**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**HEALTH COMMITTEES WELCOME ARRIVAL OF CUBAN DOCTORS IN SA**

**Parliament, Monday, 27 April 2020 –**The joint meeting of the Portfolio Committee on Health and the Select Committee on Health and Social Services welcomed the report from the Minister of Health, Dr Zweli Mkhize, of the 200 Cuban health professionals who arrived in South Africa to offer support in the fight against the spread of Covid-19.

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Health, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, who was the Co-Chair of the joint committee said: “The arrival of the Cuban doctors and public health specialists in South Africa will boost the capacity of the public sector personnel in the fight against COVID-19.”

“These are medical internationalists whose record in public healthcare far surpasses all other nations in the world,” said Dr Dhlomo.

“Since the agreement reached by the late Presidents Nelson Mandela and Fidel Castro we relied on Cuban medical support, hence we are sending hundreds of South African students for training in Cuba,” he added.

The delegation consists of experts in the field of epidemiology, biostatistics and public health, family physicians, healthcare technology and experts to provide technical assistance – who will be working with local experts.

Members of the committee also appreciated the arrival of Cuban doctors and said their arrival in South Africa will significantly boost the public health sector personnel capacity in the fight against  Covid-19.

The Chairperson of the Select Committee on Health and Social Services, Ms Maurencia Gillion, who also Co-Chaired the joint committee said: “Considering the good relations that South Africa has with Cuba, it is fitting that the arrival of the Cuban delegation lands when the country celebrates Freedom Day.”

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, DR SIBONGISENI DHLOMO – AND THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES, MS MAURENCIA GILLION.**