MEDIA RELEASE **GEMS: PSA demands no fee increases for 2021/22-financial year**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is demanding that the Government Employees Medical Scheme (GEMS) refrains from implementing membership fee increases for the 2021/22-financial year in view of rising financial pressures on public servants.

The PSA, which represents some 240 000 public-sector employees, points out that GEMS is not under any financial constraints and should be able to sustain itself financially without a fee increase in the coming financial year. On the other hand, and in the absence of salary increases that were due in April 2020, the current financial climate does not enable public servants to shoulder any increase in medical-aid expenses, considering the rising costs of basic items such as food, electricity, and transport.

The COVID-19 pandemic has furthermore had a devasting effect on many public servants, especially workers in the health and safety and security sectors and other critical services – were on duty under trying circumstances and incurred additional expenses related to transport, childcare, etc.

The PSA further calls on the State to allow public servants more flexibility when choosing a medical-aid scheme. The State should also ensure that all these employees receive the same employer subsidy, irrespective of the scheme they belong to. This will allow public servants to choose more affordable schemes to suit their financial situation.

The PSA will continue to canvas GEMS and the Council for Medical Schemes to ensure that no GEMS membership contribution increase is implemented until public servants are granted salary increases to allow them to absorb such expenses.

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