

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA calls for urgent intervention in National Health Laboratory Service debt crisis
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EMBARGO	None
ENQUIRIES	communication@psa.co.za

The Public Servants Association (PSA) is extremely concerned about the more than R11 billion owed by provincial health departments to the National Health Laboratory Service (NHLS).

This escalating debt crisis is severely undermining the NHLS's ability to deliver critical healthcare support services to South Africans. The NHLS plays an indispensable role in the healthcare system by providing diagnostic services that enable doctors to make timely and accurate treatment decisions. The ongoing financial strain has, however, resulted in major delays in the processing and release of test results, including those related to life-threatening illnesses such as cancer, HIV, and tuberculosis. These delays are placing patients' lives at risk, compromising the quality of healthcare, and creating additional hardship for families awaiting medical outcomes for their loved ones.

The PSA warns that if provincial departments fail to settle their outstanding debts urgently, the NHLS will be unable to recruit additional personnel required to reduce testing backlogs and improve turnaround times. Laboratory equipment will not be maintained, increasing the risk of breakdowns and further service disruptions. Modern equipment necessary to meet growing healthcare demands and ensure efficient diagnostic services cannot be procured.

The sustainability of the NHLS is under serious threat. The collapse or weakening of such a vital institution would have devastating consequences for South Africa's healthcare system and the broader public service. The PSA calls on the Minister of Health to intervene urgently and ensure that provincial health departments honour their financial obligations to the NHLS without delay. Immediate action is essential to safeguard the sustainability of the NHLS, protect the integrity of public healthcare services, and uphold the rights of patients and families who depend on reliable and timely diagnostic results. The PSA is committed to engaging with all relevant stakeholders to promote accountability and protect the future of South Africa's healthcare system.

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