



Speech by Hon Annah Gela, MP

**Member of the African National Congress and Member of the Portfolio
Committee on Health**

Debate on the Health Budget Vote (Vote 18 – Health)

Tuesday, 09 May 2023

Honourable House Chairperson

Honourable Minister Joe Phaahla

Honourable Deputy Minister Sibongiseni Dhlomo

Other Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers present

My Chairperson Honourable Kenneth Jacobs

My fellow Members of the Portfolio Committee on Health

Honourable Members of the House, but especially my fellow Comrades from the
Glorious Movement, the African National Congress

Honourable MECs for Health who have joined us today, it is a pleasure to have you

Distinguished Guests and Ladies and Gentlemen who have tuned in to this important
debate on the virtual platform and other social media platforms

Good Morning

Improving health outcomes as an imperative for strengthening the South African health system

It has been globally declared that we are now on the other side of the covid-19 pandemic which has over the past few years changed the world as we have known it, but also more importantly challenged the sector globally. Throughout the period of the pandemic, the South African health sector has evolved, with our country also gaining global recognition for its leadership in health science research and development.

The covid-19 pandemic also posed a challenge for some of the strategic health goals that the Department had set for this administration, this is seen in how some of the programmes performance over the past few years experienced some setbacks, this including in the areas of Maternal, Child and Youth health, HIV and Aids as well as in the area of communicable and non-communicable diseases.

Although the country and the world is confronted by economic challenges that further plunge the poor into positions of vulnerability. The South African government, as inspired by its commitment to the people of South Africa maintains its position of prioritising healthcare, and in particular ensuring that the NHI remains the vehicle which should be used in order to achieve health justice in our lifetime.

An integral part of this is indeed resource allocation for health priorities such as Maternal, child and youth health, HIV, and communicable and non-communicable diseases. Prioritising the issue of the youth bulge as it relates to HIV, is vital and is a critical aspect in the attainment of UNAIDS 95-95-95 strategy.

The Department is giving Adolescent and Youth Friendly Services (AFYS), which is anticipated to improve how young people access health services, top priority in addressing some of the barriers to receiving sexual health treatments.

This Budget Vote enables the implementation of the Department's initiative to create youth zones aimed to ensure that these adolescent and young adult-friendly services are included in the suite of primary health care services. The Youth Zones support the political call for enhancing everyone's access to health care and are a strategic avenue wherein issues such as the promotion of access to health and other services, public health promotion and ensuring that health facilities are free from stigmatisation especially for youth and other vulnerable groups.

The HIV, AIDS, and STIs sub-programme of the Communicable and Non-communicable Diseases programme has been allocated R24.6 billion throughout with the HIV, AIDS, and STIs component being the largest. The main focus of this component's funding is antiretroviral therapy, which will reach 7 million individuals by 2025-2026. There are also sizeable budgetary allocations for preventative initiatives like condom distribution, medical male circumcision, and HIV testing. This is indeed a significant step that will provide for the overall improvement of health outcomes of our health system

Regarding communicable and non-communicable diseases, the Budget Vote strategically identifies the areas that need to be prioritised over this MTEF term, these including –

- Reduce the risk of women developing cervical cancer by vaccinating 80 per cent of eligible girls in grade 5 against the human papillomavirus in each year over the medium term.
- Contribute to the reduction of HIV infections among young people by ensuring that 2 300 primary health care facilities have youth zone
- Achieving a TB treatment success rate of 95 per cent by 2024/25

- Increase the total number of HIV-positive people accessing antiretroviral treatment from 5.2 million in March 2022 to 7 million in March 2026 by implementing the universal test-and-treat policy
- Reducing new HIV infections by implementing a combination of prevention interventions such as HIV counselling and testing, medical male circumcision and condom distribution over the medium term.
- Reduce premature mortality as a result of non-communicable diseases by screening 60 per cent of clients for hypertension and diabetes in 2023/24.

We need to continue to strengthen the Health System through increasing human resources capacity of professionals such as specialists, doctors and nurses. . In line with the increased training, the number of medical interns appointed by provinces has increased from 1 500 in 2015 to 2 625 in 2022, and community service doctors from 1 322 to 2 369 over the same period. The Mandela Fidel Castro graduated over 650 graduates which will improve positively in improving the capacity and quality of healthcare.

One of the strategies that will enable this include to re-orientate the health system towards primary health care through community-based health programmes by ensuring that all community health workers are capacitated and supported.

The department plans to improve the quality of care at primary health care facilities by ensuring that 2 400 of these qualify as ideal clinics by March 2024.

It is important to place emphasis on the importance of strengthening the Primary Health Care system as a way to improve the South African health system, and

building a more equitable health system that equally serves the people of this country.

Thank You.