



# GAUTENG PROVINCE

EDUCATION  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## MEDIA STATEMENT

**To: All Media**

**Att: News Editors**

**For immediate release**

**02 April 2019**

### **MEC Lesufi Celebrates World Autism Day in Tshwane**

The Gauteng MEC for Education, Mr. Panyaza Lesufi today, 2 April 2019, launched the Autism Month at the CSIR International Convention Centre in Tshwane.

Autism Awareness Month is a time to educate your community about autism and Light It Up Blue! Spreading autism awareness in schools is a great way to celebrate April and promote inclusion and acceptance in the classroom and beyond.

Today's event was aimed at raising awareness about Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), its effect on learners and how to support parents and their autistic children. Such programs will be facilitated throughout the month of April in Gauteng.

Among the dignitaries who attended the event were parents whose children are autistic and some of them gladly shared their experiences with the audience.

“Learners with special needs cannot be treated as third class citizens, they deserve the best and as such must be treated the same as other learners, hence we have invested sufficient resources to build more schools for them and reduce the unacceptable waiting period. The waiting period for learners with special needs to access our schools was reduced from 5 years to about six months, which is still unacceptable. The department must also invest more on utilisation of technology in the Autism sector. In 2015, we had only one Autism unit at Charlotte Maxeke Hospital, we are proud to inform that currently, we have about 13 Autism units at different schools” said MEC Lesufi.

2019 marks the eleventh anniversary. World Autism Awareness Day is celebrated annually on 2<sup>nd</sup> April. Every year, autism organisations around the world celebrate the day with unique fundraising and awareness-raising events.

**For more information, contact the Gauteng Department of Education's Spokesperson, Steve Mabona on 072 574 3860.**

**Issued by the Gauteng Department of Education**

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