**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**EDUCATION COMMITTEES BRIEFED ON SCHOOLS REOPENING PLANS**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 30 June 2020** – The Portfolio Committee on Basic Education, and the Select Committee on Education and Technology, Sport, Arts and Culture were today briefed by the Department of Basic Education on the state of readiness for the reopening of schools, following a two-month break due to the outbreak of Covid-19.

The first phase of reopening began with the return to school of Grades 7 and 12 early this month, and today the department told the committee that more grades are expected to go back to school during the next phase on the 1st and 6th of July.

The department’s plan of reopening schools involves different models which will make sure that only 50% learner enrolment is present, to allow social distancing in class.

The different models include a situation where learners attend bi-weekly (week one, 50%of learners, and week 2, the other learners who did not attend in week 1), or learners rotating to be present at school every second day. The other model is where two groups of learners of up to 50% attend on platoon basis (one group in the morning, and the other in the afternoon).

The committee welcomed the department’s readiness and commitment to ensure that all health and safety protocols are observed, as well as its commitment to provide personal protective equipment (PPE).

Committee members were, however, concerned about the number of teachers and learners who tested positive for coronavirus, as well as teachers who were over the age of 60 years who could be at risk due to underlying comorbidities (comorbidity means a state of having multiple medical conditions at the same time).

Committee members will, as part of their parliamentary oversight responsibilities, continue to monitor the situation at school to make sure that all the necessary regulations were adhered to.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION, MS BONGIWE MBINQO-GIGABA.**