



Kenya Medical Association

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

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PRESS STATEMENT

DOCTORS' VOICES ESSENTIAL FOR SHAPING HEALTHCARE POLICY IN KENYA

The Kenya Medical Association is the **professional association** of registered doctors in Kenya, with the twin mission of championing for the welfare of doctors and advocating for quality health care for all.

Since its founding in 1968, the Kenya Medical Association has been a key stakeholder in the health sector and has promoted the practice of high-quality medicine in Kenya. This has harmoniously been **through partnership** with the Ministry of Health and its agencies in **developing sound policies** which have transformed the health sector in Kenya. Indeed, our involvement in the several technical working groups at the Ministry speaks highly of the pivotal role we have played in making our health system one of the best in East and Central Africa

As the **professional representatives** of doctors who are fundamental to quality healthcare provision, KMA is an ardent supporter of the design and smooth implementation of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in Kenya. Successful implementation of UHC will ultimately depend on the services we provide to Kenyans, in collaboration with other professional cadres of healthcare workers. Therefore, doctors **should regularly be consulted** and their **voices heard** when developing policies in the management of healthcare in Kenya. Anything less than this is bound to have disastrous outcomes.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has recognized Health Care Professionals as an essential pillar in the governance of healthcare systems. These professionals form a necessary representation on boards and councils that are key to the delivery of UHC and in healthcare governance in general. Currently, KMA is a member of the NHIF Board where we have contributed to the reform agenda aimed at optimizing the organization in its readiness to implement UHC. The current proposed National Hospital Insurance Fund (Amendment) Bill, 2021, that leaves the KMA unrepresented

on the Board of NHIF, inadvertently reverses the gains championed by doctors, while muffling the voices of doctors in shaping UHC; doctors who continue to fight to strike a balance between financial sustainability while providing proper medical services to Kenyans, consistent with the oath we have sworn.

KMA recognize that the cost of healthcare in Kenya is very high, majorly due to a myriad of factors, among them hospitality charges, the high cost of health insurance, and supply chain challenges, and punitive taxes on health equipment, including medication. KMA has been key in trying to drive down the cost of healthcare by strategic payer-provider engagements, and lobbying the Ministry of Health to manage taxes and other factors that make healthcare expensive and inaccessible to the public, as opposed to the misguided notion that the high cost is solely due to doctors professional fees.

A survey by KMA estimates that doctor's professional fees are 15-20% of total hospital bills. Further, the professional fees charged by doctors are already regulated through subsidiary legislation of the Medical Practitioners and Dentists Act (CAP 253). Honest conversation between the organizations representing the doctors, insurance providers, hospitals and the Ministry need to be held to address this issue in its entirety. Our expertise cuts across all facets of healthcare and our members are a valuable asset in this conversation.

KMA notes with a lot of concern the rushed passing of legislation in the health sector without exhaustive stakeholder involvement and in most instances completely disregarding the input from key players in the sector. KMA has participated in and has provided advisory on this reform agenda and continues to do so. KMA is deeply concerned that the health care sector is being imbued with poorly crafted laws that in the long run will reverse the gains made in our healthcare system. The observed attempts at isolating doctors in preference of business and political interests in health will erode the quality of services offered in the sector and make the attainment of the highest quality of health as provided by the constitution and envisioned under the Big 4 Agenda's UHC a mirage for many.

In this regard, KMA puts forward the following recommendations:

1. The National Assembly and the Ministry of Health consider the several memoranda submitted by stakeholders in the health sector, including those by the Kenya Medical Association.
2. Reforms in the health governance sector be anchored on the agreed joint memoranda by the Ministry of Health and the Federation of Health Professionals Association of Kenya (FHPAK) as directed by the Health Committees of Parliament.

3. Suspension and withdrawal of the Health Amendment Bill 2021 and the National Hospital Insurance Fund (Amendment) Bill, 2021 from Parliament until proper consultation and exhaustive deliberations are done on the proposed changes in the governance of the health sector, that are causing unease and anxiety among the doctors as well as other health professionals.
4. Medical Doctors be included in the UHC planning and execution as they key stakeholders and actual implementers of the UHC agenda.
5. Urgent meetings with stakeholders in the health sector be held to objectively discuss the drivers of the high cost of healthcare in Kenya.
6. The government defends and upholds the dual regulatory framework in place between the State and medical practitioners aligns to the best practices of health governance as recommended by WHO and WMA.

KMA remains available to provide the National Assembly, the Ministry of Health and all other stakeholders in the health sector invaluable professional advice as espoused by best practices internationally in management of healthcare in Kenya.



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President, Kenya Medical Association