

NHI under threat, warns Cosatu

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Johannesburg - Cosatu has called on President Jacob Zuma to ensure that the National Health Insurance (NHI) policy is implemented in its original form.

The federation said the policy was being attacked by people within and outside government, who wanted to change the policy paper in the interest of big business.

The scheme has come under attack with some experts, outside labour structures, having warned it will be an unmitigated disaster, too expensive and will kill the private medical aid industry.

The Cosatu Central Executive Committee, meeting this week in Johannesburg, urged Zuma ensure the implementation of the NHI as it was his legacy project.

The committee said the President could not afford to sit on the sidelines and watch the ANC policy being “watered down”.

“The NHI is under sustained threat inside the government, mainly from the Treasury and vested interests at provincial government level. There are also outside threats coming from the four private hospital monopolies, the Free Market Foundation and others, such as the foreign-funded NGOs,” said Cosatu spokesman Sizwe Pamla in a statement.

He added Cosatu is of the view that the lack of commitment, clarity and decisiveness by government indicated it was “intentionally dropping the ball”.

The federation said it was concerned the main supporters of the NHI had been sidelined by the Department of Health and replaced by consultants approved by the world bank.

“The fact that the NHI was only allocated R4.5 billion over the next three years is a confirmation for us that the NHI remains under threat not only from private monopolies and other opponents, but also from the Treasury itself through austerity measures.

“The CEC is concerned that last year the Treasury stated that the implementation of the NHI depends on economic growth. In April this year, the Treasury circulated some problematic and sceptical documents, within government, on obstacles that may allegedly make it impossible to implement the NHI,” said Pamla.

Cosatu also reminded the government of the ANC’s manifesto commitment to implement universal healthcare through the NHI.

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