**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**STAKEHOLDERS HAVE MIXED VIEWS ON ESTABLISHMENT OF GBVF COUNCIL AS A STATUTORY STRUCTURE**

**Parliament, Thursday, 15 June 2023 –** The Portfolio Committee on Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities concluded its public hearings on the National Council on Gender Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) Bill on Tuesday,13 June 2023. Various stakeholder representatives participating in the public hearings held on 6 and 13 June 2023 argued both for and against the establishment of the proposed National Council on GBVF.

Those who argued against it indicated that the mandate of the National Council on GBVF, which the Bill seeks to establish, is no different from the mandates of existing statutory bodies. They listed the chapter nine institutions with an overarching mandate to strengthen constitutional democracy by, among other things, deepening constitutional values and promoting a culture of human rights. The envisaged council will be a duplication of what already exists, they said, and will cause confusion.

The Chairperson for the Commission of Gender Equality (CGE), Adv Nthabiseng Sepanya-Mogale, who participated in the hearings on 6 June, spoke about the role and functions of chapter 9 institutions such as the CGE and the South African Human Rights Commission. Key among them is monitoring GBVF, the Advocate said. Considering the institutional duplication of objectives and functions, the CGE questioned if there is a need for another institution, particularly in light of the government’s financial constraints.

The proposed establishment of the new council is premised on the fact that there is a gap. However, funding would need to be revised significantly to avoid the creation of another underfunded institution that will be unable to fulfill its obligations and objectives. Despite its general support for the Bill, the CGE believes that further consultation is necessary to fill gaps and, if these gaps are not addressed, the proposed council may be ineffective in addressing GBVF.

Expressing the views of Action Society, Mr Ian Cameron told the committee that if the Bill is passed it must make a meaningful impact with a holistic, multipronged approach to GBVF, one that will address not only the symptoms, but also the root causes of this crisis. Action Society believes that the proposed council, as it is currently defined in the Bill, will fail to achieve this and has the potential to create another layer of bureaucracy that lacks the required capacity to effect real change. Moreover, the Bill’s proposal does not adequately address the critical deficiencies within the justice system and law-enforcement bodies, particularly the South African Police Service. On this basis, there is no need for the envisaged council.

In contrast, Ilitha Labantu, the Congress of South African Trade Unions, the Gender Equity Unit of the University of the Western Cape and Call to Action, to name a few, all supported the Bill. Some of them called for the size of the Board to be expanded to be more inclusive, with representation from government departments such as the departments of Basic Education and of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, as well as the LGBTQIA+ community, persons with disabilities and the children’s sector.

Several stakeholders called for the Bill to be tagged as Section 76 legislation to obtain the views of the National Council of Provinces. The Chairperson of the committee, Ms Nonhlanhla Ncube-Ndaba, thanked all individuals and organisations that sent written submissions to the committee and participated in the public hearings. She said the public hearings created a platform for the people to express their views on the Bill.

The committee is satisfied that it enabled public consultation on the Bill. The Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities was also given a deadline for August 2023 to respond to all written and oral submissions on the Bill in preparation for the deliberations of the committee on the Bill.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON WOMEN YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, MS NONHLANHLA NCUBE-NDABA**

For media enquiries or interviews with the Chairperson, please contact the committee’s Media Officer:
Name: Yoliswa Landu
Parliamentary Communication Services