

MEDIA RELEASE **PSA condemns Gauteng Department of Health's non-renewal of contracts of more than 2 000 health workers**

DATE 26 May 2023

EMBARGO None

ENQUIRIES communication@psa.co.za

The Public Servants Association (PSA) is extremely concerned about the Gauteng Department of Health's decision not to renew the contracts for more than 2 000 doctors, nurses, and healthcare workers that expired on 31 March 2023.

The Department employed more than 3 000 employees through Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) and more than 1 000 fixed-term contract employees from 2020. They all had reasonable expectations that their contracts would be renewed on 1 April 2023. The Department decided not to renew these contracts owing to alleged budgetary constraints.

The PSA is concerned about the mounting pressure of staff shortages and increasing number of patients that the Department must serve on a daily basis. The non-renewal of these contract workers will place additional pressure on the current workforce that is already overworked and struggling to cope with the pressure.

The PSA engaged the Gauteng Premier, Mr Panyaza Lesufi, in March 2023 on this matter where he pledged that the contracts of EPWP employees would be renewed. The PSA, however, subsequently learnt that there was only a partial renewal with less 2 000 EPWP contracts being renewed. On 18 May 2023, the MEC for the Gauteng Health informed the PSA that the Department had budget constraints and could not renew the 2 000 contracts it had through EPWP.

The PSA is concerned that the MEC is acting contrary to the undertaking of the Gauteng Premier to renew these contracts. More than 2 000 health workers are now unemployed during a time of a cholera outbreak in the province that has already claimed lives in the Hammaskraal area. The PSA urges the Gauteng Government to work with the Department to renew the contracts of the 2 000 employees whose contracts expired on 31 March 2023 to ensure immediate capacity to deal with the cholera outbreak, other pressing needs and ensure compliance with occupational health and safety at affected hospitals and clinics. The Department is aware that government has not been filling positions and contract workers have been used to fill the enormous gaps created by government's decision to reduce the wage bill at the expense of the most vulnerable people who rely on public institutions for critical service delivery.

END