**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE CONCLUDES NATIONAL PUBLIC HEARINGS ON CHILDREN’S AMENDENT BILL**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 18 May 2021 –**The Portfolio Committee on Social Development has concluded virtual public hearings on the Children’s Amendment Bill, a process which, according to the Chairperson of the committee, Mr Mondli Gungubele, has educated the committee on challenges facing child protection services.

A total of 69 stakeholders made presentations to the committee over a week-long period. They highlighted challenges relating to the lack of support, onerous registration requirements and complex norms and standards for early childhood development (ECD) programmes.

They also raised challenges in relation to the placement of children in child and youth care centres, particularly in relation to a lack of transitional support to independent living, delays in the administrative processes for adoption services from the Department of Social Development and the Department of Home Affairs.

These result in adoption processes unnecessarily taking very long to complete. They also raised challenges faced by unmarried fathers when they need access to their children. The law makes a distinction between married and unmarried fathers to the disadvantage of unmarried fathers. All these challenges the Bill fails to address.

Mr Gungubele said the submissions noted the need and the importance of simplification of the registration process and recognition of ECDs.

“As the committee is about to embark on the provincial public hearings engaging our communities, we undertake not to fail South Africans. The committee will take into consideration all inputs and concerns for the sake of our children.”

The committee heard submissions on other pertinent topics that included the parental responsibilities of unmarried fathers, empowering intersex children, and cultural considerations in a constitutional democracy.

Mr Gungubele added that the high content presented to the committee was highly researched and that would result in quality legislation that will improve the conditions and environment within which children live. He emphasised that government should not be an obstacle in children receiving what is due to them – child development and protection.

The committee is scheduled to undertake provincial public hearings in June and July.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES ON BEHALAF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, MR MONDLI GUNGUBELE.**