



**Memorandum delivered to Premier David Makhura
Johannesburg, 7 August 2018**

The Treatment Action Campaign, Corruption Watch and partners are marching today because the health system in Gauteng has collapsed. People wait hours or days to access health services. Healthcare workers are overburdened and overstretched to breaking point. Hospitals are in shambles. Patients are found sleeping on corridor floors. Ambulances are scarce and unreliable. TAC's own monitoring in recent months at facilities across the province confirms the extent of this crisis. The dignity of poor people is being trampled upon every day. The reality is that our peoples' Constitutional right to healthcare is being violated.

Underpinning the collapse of the Gauteng health system is pervasive corruption, gross negligence and a dire lack of accountability of public officials.

The worst case of negligence which shook the country is the Life Esidimeni tragedy. Details of the extent of negligence were revealed during the arbitration hearings led by retired Deputy Chief Justice Dikgang Moseneke. As the painful arbitration hearings unfolded, families cried and spoke about the suffering of their loved one's undignified deaths. We heard how those who had the power to prevent this tragedy washed their hands and tried to evade responsibility, doing the minimum to collect their pay checks. The painful reality is that substantial sums of money were involved and that in many cases the only explanation for some of the implicated NGOs taking in patients that they were not qualified to care for was greed.

The arbitration award required the current MEC of Health Gwen Ramokgopa to produce a turnaround plan within 30 days that would outline how she would improve mental healthcare services in the province. Part of this plan should have included a strategy of engagement with interested parties such as patient groups and civil society. To date this plan has not been published.

In relation to rampant corruption, our whistleblowers, as well as the media, have highlighted the looting of public funds and resources on a mass scale in the Gauteng health system, including in the provincial health department. The recently publicised 'Special Investigating Unit' report uncovered more than R1.2 billion in unauthorised, irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure during Brian Hlongwa's tenure as MEC of Health. We firmly believe that the current health system collapse is linked to this. Under his leadership, it is evident that a culture of corruption was developed. The consequences of this is the death and suffering of poor people. The state has a duty to address the conduct of public officials that squander state resources including investigating and prosecuting crimes involving corruption. These officials should be held accountable, not put in senior positions.

The dysfunction in Gauteng is claiming lives and leading to widespread suffering. We have had enough of these daily indignities. Former Health MECs Brian Hlongwa and Qedani Mahlangu must be held accountable for their failings. However, instead of facing the consequences of their actions they have been re-elected into leadership positions in the Gauteng ANC. This is an absolute disgrace. It is an affront to the poor people who have suffered and lost their lives at the hands of a failing health system.

We demand that they be immediately removed from the ranks of the ANC leadership, and in the case of Brian Hlongwa, as an MPL and ANC Chief whip in the Gauteng legislature. We demand that there be an urgent turnaround of the collapse of the Gauteng health system. If not, we will hold the Premier and the health department accountable for their indifference to the suffering of poor people, for their foot dragging and empty promises.

We still await a response from Premier David Makhura from an open letter sent on 17 July 2018. We demand adequate time with the MEC of Health Gwen Ramokgopa to discuss the contents of a damning report sent to her office in May 2018 – are our health and rights worth only an hour of her time?

We will not rest until we have an adequate response to all concerns. If the Premier and MEC of Health do not take our demands seriously, we will be back here in our numbers. We will protest in ways you have never seen before in this province. The gloves are coming off. It is time to deliver on your Constitutional mandate, or face the consequences.

Signed: Gauteng Premier David Makhura

Signed: TAC Provincial Chairperson, Fikile Mtsweni
