

Written submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and the Select Committee on Finance on the 2019 Revised Fiscal Framework and Revenue Proposals (MTBPS).

Submitted by: Noxolo Mfocwa for the Pietermaritzburg Pensioners Forum

Date of submission: 04 November 2019

Honourable PN Abraham, MP, Chairperson: Standing Committee on Finance.

Honourable YI Carrim, MP, Chairperson: Select Committee on Finance.

04 November 2019

Greetings and thank you for once again considering our submission

We are the Pietermaritzburg Pensioners Forum. The Pietermaritzburg Pensioners Forum is a forum of pensioners who live in Pietermaritzburg who are organising with other pensioners locally and nationally for all pensioners to receive a substantial increase of their monthly state old-age grant (currently valued at R1 780) and a bonus in December equal to double their monthly pension.

Over the past 2 years, we have made numerous written and oral submissions on the Budgets and Appropriations processes in Parliament including letters to the National Treasury, The President of the Republic, and the ANC Caucus. Earlier this year we again travelled from Pietermaritzburg to Parliament to ask the President for a double pension in December, but to our disappointment, no one in the Presidency would meet us. To date, we have not received a response indicating that the ANC in parliament and in government has listened carefully to our cries and is taking our situation seriously.

Despite your predecessors who sat on this very committee twice recommending higher increases in grants through the reprioritisation of expenditure, National Treasury and the governing ANC chose to increase the old-age grant by R80, which is less than the R100 of last year, and did not allocate for a 13th cheque in December 2019. This R80 has driven us deeper into poverty.

R1 780 a month is not enough. We cannot survive on it. It is far too low. We cannot live healthy lives on it, it just keeps us in poverty. This year has been so hard on us. Everything has gone up. Fuel has gone up. Electricity has gone up. Omalume who take our grandchildren to school have gone up. Masingcwabisane has gone up. VAT has gone up. Food prices have gone up. There are no jobs for our children.

We are unable to make it through the month on our pensions and most of us are in terrible debt. R1 780 is far too low. We will continue to stand in the queue to collect the old age grant and then go and stand in the line to borrow money from omashonisa. We will continue bringing no money home to where we live. Increasing the child support grant by R10 which is not even enough to buy toothpaste, has put even more pressure on our pension.

On 30 October 2019 we listened to Minister Tito Mboweni's MTBPS with hope that he would make the necessary interventions to relieve us from our suffering, however, once again

Treasury missed the opportunity to be visionary and see the budget as a political tool to include all South Africans in a prosperous and peaceful society and economy. Once again nothing was said about us, we have been rendered invisible.

So in light of you continuing to ignore us, we would like to remind Parliament and government of a few things;

We are of the age group that when we worked, we were paid the lowest wages, we suffered the worst racial oppression and exploitation in the workplace and did the most horrible types of jobs. We were domestic workers, factory workers, farm workers and supermarket workers. We did not earn enough when we worked to support our families and to save for our retirement. When we retired our only option was to apply for the state old-age grant.

The old-age grant is not a gift from government. We contributed and sacrificed so much for South Africa. The R1 780 a month pension takes us nowhere except to lock us into terrible poverty. It is a wicked short-sighted unreasonable thing to not make sure that pensioners receive a proper pension. Government has a responsibility to ensure that we are paid properly when we work and support us in our old age. Currently the government is doing neither.

We continue to contribute to South Africa in our old-age. The pension plays the same role as a wage does. It brings income into our homes. Many of us live in homes where nobody works. Our children cannot get jobs. Our families survive on our pensions. Our pensions support our children and grandchildren. Our pensions continue to subsidise high levels of unemployment and low wages, and keep children clothed, fed and in school.

We want you to note that our campaign is growing in strength across the country with pensioners in Pietermaritzburg being supported by pensioners organising in areas across KwaZulu-Natal, Mthatha, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Gauteng and Cape Town. We are many, We are organising. 3,5 million pensioners receive a monthly old-age grant. We are a big sector of society. We ask you to please consider our calls and look into our proposal of making real use of the grant system to the benefit of all of us.

In conclusion, we want to ask you, how many public hearings will it take for you to hear us? How many letters must we write? How many written and oral submissions must we make in order for you to hear us? How many times must we picket? We shouldn't even have to ask you this, but since you refuse to hear us we have to ask, **would you be able to survive on R1 780 a month if the roles were reversed?**

We include in our submission our petition that carries the signatures of over 29 000 South Africans who are fully behind our call for a substantial increase of our monthly state old-age grant and a double pension in December. We also include the past submissions made to the KZN Legislature, Parliament, National Treasury and The President of the Republic. Attached please see past submissions to be included with this written submission. They provide carefully thought through analysis of the struggles of elderly South Africans, the affordability crisis in

millions of people's homes and how the old-age grant, if increased could actually provide South Africa with a way out of its current economic crisis.

Thank you for considering our written submission.

Thank you for providing us with the space to make an oral presentation at the hearings on the 6 November 2019. We will be speaking in isiZulu.

Yours sincerely, Thina Ogogo

The Pietermaritzburg Pensioners Forum

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Email and telephonic correspondence can also be done through Noxolo Mfocwa on noxolo@amandla.mobi and 076 272 3782. Noxolo will ensure that the communication is passed onto the Pensioners Forum.