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MEDIA RELEASE:

## **Umzinyathi District Manager Jabulani Mndebele's shoes will be hard to fill, says KZN Health MEC**

KWAZULU-Natal Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo has challenged all managers in the Department to emulate outgoing Umzinyathi Health District Manager Mr Jabulani Mndebele, who leaves the district in a healthy state after 18 years of service.

Towards the end of August, Mr Mndebele will relocate to his native Mpumalanga Province, where he will assume the position of Chief Director: Hospital Services in the Department of Health.

At a surprise farewell party held for him at the newly-opened Pomeroy Community Health Centre earlier this week, an emotional Mr Mndebele could hardly contain his tears as the Department's leadership and his colleagues paid tribute to him.

Once plagued by multi-drug resistant TB, uMzinyathi District has nearly eradicated this scourge thanks to the efforts of health workers and management.

It was under Mr Mndebele's watch that Umzinyathi Health District recently emerged as the best-performing National Health Insurance pilot district countrywide.

The NHI's long-term aim is to ensure all people have access to decent healthcare by harnessing public and private health resources, but this cannot be done unless the care in public facilities is vastly improved.

At the three NHI Pilot Districts in the province (Umzinyathi, Umgungundlovu and Amajuba) school health teams have brought nurses into schools, ensuring that children receive their vaccinations, and that those who need medical attention are identified, while teaching the older children about sexual and reproductive health.

Ward-based outreach teams, also known as Family Health Teams, visit people in their homes to offer basic treatment and teach people how to be healthier.

MEC Dhlomo said that out of 52 health district managers, Mr Mndebele's exploits as manager had earned him the respect of his peers, as well as that of leaders in the National Department of Health.

“Mr Mndebele has made a mark in this province, and in this country as a leader. One of the striking things that I noticed with him was when I visited Dundee Hospital and found sister Mbatha, an advanced midwife, who said that the hospital had for two years not had a maternal death in that hospital. The neighbouring district of Amajuba, where patients are being referred to UMzinyathi, were complaining that their maternal and child mortality rate was higher. The difference was that uMzinyathi had a high index of suspicion for complications and were referring patients to Amajuba District on time. A long time ago, when Mr Mndebele was in charge of Greytown Hospital, it was spotlessly clean, with no

problems, for a very long time.”

MEC Dhlomo said that when the MEC’s Service Excellence Awards were established, UMzinyathi District had won gold for most categories that have to do with the Millennium Development Goals that related to maternal and child health.

“I therefore challenge all health managers in this district and elsewhere in this department to honour Mr Mdebele’s legacy by ensuring that they do not let standards plummet.”

Head of Department Dr Sifiso Mtshali said that since assumed his position more than a year ago, he had hardly received any complaints about uMzinyathi district. This, said Dr Mtshali, was due to Mr Mdebele and his management team. He thanked Mr Mdebele for putting the proper systems in place.

“There are individuals whom we’d like to bid farewell to. And when they leave we’d like to be there as witnesses. We are really sad that Mr Mdebele is leaving. But we are confident that he will represent us well where he is going,” said Dr Mtshali.

Mr Mdebele said he was humbled and honoured to have had the opportunity to lead uMzinyathi District. He thanked all those who had contributed to his success. He said that although some mistakes had been made along the way, which he had learned valuable lessons from; any success that he had attained was due to those that he had worked with.



*KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo and Head of Department Dr Sifiso Mtshali bidding farewell to outgoing uMzinyathi Health District Manager Mr Jabulani Mdebele*