

SPEECH BY GAUTENG MEC FOR HEALTH AND WELLNESS, NOMANTU NKOMO-RALEHOKO, ON THE OCCASION TO PRESENT THE 2022/23 BUDGET FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS, GAUTENG PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE, 25 MAY 2023.

**Madam Speaker and Deputy Speaker
Honourable Premier
Honourable Chief Whip of the Majority Party
Members of the Executive Council
Honourable Members of this House
Comrades and Friends
Residents of Gauteng
Ladies and Gentlemen**

It gives me pleasure to be given this opportunity to present the Departmental Budget Vote for the year 2023/24

Today, as we gather here, we find ourselves on the threshold of a new chapter, as the current political term rapidly draws to a close. It is a moment that calls upon us to reflect on the strides made and to consolidate our work in the coming months as we accelerate the rollout of health and wellness programme across communities.

The Gauteng Department of Health holds a sacred responsibility – the duty to safeguard the health of our communities, to provide quality healthcare services, and to ensure that no one is left behind in the pursuit of a healthier life.

This is even more significant on a day like today, where we are observing Africa Day. We know how the healthcare system in Gauteng caters not only for residents of this province but for our brothers and sisters from other provinces and beyond the borders of South Africa. In this global age our interconnectedness means that no healthcare system is safe on its own. COVID-19 pandemic was a stark reminder of this. As such we continue to learn from one another as we seek to provide better health care to our communities.

Indeed the demands on our healthcare system continue to grow, requiring us to adapt, innovate, and implement transformative solutions. In the face of numerous challenges, we remain steadfast in our mission. We are also addressing the persistent inequalities that exist within our society, ensuring equitable access to healthcare for all, irrespective of their socio-economic background.

Madam Speaker, in the last few months since assuming this portfolio, we have faced numerous challenges within our healthcare system. We have grappled with limited resources, overcrowded facilities, and stretched healthcare professionals. But through resilience, innovation, and a shared vision the tide has turned for the better. Our healthcare facilities are once again reclaiming their historic mission as beacons of hope and healing.

The tide is turning

Today we have in the gallery among the many special guests some people whose individual stories are diverse but interwoven by a common thread which is their interactions with the Gauteng public health system. I would like to acknowledge;

- Ms Rita Nell is one of the elderly people from Eeufees Oord Old Age Home in Nigel who recently received a new wheelchair as part of our programme to better the lives of our communities through assistive devices.
- Ms Mulalo Sinthumule, a Security Officer at Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital whose alertness on duty led to a baby that was incorrectly released to a family being reunited with their biological mother.
- Ms Kgomotso Moshobane, an Assistant Nurse at Helen Joseph Hospital whose dedication saw her using social media to reunite a patient suffering from amnesia with his family.

The story of each of our guests is not peculiar. On a daily basis we receive testimonies both from the public and our own staff that bears testimony to the fact that our efforts at transforming the healthcare system are indeed bearing fruits.

When we assumed office in October 2022, we had no illusions about the mammoth task before us and the state of the public health system in the province. This is why we immediately set on course a programme to begin to write a new chapter about the Gauteng health care system.

Health services to TISH Communities

Madam Speaker, communities across the province can attest to the fact that they now enjoy greater access to healthcare services at their doorsteps. Under the TISH (townships, informal settlements and hostels) programme we are now taking health services to where communities are. To date we have reached over 21 million people using multiple platforms through the comprehensive life course health and wellness campaigns across all five districts.

We have intensified our health and wellness drive under what we have termed #AsibeHealthyGP. This has seen us launch the **Wellness Wednesday** programme and mobilizing sectors of society to embrace healthy living as we seek to tackle both communicable and non-communicable diseases.

Knowing that oftentimes communities do not know how to respond to **emergencies we have taken a proactive approach to roll out the First Responder Training** to TISH communities. We have set ourselves a target to train 2500 people by the end of this financial year. We have already trained over 430 people in Sedibeng and West Rand since we commenced with the programme in March 2023.

Update on Cholera Outbreak

Madam Speaker, over the past few days, we have been grappling with a significant health crisis in the form of the Cholera outbreak in Hammanskraal. This challenge has not just underscored our collective fragility, but it has also emphasised the perpetual threats that our public health system faces every single day. Therefore, our vigilance, preparedness, and response must be as relentless as the threats we face.

The number of patients that have been seen at the Jubilee District Hospital as of 24 May 2023 in the afternoon is sitting at 179 and this number includes 18 patients who have been transferred to Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital and Steve Biko Academic Hospital in Tshwane.

The number of laboratory-confirmed cases of Cholera is standing at 29. To date, 20 people have passed on from the disease outbreak. The total number of patients admitted due to gastrointestinal infection was 78.

As the Gauteng Provincial Government, we extend our deepest condolences to the families who have lost their loved ones as a result of the diarrhoeal outbreak. It is truly a difficult and painful time for many families. Losing someone to a preventable disease like Cholera is heart-breaking, and our thoughts are with all the families and communities impacted by this outbreak.

We continue to upscale our public health education programmes, for knowledge is the most potent weapon in our fight against diseases. By increasing awareness about prevention, hygiene, and early detection, we can empower our communities to become frontline defenders against health threats.

We therefore plead with communities to heed the public health messages and to follow the golden rules; to ensure proper hand hygiene, treating or sterilising water before drinking or cooking, ensuring that food is cooked well and is kept covered and always disinfecting and cleaning surfaces.

We continue to closely monitor the situation and to provide the necessary support to the multidisciplinary teams working on the ground. We furthermore welcome the contribution made by various organisations towards relief efforts.

Strengthening EMS response to emergencies

Madam Speaker, to further ensure that our response time is timely and agile we continue to invest in human resource capacity and in bolstering the Gauteng Emergency Medical Services fleet.

To this end we have procured a number of emergency vehicles as follows:

- 5 violent incident ambulances that are used for all violent situations owing to protest actions and other related incidents, including accessing hard to reach areas under all weather conditions. **This initiative is the first of its kind in EMS environment within the country.**

- 30 ICU/obstetric ambulances which are custom made and are resourced with state-of -the art medical equipment to accommodate births that happen while transporting patients to hospital and have incubation capability.
- 20 Rescue response bakkies with the capabilities to enter hard to reach areas especially during rainy seasons.
- 25 G-SET the Gauteng Scheduled Emergency Transport (G-SET) ambulances will help to enhance Gauteng EMS performance and response time as it allows for a seamless 24-hour transportation system between health facilities on predetermined routes and times for non-critical patients. The model has been piloted for more than 10 months with great results at three health districts (Johannesburg, Tshwane and West Rand) and is now ready to be rolled out throughout the province. **This model is also the first of its kind within EMS environment in the country.**
- **A Mobile Classroom and Mobile counseling centre will soon be launched to help to attend to the employee wellbeing and training needs while on the move.**

The volume of emergency calls handled in 2022 increased from 42000 per month to over 72 000. Three percent (2 160) of these is made up of priority one calls which are life-threatening incidents while the remaining 97% (69 840) constitute priority two and three cases which are medical and trauma emergencies. In terms of international golden hour status **for response time to emergencies Gauteng Province is at a 97% response time, which contributes towards positive patient outcome.**

Forensic Pathology Services

Honourable Members, I am pleased to say that **we are currently piloting a digital finger print system which is linked to Home Affairs, SAPS and Credit Bureau to fast track the identification of unknown bodies in our mortuaries and thus help to eliminate storage congestion due to high the number of unidentified bodies at our facilities.**

As part of strengthening our service offering and ensuring that we have highly skilled people that can contribute in the field of forensic pathology we will in the second quarter of this financial year be opening a Training Auditorium located at Ga-Rankuwa Forensic Pathology Services. This will train medical doctors, under graduate doctors, and forensic officers amongst others.

Expanding access to care

Broadening access to health care by the majority of residents remains a key. Thus, **we are on track to realise the target of 40 primary health care facilities providing 24 hour services by March 2024.** Currently we have 38 facilities rendering much needed services to communities. By end of the first quarter, we would have further added to the list by opening Phillip Moyo Clinic. Not only that but we also endeavour to expand operating hours at our smaller clinics. In this regard, Winnie Mandela Clinic in Tembisa

is now opening for an extended PHC services on Saturdays for six hours from 8:00 - 14:00.

The re-engineering of Primary Health Care (PHC) aims to increase access of health services to the public and to improve the quality of health services in general. The ideal clinic status rate has increased by 5.2 percentage points from 92.4% during 2021/22 to 97.6% during 2022/23. **The department has managed to maintain the performance on ideal facilities above 90% of facilities assessed in the two financial years.**

The enrolment of clients into the Dablap Meds programme also known as Centralised Chronic Medicine Dispensing and Distribution programme improved by 10% from 1 085 232 in 2021/22 to 1 196 422 in 2022/23. This intervention continues to contribute towards reducing queues at our health facilities by providing convenience to patients to remotely collect their medication at pharmacy dispensing unit close to them.

Access to good quality and affordable Assistive Devices and Technology has not only been mandated by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) for more than ten years but has been mainstreamed into the provision of quality healthcare to communities. **The Gauteng Department of Health has issued more than 110 000 assistive devices.** The collective assistive devices issue rate target of 85,0% for 2022/23 financial year was exceeded with an actual issue rate of 93%. Wheelchair and hearing aid issue rates increased from 86% to 97% and from 77% to 82% respectively.

Health infrastructure

Honourable Members, it is no secret that many of our aging facilities need maintenance, refurbishment, upgrades, or replacements but we also need new infrastructure. This will enable smooth rolling out of the National Health Insurance from Primary Health Care Centres up to tertiary services.

I am proud to announce that despite slow progress in the implementation of infrastructure projects, Sebokeng Zone 17 Clinic was opened in March 2023 and is functional as we speak. Process to operationalise and open other clinics such as Mandisa Shiceka, Philip Moyo, Finetown, Boikhutsong and Kekanastad are underway and these facilities should be handed over to communities within this financial year.

These projects have reached practical completion (i.e. building work has been completed). The handover of these facilities will be concluded as soon as the few remaining municipal regulations has been complied with, and the Occupation Certificates are issued. These clinics will further broaden access to care which remains our priority. This process is being fast-tracked with the assistance of the municipalities.

Surgical backlog

Honourable members, as part of ongoing efforts to address the surgical backlog that has impacted the healthcare system in Gauteng, a total of R784 million was allocated

to the Gauteng Department of Health to address urgently the backlog in surgical and radiation oncology services, emanating from shortages in both personnel and equipment, and the knock-on effect of the COVID-19 pandemic that stretched the capacity of the Gauteng healthcare system.

I am delighted to inform the house and the people of Gauteng that we have successfully expanded our capacity to perform surgical procedures in multiple hospitals across the region. The recent successful operations at Sebokeng Hospital (performed its first brain surgeries on two patients) and at Bheki Mlangeni Hospital (performed its heart surgery) affirms the confidence we have in our centres of excellence. These two facilities would have had to refer their patients to be operated at the so-called big hospitals.

A total of 11 242 cataract surgeries have been done for the 22/23 financial year, with 2 362 of those done between January and March 2023. The total number of cataract shows a marked improvement as compared to 4 339 the year 20/21 and 8 385 in 21/22 respectively.

Oncology services

Oncology services has been a challenge following the rising demand for various treatment of cancer patients. In bringing services to the most vulnerable groupings of society the **Oncology services will now be expanded to cover the Township based teaching hospitals namely Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital (CHBAH) and Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital (DGMH).** By end of 2022/2023 financial year, CHBAH's paediatric Haematology Oncology unit provided treatment to 5 475 children and the newly established Soweto Comprehensive Care Centre has treated 5 656 adults with cancer.

Through our intervention, we will finally be able to start with the delayed construction of the bunkers at two central hospitals and we anticipate completing this by January 2024. Currently oncology services are provided through Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital (CMJAH) and Steve Biko Academic Hospital (SBAH). We currently have 2000 patients per month benefitting from oncology services at Charlotte Maxeke and Steve Biko hospitals.

In order to ensure that patients requiring radiation oncology services are not disadvantaged by the reduced available public health resources, the Department has identified the need to appoint private sector providers to supply radiation oncology services for this financial year.

Madam Speaker, the burden of mental health disease has been on the rise in recent years. **The Department is thus, refurbishing beds in 15 hospitals in order to increase the acute mental health beds by 206 beds in this financial year.** Additionally, Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital is currently adding a 20-bedded acute mental health unit that is to be completed by the end of June 2023.

Governance systems

One of the common concerns we have had to contend with as we engage with frontline workers in our weekly service delivery monitoring visits to facilities is the frustration that is brought about by non-responsive bureaucratic systems within the department. We are working hard to strengthen governance systems internally and to ensure that there is greater accountability on how the limited state resources are used.

We have subjected almost 1600 senior managers and officials in the Supply Chain Management and Human Resources Management to a vetting process. Our 106 senior management services employees have now submitted their documents for processing by the State Security Agency. A further 1487 SCM and HR employees have also submitted completed forms for SSA to process.

We are working with the Office of the Premier to ensure that forensic investigations in the department are undertaken. We have taken a stance against maladministration and corruption and remain committed to work with Chapter 9 institutions and law enforcement agencies to ensure that the department is rid of bad apples.

Medico legal claims are still a major concern for the department, however, we have been able to bring down the rand value of medico-legal claims and the contingent liabilities to R20.8 billion as at end of March 2023. The work of verification of cases will continue with the legal intervention strategy developed to address the medico legal cases. The content of the strategy will include ensuring that we have a dedicated unit that will be working day and night to bring down medico legal claims. **We will further undertake reforms when contracting CEOs of hospitals to ensure that their contracts of employment include as a key performance the reduction of medico legal claims.**

Payment of Suppliers

Honourable Members, we have implemented the rapid work cycle programme for institutions to improve turnaround times on financial systems clearing of exception. A total of 41% (56 875) of the 137 724 invoices without disputes were paid within 30 days and this is an increase of 13.8 percentage points from 27.2% during 2021/22 financial year to 41% during 2022/23 financial year. **Invoices without disputes paid within 30 days increased by 73% from 32 936 during 2021/22 to 56 875 during 2022/23.**

As the department, we are closely monitoring the wrong practise of split billing under threshold of R500 000. Cases of abuse are being investigated by the Special Investigation Unit. An oversight process which entails the compilation of a monthly purchase order report to track any incidents of split billing is being instituted by the department. All purchases between the value of R500 000 and R1 million are forwarded to the Gauteng Provincial Treasury for verification and to ensure that they comply with Supply Chain Management prescripts.

I want to extend my sincere thanks to our dedicated finance team, whose tireless efforts have contributed to the success we are experiencing today. Their commitment

to resolving this issue and ensuring the financial stability of our organization is truly commendable.

Budget Appropriation

Madam Speaker, for the financial year 2023/24, a total allocation/appropriation for the department is R 60 Billion (R 60 093 535 000). The budget per programme is as follows:

- Administration - R 1 489 406 000
- District Health Services - R 20 137 498 000
- Emergency Medical Services - R 1 778 114 000
- Provincial Hospital Services - R 11 357 425 000
- Central Hospital Services - R 21 762 135 000
- Health Sciences & Training - R 1 196 718 000
- Health Care Support Services allocation is R 453 930 000
- Health Facilities Management R1 918 309 000.

We have been allocated conditional grant funding amounting to R13, 891, 408, 000 (R13.8 billion) which is being used amongst other things for the provision of tertiary services, HIV/AIDS and training of health professionals.

In conclusion, let me extend my heartfelt thanks to Premier Panyaza Lesufi and my esteemed cabinet colleagues. Their unwavering support has been instrumental in our collective efforts and has made a profound impact on our shared goals. Together, we have achieved great things, and together, we will continue to make a difference in the lives of those we serve.

Let me also express my sincere appreciation to the Finance Portfolio Committee under the leadership of Honourable Dr Rebecca Digamela and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts under the leadership of Honourable Sochayile Khanyile for the continued oversight and constructive engagement on all departmental matters.

My heartfelt gratitude to the Acting Head of the Department, Mr Lesiba Malotana and the entire healthcare team for their unwavering support and dedication. This team has exhibited exemplary leadership, guiding us with their expertise and ensuring that the department operates smoothly. I also want to appreciate the team in my office who remain a constant pillar of support enabling me to discharge my mandate effectively.

I hereby introduce the 2023/24 Budget Vote of the Gauteng Department of Health and Wellness for consideration by this House.

Thank you.