



EKITI STATE DOCTORS' STRIKE: GOVERNMENT'S POSITION

Thursday July 30th, 2020

1. Our attention has been drawn to the news reports of a press conference held in Ado Ekiti by some striking members of Ekiti State Branch of the National Association of Government General Medical and Dental Practitioners (NAGGMDP). It is unfortunate that despite the numerous efforts of the State Government to support the Health Sector, especially during this pandemic and its attendant economic effects, the members of this Association have insisted on the strike action.
2. NAGGMDP approached Government with a list of requests on the welfare of its members. The leadership and that of the parent Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) were promptly invited to more than seven (7) meetings between June 11 and July 8, 2020 for constructive engagement with the Secretary to the State Government, Head of Service, Hon Commissioner for Health, Permanent Secretaries in the Health Sector, Hon Commissioner for Finance, the Permanent Secretary Ministry of Finance, Permanent Secretary, Office of Establishments and Service Matters, the Senior Special Assistant to the Governor on Labour Matters, the State Accountant-General and other top officers of government in attendance.
3. Government empathised with the concerns of the association but explained that the State could not meet all their demands especially due to the global economic challenges occasioned by the ongoing pandemic and dwindling monthly federal allocation and low IGR. The statements of income and expenditure of State since the outbreak of the COVID 19 Pandemic were made available to the Association as proof of the State's financial position.
4. While most of the association's demands were not peculiar to them alone, they emphasised the implementation of the "SKIPPING" in their salary scale; that means Medical Officers will commence their career in the civil service on GL 13 instead of the current GL 12 while Consultants will be appointed on GL 16 instead of the current GL 15, as approved by the National Council on Establishments (NCE).



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5. This “SKIPPING” issue is currently being reviewed by the NCE because of its far-reaching implications on other cadres in public service. In fact, it is a subject of litigation at the federal level and an appeal filed by the Federal Ministry of Health is yet to be determined so NO STATE GOVERNMENT has implemented the skipping adjustment till date. Besides, it goes against the principle of natural justice to enter into agreements with the FG in a Federation without inputs from states and expect such agreement to be binding on states.
 6. Government had proposed a phased implementation of some of the demands to enable it meet other obligations like salaries, but the association has refused to be flexible. This administration under the leadership of His Excellency, Governor Kayode Fayemi has a responsibility of care to all Ekiti people, both civil servants and private individuals. It must therefore manage the state’s limited resources judiciously for the benefit of all.
 7. Formal and informal steps have been taken to appeal to the striking doctors to call off the strike, including the intervention of well-respected citizens of Ekiti, but the doctors have remained adamant. It is necessary to note that all the other unions in the Health Sector who are similarly affected by some of the same requests, met with Government and after reviewing the state finances, were considerate and humane enough to call off their strike action and are now at their duty posts, providing lifesaving services to Ekiti people.
 8. The timing of this strike action, in the middle of a global public health crisis when the citizens need their services the most, borders on insensitivity. Government calls on all well-meaning Nigerians to appeal to the striking doctors not to allow themselves to be pawns in the hands of political detractors. The administration of Governor Kayode Fayemi is committed to improving the conditions of service of all public servants in Ekiti State, the doctors inclusive.
 9. A lot of intervention is on-going in the health sector; some of which include
 - a. Fifteen (15) Primary and Secondary Health facilities undergoing renovations as well as provision of PPEs and medical equipment with the support of the Ekiti State COVID-19 Response Resource Mobilisation Committee (RRMC)
 - b. Ongoing process to access the Healthcare Support Fund from the CBN to equip more health facilities so that our health workers can practise in more conducive environments
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- c. Mr Governor approved the payment of the monthly hazard allowance to health workers as part of efforts to appreciate their dedication and hard work.
 - d. The Ekiti State Health Insurance Scheme has been launched to adequately fund service delivery in healthcare so our people can access quality service at affordable rates.

All these and many more initiatives are part of Governor Kayode Fayemi's visionary programmes to uplift healthcare delivery in Ekiti State and our health workers are at the very centre of these interventions.

10. It is widely acknowledged that most developing nations and sub-nationals are experiencing the shortage of doctors in the health sector, including Ekiti State. It is however important to clarify that there are adequate doctors in both public and private sectors in Ekiti State to meet the healthcare needs of its residents. We are working to improve our patient-doctor ratio as well as to ensure affordable healthcare in every part of Ekiti State but, the impression that Ekiti State residents might need to go out of state to access healthcare is not accurate. There are over 300 doctors in the service of Ekiti State Government and more than 700 doctors cumulatively in the state.
11. Once again, Government appeals to the striking doctors under the aegis of NAGGMDP to reconsider their position and return to their duty post immediately. Continuing with this ill-timed strike action will only put the lives of Ekiti residents at more risk during this COVID-19 pandemic .

Signed

For: **Ekiti State Government**

Aare Muyiwa Olumilua

Commissioner for Information & Values Orientation