**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE TAKES UNANIMOUS DECISION TO CONDUCT AN OVERSIGHT INQUIRY INTO NSFAS**

**Parliament, Saturday, 7 November 2020 –**The Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science and Technology took a unanimous decision during its meeting held yesterday, Friday 6 November 2020, to conduct an oversight Inquiry into the administration and management of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS).

This was after the committee held a follow-up meeting with the Administrator of NSFAS, Dr Randall Carolissen, regarding allegations of maladministration and corruption that were brought to the committee by Nehawu (National Education, Health and Allied Workers’ Union). The committee also received testimonies under oath from senior employees of NSFAS.

The committee was shocked by what appeared to be a complete disregard for normal recruitment policies and procedures guiding the recruitment of staff at NSFAS. The committee was informed by the employees who appeared before it that the Administrator facilitated the employment of his friends and acquaintances at the entity without following due process. The Administrator admitted that he did pass the CVs (curricula vitae) of some of the implicated persons over to Human Resources, who were later appointed but denied that he was responsible for their appointment. Of the long list of irregular appointments, nine of the people alleged to have been appointed irregularly were the Administrator's former schoolmate, former university mate, a friend of the Administrator’s brother, the daughter of the Administrator’s friend, a friend of the wife of the Administrator, and a nephew of the Administrator’s friend.

The Chairperson of the committee, Mr Philly Mapulane, said: “Of grave concern to the committee was the admission by the Administrator that he passed on the CVs of some of the persons to Human Resources. We do take note of the denial by the Administrator that he was not personally involved in the appointment of some of his acquaintances and friends, however, when you pass on the CV as the Administrator to your subordinate, the subliminal message to the person receiving the CV is that you must appoint this person. You may not have said it in your own words, but the message is loud and clear to your subordinate receiving a CV from you of what your intention is. Ultimately it is the Administrator who is finally the authority responsible for the employment of staff at the agency.”

The committee further resolved that allegations received in the past regarding alleged irregularities in the procurement of digital devices (laptops) by NSFAS as part of saving the 2020 academic year, will be interrogated as part of this oversight inquiry.

Employees further testified to other issues of alleged maladministration in the entity, which the committee will look at.

The committee condemns the alleged action of attempting to charge an employee for appearing before the committee of Parliament. “We wish to remind NSFAS that witnesses appearing before Parliament are protected in terms of section 16 of the Powers, Privileges and Immunities of Parliament and Provincial Legislatures Act, 2004. Anybody who attempts to subvert the oversight work of Parliament by intimidating witnesses invited by it will not be left unattended.”

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, MR PHILLY MAPULANE.**