

Young persons with disabilities should not be left behind

By **Sibongiseni Ngcobo MP** – DA Member of the Portfolio Committee on Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities

On Friday, 22 May, I attended a virtual Disability Webinar organized by the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities.

In this webinar, different speakers representing persons with disabilities in this country unanimously said to the government, *“We want to be heard. We want to be part of the conversation and we want to be part of the solution”*

They want to be included and not left behind by the government, and yet today we are having a Youth Parliament where they are not represented.

There are civil society organizations like the South African Disability Association which advocate for the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities and these organizations could have been represented here today by their younger delegates if an invitation had been extended to them.

Chairperson,

According to a research brief on Equality and Disability in South Africa which was done by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), it is estimated that ‘eight in ten persons with disabilities are unemployed’ and that includes young persons with disabilities.

The White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities stipulates that the employment equity and work opportunity targets for persons with disabilities should have at least reached 7 percent by 2030.

But if we look at our current employment statistics, we can be certain that this target will not be met.

The public sector’s employment of persons with disabilities target was set at 2% for 2005. More than 14 years later, this target is still not met. This is indicative of an incapable state which has left even the most vulnerable members of our society behind.

Today we still have young persons with disabilities who are sitting at home because there is a shortage of special needs schools.

Research conducted by the SECTION27 organization showed the wide-spread neglect of and discrimination against children with visual disabilities. It revealed that adequate learning materials are unavailable, or teachers are not sufficiently trained to teach children with visual disabilities.

This is not the South Africa that the Youth of 1976 wanted.

The government must start to seriously listen to the concerns of young persons with disabilities in this country.

Now is the time for government to decisively deal with these concerns.

Now is the time for the government to take action to protect the most vulnerable young people in our society.

The Youth Hustle continues

I thank you.