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Media Statement:

COPE Slams Government for Ruining Future of Overseas Scholarship Students

Immediate Release:

The Congress of The People (COPE) calls on the Free State Provincial Government to urgently intervene and implement a clear programme of action to assist students who studied abroad under the province's Overseas Scholarship Programme.

These students, who have dedicated over a decade to their studies, are now facing barriers in having their qualifications recognised and accredited by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA). This is preventing them from practicing as doctors and rendering their qualifications effectively useless.

The Free State Overseas Scholarship Programme, initiated in 2013, sought to provide students with opportunities to study in various fields, including medicine. However, many of these graduates are now trapped in a bureaucratic limbo.

According to media reports, one such graduate is Baile Motsamai, a qualified medical doctor who completed her studies in China. Despite her successful completion of a 10-year medical degree, her qualifications remain unrecognised by the HPCSA due to costly and complex accreditation processes. Other students, too, are suffering the same fate, leading to frustration and hopelessness.

The Free State government, which once supported these students, is now distancing itself from responsibility. Many of those involved in the programme, including former Premier Ace Magashule who championed the initiative, are no longer in government, leaving these graduates to face an uncertain future without the support they were promised.

It is an untenable situation where taxpayers' money was spent on sending students abroad, only for them to return and be left without the means to practice. The provincial government's failure to assist these graduates, despite the promise of a brighter future, is deeply concerning and unfair.

COPE urges the Minister of Higher Education to intervene immediately to ensure that these students' qualifications are recognised and accredited by the HPCSA. COPE remains committed to fighting for the rights of all affected students, particularly the medical graduates, and we will continue to push for a solution until their issues are fully resolved.

“We cannot afford to let the struggles and sacrifices of these students go to waste. We must hold the government accountable and ensure that they fulfil their promises to those who have invested so much in their education,” said COPE Acting Provincial Chairperson in Free State Nathane Makalo.

COPE remains resolute in its commitment to advocate for these students and ensure that they receive the support they need to contribute meaningfully to the healthcare system and society.

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