

# Samatu commends NHI Bill approval for Universal Health Coverage

The South African Medical Association Trade Union (Samatu) asserts that the implementation of the National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill marks a significant milestone in South Africa's pursuit of achieving universal health coverage.



Source: [Rxabay](#)

“This milestone signifies that the nation realises the importance of universal health coverage as a means of addressing the inequalities that exist in the current healthcare system,” said Samatu general secretary, Cedric Sihlangu.

The union commended the Ministry of Health for the significant strides made in the implementation of the National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill, which was passed by the National Council of Provinces (Ncop) in Parliament, in Cape Town, on Wednesday, 6 November.

The Samatu noted with great satisfaction the Ministry's inclusive and comprehensive approach, particularly through robust stakeholder engagements, transparent communication, and a well-considered phased implementation strategy.

Sihlangu said Samatu views these efforts as “key components for the successful execution of this critical healthcare reform”.

“Samatu recognises and supports the Ministry's emphasis on a rational, structured, and phased approach to the

implementation of the NHI. The acknowledgement of the role of transitional arrangements and the impending proclamation of specific sections of the Act as law are crucial elements in realising the transformative impact of the NHI.

“We understand the intricacies involved in implementing such a fundamental reform and appreciate the Ministry's foresight in ascertaining that the effectiveness of the Act's provisions is undeniably linked to the subsequent introduction of accompanying regulations, directives, and operational procedures,” Sihlangu said.

Sihlangu's comments come as health minister, Joe Phaahla, has described the adoption of the bill as a historic and important milestone.

## Strategic NHI implementation

According to Phaahla, the Ministry has since developed and adopted a comprehensive approach to stakeholder engagement to ensure diverse perspectives are considered as the country forges ahead with implementing NHI.



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“Regarding the next key steps, we look forward to the Bill being forwarded to the President for consideration and promulgation. Once it receives presidential assent, the Bill will become an Act of Parliament, creating a statutory mandate for the Minister and the National Department of Health,” Phaahla said on Wednesday.

Sihlangu added that the Constitutional provision empowering the President to set dates for the effectiveness of various provisions within the Act is recognised, and Samatu is confident in the Ministry's commitment to navigate through these processes with due diligence and steadfast focus on the public interest.

## Samatu's pledge

“Samatu stands ready to offer unwavering support and collaborate with all stakeholders involved in the NHI implementation processes. As a union that represents doctors, we are committed to provide valuable insights and engage constructively to ensure the realisation of a healthcare system that guarantees equitable access to quality healthcare for all South Africans.

“As we move forward, Samatu reaffirms its commitment to advocating for the best interests of healthcare professionals and the public. We eagerly anticipate the successful realisation of the NHI objectives for the benefit of all citizens,” Sihlangu said.

- On Monday, 12 June 2023, the National Assembly (NA) passed the National Health Insurance Bill.
- The NHI Bill was initially tabled in Parliament and introduced to the Portfolio Committee on Health on Tuesday, 8 August 2019 for processing.