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Honourable, SN Buthelezi, MP, Chairperson: Standing Committee on Appropriations.

Honourable, DG Mahlangu, MP, Chairperson: Select Committee on Appropriations.

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Written submission and request to make an oral presentation regarding the Public hearings on the Division of Revenue Bill. Submitted by amandla.mobi, on behalf of various members of the public

Dear Members of the Standing and Select Committee on Appropriations. The 2021/2022 Budget Review, Division of Revenue Bill [B 3 – 2021], Appropriation Bill [B 4 – 2021] and Special Appropriation Bill [B 5 – 2021] are technical documents that will have a direct impact on tens of millions of lives.

This submission presents to you the demands and concerns of those who will be most impacted by decisions that underpin the Fiscal Framework, Revenue Proposals and 2021/2022 Budget Review. In addition to the below-written submission, we wish to make an oral presentation to the committee members this Friday, 12 March 2021. The presentation will address the call to extend the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) Grant of R350 beyond April, introduce Basic Income Support, increase social grants, and expand the Child Support Grant to start at pregnancy.

Let's be crystal clear about what Finance Minister Mboweni's budget is. It is an anti-poor austerity budget. It does not deal with the immediate issues of hunger and unemployment faced now, and this is just going to amplify as the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic intensify. It is prudent to think of the future, but it is inhumane to let this blindsides the authentic and present problems many people face in South Africa. The latest household affordability index shows us that many households in Mzansi are starving [1], and as little as the SRD grant was, it provided some relief. Removing the SRD will plunge many into a food crisis.

As outlined by Black Sash in their open letter to Minister Tito Mboweni [2], the SRD grant plays a massive role in mitigating the financial burdens of unemployment faced by the 11.1 million people currently unemployed [using the broad definition]. Those aged 18 - 59 years are currently left out of the government's social assistance programme. The absence of social support for this age group stretches the other social grants' reach, as that money has to feed other people in a household. The human cost of the financial decisions represented in the budget is enormous and will take years to correct if the government doesn't prioritise social

spending and taxing the rich.

We support the demands made by Black Sash, to increase the SRD grant to at least R585 per month, the country's current food poverty line. The SRD grant should include provision for adult women who receive the Child Support Grant for children. The COVID-19 grant gives an administrative and operational platform to realise permanent Basic Income Support for those aged 18 - 59 years.

We welcome and note the recommendation by the Standing Committee on Finance in their report on the 2021 Fiscal Framework and Revenue Proposals. The committee recommends that "While recognising the economic, financial and other challenges, the Committee recommends that, in view of the COVID-related huge job losses, increasing poverty and inequality, the NT and the government seriously consider a basic income grant after the necessary consultation with the relevant stakeholders. We refer this matter to the Appropriations Committee to give further attention to".

The presentation will speak to the below-mentioned campaign demands

Basic Income Support for people aged 18 to 59 NOW! - Over 280 000 signatures;

<https://awethu.amandla.mobi/petitions/basic-income-support-for-aged-18-to-59-now>

We demand that the government:

1. Implement permanent social assistance for those aged 18 to 59 valued at the upper-bound poverty line, currently R1,268.00 per month. Caregivers, who receive the Child Support Grant, must qualify for this grant;
2. Ensure that the above provisions apply to refugees, permanent residents, asylum seekers and migrant workers with special permits; and
3. Work towards a Universal Basic Income;

The extension of the COVID-19 SRD grant to April 2021 is completely inadequate. The government must lead with urgency on issues of poverty affecting a majority of people in Mzansi.

It is crucial that the committee also considers the below campaigns as their demands are relevant to the 2021/2022 budget;

Tell Government we urgently need a Child Support Grant increase of R500 for the next 6 months - Over half a million signatures;

<https://awethu.amandla.mobi/p/child-support-grant-corona>

The campaign called for an urgent increase to the value of the Child Support Grant (CSG) by R500, for six months during last years lockdown. Further demands included:

1. Vulnerable households not already receiving grants, including unemployed adults in households without social grants also need access to income support. Innovative mechanisms to reach these individuals and households

need urgent attention.

2. More cash without addressing congestion at big retailers, in taxis and social grant payment queues is not effective. We, therefore, recommend that SASSA re-structure its payment system to ensure that grants are transferred into the accounts of beneficiaries in a staggered manner.

3. Selected highly nutritious foods should be subsidised.

Demand a Maternity Support Grant to help reduce stunted growth in our children - Over 600 signatures;

<https://act.amandla.mobi/campaigns/maternity-grant>

The campaign calls for a Maternity Support Grant, by expanding the Child Support Grant to start at pregnancy.

Tell Pres. Ramaphosa to give pensioners R2500 and a 13th cheque in December - Over 50,000 signatures;

<https://awethu.amandla.mobi/petitions/tell-tito-mboweni-to-give-all-pensioners-a-bonus-in-december>

Say no to Treasury cutting the CCMA's budget - Over 300 signatures;

<https://act.amandla.mobi/campaigns/stop-cuts-to-ccma>

Dineo Rabaholo on behalf of amandla.mobi

[1]

https://pmbejd.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/February-2021-Household-Affordability-Index-PMBEJD_03032021.pdf

[2]

<https://www.blacksash.org.za/index.php/media-and-publications/media-statements/706-open-letter-to-finance-minister-budget-places-the-poor-on-the-altar-of-fiscal-consolidation>