**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMITTEES EXPRESS THEIR CONCERN OVER NON-ACHIEVEMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH TARGETS**

**Parliament, Thursday, 19 November 2020 –**The Portfolio Committee on Health, and Select Committee on Health and Social Services, said a separate session is needed for both committees to engage the Department of Health on its poor performance on mental health programme in the 2019/20 financial year.

The Department of Health appeared before the portfolio and select committees on health to brief them on its annual report and financial statements for the 2019/20 financial year.

The committees noted with concern that the entire mental health budget was spent, yet not even one target was achieved under this programme. The committees cautioned the department against using the Covid-19 pandemic as a scapegoat for its failure to achieve its set targets. Moreover, the committees said mental healthcare in the country has been lagging behind.

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Health, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, suggested that the committees need to find space and time for the department to brief them on the mental healthcare situation in the country. Dr Dhlomo said mental health does not receive the attention it deserves and that is a worldwide problem.

According to 2019/2020 audit outcomes, the department and its entities regressed from the previous year. The committees expressed their disappointment on the report the department received. Members of the committees indicated that the Auditor General (AG) also reported on irregular expenditure that has amounted to R69 million and which increased by R32 million compared to the previous financial year.

The committees were of the view that this needs to be addressed by the department.  Furthermore, the committees said the biggest concern on the AG’s report regarding the department, is that there seems to be non-compliance with legislation. The committees also raised a concern on high level of underspending by the department.

There is R422 million which the department did not spend in the 2019/20 financial year, yet health facilities require upgrading. The committees called on the department to address the huge vacancy rate and requested a report on all the provincial departments of health.

On the matter of the report that was released by the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE), on forced sterilization of HIV-positive women, the Deputy Minister of Health, Dr Joe Phaahla, said work has been done on the report. He said the investigations need to be finalised before the department can report to the committees.

**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.**