

PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

NO. 5931

28 February 2025

MR. SIHLE LONZI, MP

**NOTICE OF INTENTION TO INTRODUCE A PRIVATE MEMBER'S BILL
AND INVITATION FOR COMMENT ON THE DRAFT, NAMELY THE
STUDENT DEBT RELIEF BILL, 2025**

Mr. Sihle Lonzi, MP, acting in accordance with section 73(2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, intends to introduce Student Debt Relief Bill, 2025, in the National Assembly. An explanatory summary of the draft Bill is hereby published in accordance with Rule 276(1)(c) of the Rules of the National Assembly (9th Edition).

BACKGROUND

According to an article written by Lea Leathern on 06 May 2024 half a million students in South Africa have debt in respect of the fees they owe to an institution of higher learning and most of them will not graduate, receive certificates or a letter of completion until they're fully paid-up. According to William Gumede, the country's student debt stood at approximately R16.5 billion in March 2021, and in the following year, 2022, more than 120 000 students were unable to graduate because of their indebtedness to the institution of higher learning.

Young people in South Africa are faced with two undesirable scenarios: (i) to begin their work lives with huge sums of debt that imprison them in a permanent cycle of debt for the rest of their lives, or (ii) to remain jobless and economically inactive, as their qualifications are withheld by institutions of higher learning because of their debt. The need to address student debt is both necessary and urgent.

The Student Debt Relief Bill, 2025 ("draft Bill"), intends to address the plight of students in respect of their debt to institutions of higher learning by establishing a Fund, namely the Student Debt Relief Fund ("Fund"). In terms of the draft Bill any student may, based on a set criterion, apply to the Fund for the Fund to pay off their debt to an institution of higher learning to enable a student to graduate

or get his or her qualification. Furthermore, the draft Bill will make provision for all students who have met their academic requirements to receive their qualifications irrespective of their debt to the institution of higher learning.

Interested parties and institutions are invited to submit written representations on the proposed content of the draft Bill to the Speaker of the National Assembly within 30 days of the publication of this notice. Representations can be delivered to the Speaker, New Assembly Building, Parliament Street, Cape Town; mailed to Speaker, P.O. Box 15, Cape Town, 8000, or emailed to speaker@parliament.gov.za and copied to chiefwhip@effonline.org.

Copies of the Student Debt Relief Bill, 2025, may, after introduction, be obtained from:

Economic Freedom Fighters

Office M415 4th Floor, Marks Building

Parliament of the Republic of South Africa

Cape Town 8000

Attention: Mr Sihle Lonzi

E-mail: studentdebtcancellationbill@effonline.org