MEDIA RELEASE	**COVID-19: PSA condemns attack on teachers by Limpopo Command Council**
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is concerned with the Limpopo Government's handling of applications of teachers with comorbidities after learning that the Department of Health, with the assistance of the police, is investigating the authenticity of submitted documents.

The accusation by the Provincial Coronavirus Command Council (PCCC) that some teachers submitted fake doctors' certificates regarding their comorbidities to avoid returning to work on 6 July 2020 is an attack on the integrity of the teaching profession. The PCCC's statement indicated that although it received more than 700 applications from the teachers to be exempt from attending school owing to comorbidities, only 400 were granted. It is claimed that suspicious medical certificates from certain doctors were received, which prompted the investigation. The insinuation that teachers consult private doctors and submit medical certificates that do not conform to protocol, is not enough reason to call for an investigation. The Limpopo Government must understand that the requirement to submit a medical report does not waive the doctor-patient relationship. Teachers' right to privacy must be respected and they cannot be expected to publicise their health conditions. Unless there is consent, doctors cannot disclose the nature of the illness. Evidence stating that a teacher has conditions that will make him/her prone to COVID-19 infection, should suffice unless the Department wants to peruse the medical files. It is questionable why the Department of Health would be involved in investigating doctors and their medical certificates, instead of the Department of Education, considering the received applications and request additional information where necessary.

The PCCC's decision to publicly announce that teachers are submitting fake certificates, while no teacher has been charged or a doctor arrested, is not irresponsible, disrespectful and tantamount to defamation of character. The statement creates an impression that some 300 teachers with pending applications are suspects, which is an attack on the teaching profession. The intimidation of teachers with comorbidities does not have space in the workplace, particularly the involvement of police in the absence of reported cases to warrant investigation. The PCCC is abusing its powers by involving the police in a matter between the employer and employees where no criminal charges have been laid. The Department of Education must speedily process these applications, for teachers with comorbidities to ensure employment or replacement teachers, before other grades report back to school on 6 July 2020.

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