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**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NUMBER: 399**

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**399. Ms L L van der Merwe (IFP) to ask the Minister of Social Development:**

In light of the fact that many SA Social Security Agency (SASSA) grant recipients are still experiencing numerous problems with unauthorised deductions from their grants, and in view of the fact that when the gold SASSA cards were introduced grant recipients were told that the cards are totally safe and cannot be duplicated, what (a) measures does the department intend to put in place to resolve the ongoing problem of illegal deductions from grant recipients, (b) total number of SASSA officials have been prosecuted for their involvement in fraud over the past 12 months and (c) total amount has SASSA lost due to fraud during the past 12 months? NW405E

**REPLY:**

1. The introduction of the SASSA/SAPO card has addressed the issue of unauthorised deductions. Unauthorised stop orders or debit orders are not allowed off the SASSA/SAPO card account. The only deductions which are allowed off social grants are premiums for funeral policies, in accordance with Regulation 26A to the Social Assistance Act.

These deductions are managed by SASSA, before the social grant is paid, and are only effected with the consent of the beneficiary. The system is secure, and it is very unlikely that any unauthorised or illegal deductions are occurring; however, should this be the case, details can be forwarded to SASSA for further investigation.

In instances where social grant beneficiaries elected to receive the social grant into their personal bank accounts, they are able to authorise deductions and stop orders; and cancel these if needed, with their bank.

It is possible that abuse of deductions may occur in this commercial banking space. However, SASSA does not have any control over accounts held with commercial banks. Should a beneficiary have challenges with their bank, they can choose to have their grant paid via the SASSA/ SAPO payment system, which does not allow for deductions.

1. To date, 17 SASSA staff have been prosecuted for their involvement in fraud over the past 12 months.

1. The total amount that is attributed to fraud during the last 12 months from February 2020 to January 2021 is reported to be **R17,279,523.95.**

This amount mainly consists of money lost through SASSA cards that were fraudulently re-issued within the South African Post Office environment. This loss is covered SAPO which is responsible for the reimbursement of social grant beneficiaries who have been negatively affected by these fraudulent transactions.