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| **MEDIA STATEMENT**                                   **COMMITTEE ON HEALTH APPLAUDS THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND THE MINISTERIAL TASK TEAM ON PROGRESS MADE ON COVID-19** **Parliament, Saturday, 11 April 2020 –** The Portfolio Committee on Health expressed its satisfaction after it heard progress that the Department of Health and the Ministerial Task Team are making in curbing and fighting the spread of Covid-19 in the country. On Good Friday (10 April 2020), the committee had a virtual meeting with the Minister of Health, Dr Zweli Mkhize, Department of Health, MEC’s of Health from the nine provinces, Ministerial advisory team chair Prof Salim Abdool-Karim, National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) and the South African Health Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) where the committee was briefed on progress made so far. The committee received an update on the latest developments relating to Covid-19 and engaged the minister on issues covered in the media concerning protective equipment in healthcare facilities and the progress with Covid-19 screening in various provinces. In the meeting, the minister provided an update on the measures undertaken by the Department of Health with the MEC of Health in KwaZulu Natal to close St Augustine’s Hospital in KwaZulu Natal. The committee heard that the hospital experienced increased numbers of patients and healthcare workers infected with the virus. Briefing the committee, Prof Abdool-Karim who is part of the ministerial health advisory committee shared with the committee the epidemiology of the disease and highlighted what is happening at St Augustine’s hospital. Prof Abdool-Karim stated that the decision to go on a countrywide lockdown was “timely that the epidemic as we see in other countries is following a very conservative curve, not exponential, however, we should not rest but press on in this positive direction”. The Chairperson of the committee, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, said the committee commends the sterling work conducted by the task team that is headed by the Minister of Health. Members of the committee thanked the team for the hard work it is doing under difficult times, and on how the team has handled the outbreak of the pandemic in the country. The committee took a unanimous decision that the meeting should take place weekly where it will receive updates from the minister and the task team and monitor the developments on the pandemic. Dr Dhlomo said: “This is in line with parliament’s constitutional mandate of oversight, and this will go a long way in ensuring that the committee is on board and kept abreast on the ongoing fight against the pandemic.” **ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, DR SIBONGISENI DHLOMO.** For media enquiries or interviews with the Chairperson, please contact the committee’s Media Officer:**Name: Ms Yoliswa Landu****Parliamentary Communication Services****Tel: 021 403 8203** **Cell: 081 497 4694****E-mail:** **ylandu@parliament.gov.za**     |

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