

## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

**TO: ALL MEDIA HOUSES**

**DATE: 16 JANUARY 2025**

### **MEC FOR HEALTH IN MPUMALANGA HOLD ENGAGEMENTS WITH COSATU AND SAMATU TO ADDRESS ISSUES OF UNEMPLOYMENT OF DOCTORS AND COMMUTED OVERTIME.**

The South African Medical Association Trade Union (SAMATU) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) have vented out their frustration over the alleged unemployment of some doctors in the province and issues regarding commuted overtime. The Unions says there are about 78 graduates who are qualified as doctors but have not been employed by the Department.

To ensure transparency, the MEC for Health in the Province, Sasekani Manzini and her Departmental management, earlier this week, held several meetings with the unions regarding the two issues.

During the meetings, the two unions, SAMATU and COSATU, raised concerns regarding the Department's move to advertise about 25 posts tomorrow on Friday the 17<sup>th</sup> of January 2025. The unions said the number of posts to be advertised by the Department, does not meet the required number of 78 doctors whom according to them are sitting at home.

Commenting on the appointment of Doctors, MEC for Health, Sasekani Manzini said on the appointments of doctors, the Department is guided by the policies from Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA).

According to Manzini, all the requirements and policy guidelines, in-line with issuing of bursaries to in-service training of doctors, plus appointments thereof, have been fulfilled by the Department.

"In terms of the guidelines and Policies, the Department issued bursaries to now qualified doctors who were also accommodated in the two-year in-service training that they needed to serve in Health facilities to become qualified doctors.

According to legislation, to become a qualified doctor, of the (8) Eight years of study, two years must be spent training in a health facility as Medical Intern, then another year must be spent doing community service.

The Department has met such a requirement regarding all the 78 qualified doctors mentioned by the two unions" said Manzini.

The legislation also protects the Department about the employment of the doctors after they qualify as doctors. Section 11 of the DPSA says with regard to appointments and filling of posts, equality must be the order of the day, including democratic values and principles enshrined in the Constitution which must be followed.

The policy also stipulates that all persons who qualify for the appointments, transfer or promotion concerned, shall be considered; and the evaluation of persons shall be based on training, skills, competence, knowledge and the need to redress the imbalances of the past to achieve a public service broadly representative of the South African people, including representation according to race, gender and disability.

This means even after the completion of the two years of training, the Department is not obliged to absorb the qualified doctors as per the DPSA policy

The policy continues to say, only if the Department has funded vacant posts, it will be then that posts be advertised and those that have completed their training can apply as such.

MEC Sasekani Manzini outlined that a total number of eighty-one (81) Medical Officers were appointed during the period of December 2023 to December 2024. "Seven (7) of the approved appointments for Medical Officers declined the offer of employment. The Department also faces a challenge where bursary holders are not applying for the posts because they prefer to work in certain areas where there are no vacancies."

The Department has presented that before end of this week, the 25 funded posts that will be advertised will be filled with speed.

According to the MEC, the Department plans to engage the provincial government, to see if the Department can be given more money to accommodate the outstanding posts so that more doctors can be employed.

Commenting on the issue regarding commuted overtime the MEC said "It is true that we had issued a Circular to all doctors that stipulates that doctors who have signed commuted overtime, their contract will be downgraded to group (2). This means that all those who had contracts which were in group three, which is a scale with more hours, will be downgraded. This decision was taken because the department wanted to correct the application of commuted overtime policy.

The two Unions disagreed with such a move, citing that this will affect the total income of doctors. The unions and the Department then agreed that the circular on commuted overtime will be withdrawn and that further engagements involving all parties will be conducted and the matter will be finalized before the end of the financial year.

**Issued by the Communications Directorate. For more information contact Departmental Spokesperson, Mr Dumisani Malamule on 067 023 9053. Or Ms Sharon Nkosi MEC's Spokesperson on 078 317 9518.**