**BASIC EDUCATION COMMITTEE CALLS FOR GREATER COLLABORATION IN EDUCATION SECTOR**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 6 October 2020**– The Portfolio Committee on Basic Education today appealed for greater collaboration and communication between the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and non-profit organisations (NPOs) working in the sector.

Committee Chairperson Ms Bongiwe Mbinqo-Gigaba made the appeal after the NPO Zero Dropout Campaign made a presentation on its attaining a zero % drop-out rate in schools across the country. “It is important for both parties to sit and engage first as to how the research can benefit all South African learners, but most importantly the poor learners who tend to be more vulnerable to circumstances that can lead to exiting or disengaging school at an earlier rate. They should not be meeting for the first time at Parliament.”

She said the committee greatly appreciates the work done, as the aim is always to advance and improve the plight of all learners. “An approach where all parties discussed the research findings first before presenting it would have been more beneficial as to the way forward.”

The Zero Dropout Campaign told the committee that around 40% of learners who start school in Grade 1 will exit the schooling system before completing Grade 12. There is no proper data tracking and monitoring to accurately reflect the extent of the problem. Furthermore, the health, economic and social impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic have amplified the disruptions leading to dropouts has brought the phenomenon into sharper focus. Covid-19-related school closures and the economic shocks of lockdown are expected to worsen the dropout rate, the committee was told.

Research has shown that one of the best ways to prevent dropouts is through effective tracking of learner progress, which would alert education officials when learners are at risk. Academic results, behaviour problems and chronic absenteeism should all be tracked. A national psycho-social support strategy was also recommended.

The DBE told the committee that there is confusion in public discussions on the definition of the terms “dropout rate”, “throughput rate” or “real matric pass rate”. UIS Analytical Services see these rates as the percentage of children in a specific grade in a specific year who neither continue to the next grade nor repeat the same grade in the following year, rather than the percentage of learners who start Grade 1 in a given year and then exit Grade 12 in a particular year.

DBE further informed the committee that leaners repeating a grade have an impact on dropout, as it can discourage learners from continuing. South Africa currently has a 30% grade repetition rate, the committee heard.

Ms Mbinqo-Gigaba appreciated the work done and once again called for greater communication in the sector.

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