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Charlotte Maxeke a huge concern

Citizen Reporter

While Gauteng Covid-19 statistics spiral out of control, the Portfolio Committee on Health in parliament has raised concerns that the unavailability of the Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Hospital (CMJH) will compromise the public health system to manage the third wave in the province.

The committee conducted an oversight visit to Gauteng to assess the healthcare facilities in rolling out phase two of the vaccination programme as well as measures in place to manage the third wave Covid-19 infections.

"It will be practically impossible for the province to manage the third wave without the more than 1 000 beds inclusive of 124 intensive care unit beds at Charlotte Maxeke Hospital," said chair of the committee Sibongiseni Dhlomo.

"This matter needs urgent attention and we have committed as the portfolio committee to engage national ministers to see how they can assist to ensure that the facility is ready and available to assist in the management of the third wave."

The committee has since urged stakeholders involved, including the department of health (both provincially and nationally), the City of Johannesburg and the department of public works and infrastructure to urgently meet to find solutions to ensure that the facility is ready and available

to assist in managing Covid-19 infections.

The facility stretches beyond the management of Covid-19, with the hospital having speciality services that are also of benefit to other provinces.

"The continued unavailability of these services is untenable, hence the need for urgent action," Dhlomo said.

Despite this, the committee welcomed the intention by the Gauteng department of health to open more vaccination sites to expand access to vaccines.

The committee remains cognisant that the fight against the spread of Covid-19 will only be strengthened by the effective roll-out of vaccines that will eventually ensure herd immunity.

As such, the committee has welcomed the expansion of sites as a step in the right direction to ensure the maximisation of the vaccination programme.

The sites visited by the committee were all operational and functioning, but the committee raised concerns about the Kopanong hospital.

"The halted infrastructure development at the Kopanong Hospital prevents the expansion of the vaccination site to ensure that it caters for increased numbers of people to speed up vaccinations.

"The committee will interact with the Gauteng department of infrastructure to find solutions to the delays in finishing the infrastructure programme," Dhlomo said.