**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMITTEES REJECT FORCED STERILISATION AT PUBLIC HEALTH FACILITIES**

**Parliament, Wednesday, 25 November 2020 –**The Portfolio Committee on Health and the Portfolio Committee on Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities were informed by the Department of Health that government does not have a policy that forcefully sterilises HIV-positive women.

The Minister of Health, Dr Zweli Mkhize, briefed the committees in a joint meeting on Wednesday, on the implementation of recommendations emanating from the Commission for Gender Equality’s (CGE) investigative report on forced sterilisation in public health care services.

The CGE concluded its investigation on the matter and handed a draft report to the Department of Health in 2019.

Briefing the committees, Minister Mkhize said: “We need to investigate these allegations and find out what truly happened, we need to find if there is merit to the allegations, women say they were abused and we need to check what happened. We can only know how many women were sterilized without their consent once the investigation has been completed by the Department of Health,” said Minister Mkhize.

Dr Sandile Buthelezi, the Director-General of the Department of Health, updated the committees on the implementation status of the CGE’s recommendations.

The committees welcomed the progress made in respect of the recommendations made by the CGE. However, the committees expressed concern on the matter and said it is shocking and amounts to gross human rights violation that women living with HIV in South Africa were being subjected to forced sterilisation in public health facilities. The committees called for a comprehensive investigation to be undertaken by the Department of Health.

The committees said the department needs to address the issue of proper record keeping, this after the members were informed, among the challenges experienced during the investigation, that victims’ files have gone missing from public health facilities.

The committees requested quarterly reports on the matter.

**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 PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON WOMEN, YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, MS NONHLANHLA NCUBE-NDABA.**