENT - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **NEHAWU CALLS HEALTH MINISTER TO TAKE DECISIVE ACTION AGAINST PROVINCES WHO REFUSE TO FUND JUNIOR DOCTOR INTERNSHIPS**

Wednesday November 29, 2017

The National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union [NEHAWU] calls on the Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, to take a decisive action against provinces who refuse to fund junior doctor internships. The provinces in question are Gauteng, Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal.

The above mentioned provinces are responsible for the shortage of junior doctors in their respective provinces. This is as a result of their provincial departments of health refusing to fund posts for junior doctors. The Health Professions Council of South Africa [HPCSA] determines how many of each type of position provinces must provide for junior doctors. Thereafter the province each have a responsibility to find the money to pay for these posts. However, even with these statutory obligation in place, the provincial governments still dig in their heels when they have to fund these posts.

It is law that a province must allocate money to fund posts for junior doctors to perform their mandatory internships and community service. It is not the benevolence of the province to avail these posts but they are dictated to by law to provide them so as to train a new cadre of doctors but also benefit communities' especially rural ones with medical attention. With the health system already heavily understaffed there situation will get worse if the hundreds of health sciences graduates are not allocated posts to enter the health system come 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018. The system is unable to cope without interns and that will result in the increase in the mortality rate as the system heavily relies on junior doctors.

Not only do these posts benefit the doctors who goes on to be absorbed into the countries health services but they assist our health sector which is understaffed. Currently about 160 junior doctors across the country have not been allocated internship or community service positions. This figure is down from 316 recorded earlier in the year and comes little more than a month before the country's junior doctors are expected to take up internship and community service posts on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018.

NEHAWU has been highlighting the issue of short staffing in the public health sector. We have continuously pleaded with government to fill all funded vacant posts to help healthcare workers to deal with the huge workload. Understaffing leads to poor service delivery and the impediment of dispensing healthcare especially to the working class and the poor who in the main rely on clinics for medical attention.

We call on the Minister to decisively deal with these provinces as their actions seeks to create a crisis in our health system. As NEHAWU, we propose that the minister takes a legal route to enforce these provinces to allocate money to fund these posts as the availing of posts is a legal matter.

Issued by NEHAWU Secretariat

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