



GAUTENG PROVINCE

HEALTH
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT

WEDNESDAY, 24 MAY 2023

GAUTENG HEALTH ADDRESSES THE MISINTERPRETATION OF FACTS BY R171 NURSING STUDENTS

The Gauteng Department of Health (GDoH) has noted with concern the misrepresentation of facts that have been peddled in the media concerning the status of R171 final year nursing students.

The department wishes to set on record the following:

- R171 nursing students (staff nurse) studying at the Gauteng College of Nursing (GCoN) have this month (May 2023) completed their 3-year study programme which was fully funded by the GDoH.
- The students are awaiting their licentiate exams which will take place in November 2023, about six months after completion of their academic programme at the GCON.
- The South African Nursing Council (SANC) stipulates that the duration of the study programme for R171 nursing students is three (3) years full-time. At the end of the 3 years, the students will not have to undergo community service but are subjected to a licentiate exam with the South African Nursing Council (SANC) which regulates their profession.
- This new determination, however, has financial implication for GDoH as the bursary benefits were to only fund the students' academic programmes at GCON.
- The students are demanding that the bursary stipend they have been receiving while studying must continue to be paid between June and November 2023, while they wait for their licentiate exam with the SANC, even though they are now done with their studies. This will be considered irregular expenditure as it does not comply with the Public Finance Management Act.

- The students' demand is over and above the fact that their bursary benefits including monthly allowances were extended before as a result of COVID-19 related disruption of their academic programme at various campuses of Gauteng College of Nursing, the Nursing Education Institution (NEI) they are studying at.
- Unfortunately, the GDoH does not have over R8 million to cover the costs of extending the period of the 167 final year students currently on bursary contract.
- The total budgetary implications are that it will cost GDoH about R77 million when considering three cohorts of students who are currently on bursary contract with GDoH. The precedence created by the demand of the current final year students is such that it has implications for the next cohorts. What is done to these final year students must be done to the remaining cohorts.
- The GDoH cannot overextend the bursary benefits of the R171 final year students as it has already extended it with six (6) months due to COVID-19 related delays in their academic programmes.
- The concerns about the contractual obligations of students serving back the GDoH for the years they were supported with all bursary benefits is not contested. This matter will, however, be communicated to the students using channels of communication agreed with them after due consideration of the new regulatory pronouncements by SANC. The GDoH has not yet taken any decision to release them once licenced and registered.

Ends/

Issued by the Gauteng Department of Health

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