**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE SAYS EXTENSION NECESSARY FOR FOSTER CARE COURT ORDERS EXPIRING AT THE END OF NOVEMBER**

**Parliament, Wednesday, 20 November 2019**– The Portfolio Committee on Social Development believes that the provinces will not meet the North Gauteng High Court deadline of 28 November for dealing with court orders that will lapse in November 2019. The committee made this observation after it received a foster care progress report from the Department of Social Development on this matter.

The committee was informed by the department that nationally, the figures of court orders that have been processed have dropped from 90 634 as reflected in September 2019, to 41 609 as at 4 November 2019. The committee wants to commend members of the judiciary who have prioritised these cases in an effort to assist the department to meet the court deadline. As much as the department will not meet the deadline, significant progress has been made in this matter.

The committee understands that the department, in an effort to avert the possibility of children not receiving foster care grants as a result of cases that might not be taken to court, has written a letter of request to the National Treasury for continued payment of grants to children that might be affected should these cases not be dealt with before 28 November 2019.

The committee is also concerned about the lack of clarity on whether the Children’s Amendment Bill has been referred to Parliament or not, including its certification. The department informed the committee today that it has taken a decision to approach the court jointly with the Centre for Child Law on an urgent basis to make an application for the extension of the period of invalidity. The Centre for Child Law has agreed in principle to support the intended extension. The committee has also been informed that the Minister of Social Development has also written and sent a letter to the Deputy President as a Leader of Government Business, requesting him to intervene in the impasse regarding the certification of the Children’s Amendment Bill and ensure that the Bill is processed and finalised in terms of the order within the period set out in the North Gauteng High Court order. The department is still awaiting a response from the office of the Leader of Government Business on the requested intervention.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, MR MONDLI GUNGUBELE.**