

NHI Bill to be released on Thursday – Business Day, 7 August 2019

The bill is the first piece of enabling legislation for the government's ambitious plans for implementing universal health coverage

The long-awaited National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill will be introduced to parliament on Thursday, according to the health minister's spokesperson, Lwazi Manzi.

The bill is important because it is the first piece of enabling legislation for the government's ambitious plans for implementing universal health coverage, which it calls NHI.

A draft NHI Bill was released for public comment in June 2018, and then revised before being submitted to cabinet. The updated version, which has yet to be released to the public, was approved by the cabinet on July 10. It is expected to contain proposals for establishing an NHI fund, which will purchase services on behalf of patients from accredited public and private sector providers.

The bill contains potentially contentious measures, as it is expected to signal the government's view on the future role of medical schemes and that of provincial health departments. Observers will also be scrutinising the governance measures put in place to protect the NHI fund from corruption.

Manzi said the NHI bill will be published on the health department's website after health minister Zweli Mkhize briefs the media, which he is slated to do at 9am in Pretoria.

Once the bill has been tabled in parliament, it will be considered by both the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces, which are both expected to undertake a process of public consultation.

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