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SUPPORT MESSAGE FOR THE LAUNCH OF THE NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY'S MEDICAL SCHOOL

Stats SA estimated the 2021 Mid-year population in South Africa (SA) at 60,14 million people. We are a young nation with a mean age of 27.6 years in 2020 and at the same time having a highest Gini coefficient, an indicator of income inequality. We have a wide divide between the rich and the poor. In 2019, S.A was one of the countries that scored the lowest in the Indigo Wellness Index with a score of 0,28 out of 191 countries and this indicator tracks the world's healthiest countries. This indicates that as a country and nation, we are sick, both mentally and physically.

It therefore, not surprising why we need more Medical Schools established in S.A to respond to the disease burden and also address inequitable access to health services, especially specialists and those strengthening public health in previously underserved areas. We know that health happens outside the health system and the social determinants of health should be the foundation of responding to physical and mental ailments.

We therefore, need more health workers to heal our nation and advocate for policy changes and more training capacity. We, as Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University in particular and School of Medicine specifically, welcome the establishment and launch of the 10th Medical School in South Africa. Indeed, we also want to appreciate and acknowledge the hard work of Prof. Lungile Pepeta and all those that worked very hard to make sure that this dream of establishing the new medical school in Qheberha, in the Eastern Cape is realized.

The Medical School bears the iconic name of our struggle hero, and South Africa's first democratic president, Nelson Mandela. We believe, and pray that this Medical School, shall leave up to his values and honour what he stood for. Mandela once said, "Health is not a question of income, it's a fundamental human right".

COVID-19 has robbed us of a giant in Prof. Pepeta, but what a befitting occasion that we, celebrate the launch of this Medical School. The pandemic did shine a spotlight on the role of the health sector on the economy and social stability, at the same time, highlighting gaps we believe we can tackle cooperatively.

It shall be befitting to have one of the buildings named after Prof. Pepeta, in this Medical School.

Today, we celebrate the launch of the Nelson Mandela University's School of medicine. We, as SMU, are excited and available to collaborate with you at any given moment.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'R' followed by a long horizontal line and the letters 'F' and 'C'.

Prof R.F Chauke