REPUBLIC OF KENYA

COUNTY ASSEMBLY OF KISUMU

HANSARD

Tuesday, 3rd November, 2015

Afternoon Session

Time: 02:30 p.m.

[Hon. Elijah Omondi, Presiding Speaker]

[Prayers by Presiding Speaker]

[NOTICES OF MOTION]

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Omondi): Any notice of Motion? Hon. Faridah.

Hon. Faridah Salim: Thank you Mr. Speaker, I wish to give a notice of motion on the National Hospital Insurance Fund coverage.

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Omondi): Next order!

COMMENCEMENT OF BUSINESS

MOTION:

- ✓ **National Hospital Insurance Fund coverage**

Hon. Aslam Khan: Point of order! Mr. Speaker I wish to draw your attention that this House lacks quorum.

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Omondi): Thank you Hon. Khan, Hon. Members my attention has been drawn that this House lacks quorum. Can the chief whip or any leadership of the House confirm the same?

Hon. James Omollo: Thank you Mr. Speaker, I confirm to you that we lack quorum in the House.

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Omondi): Lack of quorum has been confirmed and I therefore order the sergeant at arms to ring the bell for 10 minutes.

(Quorum bell rings)

Chief whip: Thank you Mr. Speaker, I am now here and I want to confirm that we have quorum in the House.

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Omondi): Hon. Members, it has been confirmed that we now have quorum and therefore I want to call upon Hon. Faridah to continue with her motion.

Hon. Faridah Salim: Thank you Mr. Speaker, I wish to give a notice of motion on the National Hospital Insurance Fund coverage.

(Reading of the motion)

I now call upon my colleague Hon. Aslam Khan to second.

Hon. Aslam Khan: Thank you Mr. Speaker, I rise to second this motion as you can see we have a lot of elderly people in our county who are suffering due to these hospital bills and are unable to access the health facilities. It would be very prudent and in order if our county government allocates some funds for the same purposes so that it can go a long way to assist our elderly people who can benefit from this scheme.

NHIF has recently brought in a policy where by the coverage is widened and you saw in the newspapers they are covering even the nearest health centers to the people. If that is the case then I believe even the old people are able to access medication from their villages and enjoy the benefits of this coverage and therefore help the county alleviate these problems. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Omondi): Hon. Members, I now propose a question for discussion of this motion.

Chief whip (Hon. Isaya Onyango): Thank you Mr. Speaker, this is a very good motion that will touch on the lives of our people and ours too. It is very unfortunate

that some of our people still die due to poor hospital facilities. Therefore if such a motion is there then it is better that we have the policies in place to ensure that our people get covered and get good treatment in times of need. I therefore support this motion and we should come up with a wayforward that the county government can come in and help those who might not be having chance to raise the required amount of money. Thank you.

Hon. Maurice Aloo: Thank you Mr. Speaker, I also stand to support this motion. It is common knowledge that we fought for independence and one of the reasons for fighting for independence was about diseases. If you look at this particular fund, it has been there for quite a while and if you look at the enrollment in our County it is just 40%. The reason for this is because of lack of awareness. I remember when we tried to mobilize members of my ward, very few people came. It is therefore my humble request that the County Government allocates some funds for awareness to help members of the County Assembly to mobilize the members of public in our wards. Mobilization is all about funding.

One of the reasons why registration is very low in our County is the way we offer services to our people. If you talk to someone about NHIF, they look at it on the way we handle our public hospitals. It is important that people in this sector of public hospitals improve the services they are rendering to our people. Just recently we lost a very important person in my ward because she could not be attended to in good time. So by improving good services will attract enrollment to this NHIF. Otherwise I want to call upon each one of us to support this motion so that we come up with ways and means by which we are going to sensitize our people so that they see the need to enroll in this fund. Thank you.

Hon. Salome Lungafa: Thank you Mr. Speaker, I stand to support this motion and would like to congratulate Hon. Faridah for bringing this motion in this House. NHIF is very important as it helps our people and I think this should be moved to the ward level so that our people can get easy access to health facilities. I therefore urge my fellow members to make it accessible in every ward offices whereby every member of the public can come to register so that everybody is helped. Thank you.

Hon. Simba Opepo: Thank you Mr. Speaker, I also stand to support this motion since some people cannot access the health facilities due to lack of funds. It would be prudent that members of the Assembly go back to our various wards to sensitize our people to register to this scheme because if at all you are a member of this scheme you are in a better position to be treated. Sometimes you find our people dying just because they could not be treated without money. At times you will find that the employers deduct salaries but do not remit the money to the scheme. This gives very bad reputation to some employers. I remember when I was a member of the NHIF I could go to the hospital and sometimes they could refuse to admit or treat a patient because of arrears that have not been paid by the employer.

I would wish that the Assembly comes up with a policy which gives guidelines on this so that some funds can be put aside for the elderly people and those that cannot afford treatment. I therefore thank the author of this motion for bringing it in the House.

Hon. Lydia Odhiambo: Thank you Mr. Speaker, I also stand to support this motion that indeed NHIF is very important. I have been a member of NHIF before I came to this Assembly and I know how much it has saved me during tough moments in terms of paying bills in the hospitals. I know it is an Act of the National Government but again as representatives of the people it is important that we go down to the grass roots to mobilize our people to register for this important cover. I am saying this because even today I have received about 4 calls from people who have fundraising as they have been detained in hospitals just because they cannot raise the hospital bills. At times it is very difficult for us to participate in those fundraising because we also have our needs and issues and the financial constraints is in the entire country but it is very important that the people see the need of the cover.

I am happy that there are many elected members in this House who have started rolling out these activities to their electorates and I wish to add that those that have not started to take this matter up. Let's also ensure that the allocations to health facilities are also up. I remember as health committee we once visited the Kisumu County hospital and we found out that the amount allocated to that hospital was too little and for that reason the services that they offer could not meet the expectations of the patients or the electorates. Let's ensure that our hospitals are

well equipped, with enough drugs; for instance Pap Onditi Hospital has been having issues and I remember at one time I went there when there were cattle rustling in Nyakach, somebody who had been shot by arrows and was in deep pain was only given brufen. I felt the situation they were in and looking at this issue of NHIF, suppose this guy had the NHIF cover and he was not able to access basic medication; it would not go along way.

I therefore want to ask that in as much as we advocate for NHIF lets educate our people on the importance of their health, importance of the cover and I believe at the end of it all the leaders in this House or even in the National Assembly are going to have ease in representing issues of the people. At times it is even hard going back home because you may find 20 or 100 people who want you to fundraise for them. Unless we are thieves, we can fundraise for them but if you tell them that it is not possible because we also have financial constraints they don't understand. So, the best weapon to use now is to educate them on the cover and make sure that they access it. Thank you.

Hon. Maina Koko: Mr. Speaker, I want to say that this is a good motion because the health of a nation is the strength of that nation and if we have people who are healthy is when we expect productivity from the people of this County. A lot have been done in this County and we've ensured that people do not go more than 3 kms before they reach a health center. One thing that we need to do is to change the attitude of our people as some of our people do not know what is good for them and our people's priorities are wrongly placed. They need to know that their health is first and other things follow. There is need therefore that the people are helped to change their attitudes so that they hold NHIF cover.

It is also needful to say that the County should allocate some money as where we are, some things cannot happen because of lack of funds. I also want to say that the NHIF people have also done nothing. I only hear that there is NHIF office in Kisumu but they only wait for people to go to their offices. I therefore recommend that the NHIF people should go to the ground and educate our people and recruit as many as they can. This will bring change and help most of our people. Thank you.

Minority Leader (Hon. Joshua Auko): Thank you Mr. Speaker, I also wish to support this important motion. Looking at the tabulations in the premium

breakdown, I see self employed. I think self employed is not an income that they should pay 500. In fact there are some self employed people who have a lot of income more than those with salary and in that case I think this should be reviewed in that they should determine the value of income that somebody gets. To say that self employed should pay 500 is an error which should be corrected. Thank you.

Hon. Caroline Agwanda: Thank you Mr. Speaker for this opportunity. I want to thank Hon. Faridah for bringing this motion before us and I want to say that this is a very good motion that will enable the community live a better life. I want to add that let's not forget the people with disability in this County. I know that with NHIF cover, those who are 65 years and above are treated freely and I therefore want to urge that people with severe disabilities be considered in this as some do not have the money for medication. If this is done then it will be a great achievement for the County.

Hon. Jane Omollo: Thank you Mr. Speaker, NHIF is very crucial but as we are now speaking, many people have dropped and stopped remitting their monthly contributions due to the increment. Formerly it was only 160 per month but was increased to 500 per month and many people cannot afford. Poverty level is very high in this County and that's why some people have dropped and my prayer is that the NHIF people should go down to the people and partner with the MCAs to sensitize them on the importance of the contribution of this NHIF cover. I stand to support this motion.

Hon. Priscah Misachi: Mr. Speaker I start by supporting the statement by Hon. Jane Omollo that the NHIF people should go down to the people and partner with MCAs to sensitize the people. If we go out alone to the people they will start asking us to pay for them but if it is done jointly then they can emphasize to the public and I believe we will achieve the intention of this motion. I support, thank you.

Hon. Joseph Osano: Thank you Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this motion. The truth is, the people of Kisumu County have to know about NHIF and Hon. Koko has talked about the notion. If you look at the prayer of the mover of this motion is very clear. When you go down to the last paragraph she is suggesting that we get the data of the elderly so that we can do something as a County. So much has

happened and we need to help people to get jobs since for you to have NHIF you must have some job. As a County we need to create some jobs for the people. If the County Government can come up with a programme whereby every household is given 3 chickens so that they can be able to get money from the sale of eggs and chicken, then this would be very good and they would be able to pay NHIF. This will help the elderly and even the disabled. It would be a good thing if the County Government comes up with income generating activities for our people since creating a fund for NHIF will be a very difficult thing. Thank you.

Hon. Caroline Ogot: Thank you Mr. Speaker for allowing me to speak on this matter. I support this matter but with the following: when I saw this motion my mind jolted to something and I totally agree with it. In the society we have people who cannot feed for themselves; we have total orphans, people with disabilities though not all of them because some of them have more money than you can imagine. There is this group who are totally incapacitated and they need to be supported to have a full life. We also have the elderly who have nobody to help them.

I need to say this, that there is this group who call themselves missionaries who came into our continent. They left some footprints of which some were good and some were bad. They made us believe that we cannot take care of ourselves; they made us believe that everything must be done for us, that we cannot sustain our lives. One of them is they gave us the bible and made us close our eyes as they walked away with our minerals, the natural resources. As much as this is a national function, there are certain Counties such as Nairobi, Bomet and Vihiga who on their own accord have set up safety nets to work with vulnerable people to ensure that they have a healthy life. We can do it if we choose and to concur with what other Hon. members have said, we can partner with NHIF to reach the ground through sensitization teaching the community why we need NHIF. It is a good thing; it has helped personally, why can't it help another person? Thank you.

Hon. Samwel Ombogo: Mr. Speaker I want to support this motion as it is good. I want to say that this County should focus on giving each and every elderly person a free NHIF cover. I don't mean that you give them full cover but we can opt for paying for them 3 months for a start. I for example, paid for a thousand people from my ward for 3 months as a start. This has reduced the number of people

coming to my office to ask for money for hospital and I continue encouraging them to pay each and every month. If it was for the County to pay then it could be much better. I am supporting the motion but the only problem I have is that this is a national policy. The self employed are expected to pay a higher amount than some of those who are employed. For example; the self employed pay 500 while the employed pay 160. However, this is a national policy and we can do nothing about but as a County we can have a fund which can help to pay for the vulnerable and the elderly even if for a start maybe 3 months then they later pay for themselves.

I would request that we put it open since we also have other insurance companies which are offering better covers than NHIF and we should consider that when adopting this motion. As the chair I request that you give direction when we will be adopting it, that we put it open for other covers. Thank you.

Hon. Nereah Okombo: Thank you Mr. Speaker, I also rise to support this motion. I am a little sad that my colleagues do not know that you can actually partner with NHIF. It is not the NHIF to come down to us but you as a representative move up and look for those people to partner with them to help the people you represent. I am happy today because I have managed to register almost 70% of the people in my ward. I partnered with NHIF at my own level and they helped me register for free all elderly persons who are 65 years and above.

There is also this perception that our people are too poor to register to NHIF. The idea here is empowerment and sensitization which is our key role as representatives. We are not going to ask the government to allocate more funds for sensitization because we are here as representatives and that's our role. The County has already allocated funds for empowerment such as trade fund, Youth, women and PWD funds which should actually be implemented right now. Ours also is to partner with NGOs who are ready to help us give entrepreneurship training to our people so that they can get money and register to NHIF and give their own contributions. The House has been sleeping but this is an ear opener and it is very important. I have done it and you can also do it. Thank you.

Hon. Aggrey Ogosi: Thank you Mr. Speaker, I want to say that this is a very important motion coming to the Assembly at this time and I want to thank the Mover of the motion for bringing it. It is not true as have been said that Kisumu

County cannot cover the vulnerable of this County through NHIF. If we put our priorities right we can do it. Others have done it and there is nothing stopping us from doing it. It is not the work of NGOs to do the work that the government is supposed to do. It is the work of government to ensure that the citizenry is healthy. Currently, I work with Pamoja CBO to cover many people in my ward. To the extent that the NGOs and CBOs have come in; it means the government is failing on its duty to ensure that there is affordable health care for its people. If you go to our health facilities and there are no drugs it means that the government is failing. When it gets to a place where somebody needs the services of NHIF it means the situation is getting out of control. For a long time NHIF used to cover only inpatient cases.

This is something that Kisumu County Government needs to do a little more about our health services. I support this motion and I would say that there is a huge amount of wastage in this County. The government is failing and we need to push it as the legislative arm of the government. Thank you.

Hon. Susan Omollo: Thank you Mr. Speaker, looking at the mood of the House I would like to call the Mover to reply.

Hon. Faridah Salim: Thank you Mr. Speaker, I want to sincerely thank my colleagues for supporting this motion and more so the colleagues who are already doing something at their own level in their wards. The only way to ensure that our County has people who are healthy is by going out of our ways to ensure that the systems which have been put in place will help those systems functional. Mr. Speaker, the reason why I brought this motion is basically to help us compel health facilities to offer good quality services to our people and this is well enshrined in the constitution of Kenya, and to be specific Article 43 which guarantees that everyone has access to the highest quality health care.

For us to ensure that this scheme is running well and it is indeed serving our people it is prudent that we as their representatives have to bring out the shortcomings and the areas that we feel are not addressing the needs of our people so that these areas are improved on and indeed our people can enjoy those benefits. Just like Hon. Ogosi has said, for long NHIF has been catering only for inpatient services and so this is the first time we are seeing it extending those benefits to outpatient cover

and even maternity cover. So, it is a step ahead and this has only come because of the increase of the rates. There is no way such services can be offered free of charge and that is why the people have to pay extra to ensure that these enhanced services are now reaching everybody who have registered with NHIF.

I know of people who still fund their medication from their pockets and as Hon. Aloo said earlier it is about lack of awareness and also Hon. Koko talked about attitude. When you have this kind of attitude it is very wrong because if you as an individual you are doing that then how about someone down there who don't know. It is expensive and unmanageable to finance medication from your own pocket. We should not be going that direction because we have seen how it has made us suffer and I think each one of us has that headache on daily basis of people looking for you to fundraise or chip in as far as their medication is concerned. I think we need to guide our people to doing the right things because fundraising for many people is unsustainable.

I have taken in the sentiments of Members that let it not just be for the elderly, let it be for the vulnerable and to cater for the very poor. This includes; elderly people, persons with severe disability who cannot manage contribute into this scheme. These are the people we must defend. Whereas death is inevitable, you cannot just sit and wait for your death. When somebody is sick, he/she must be attended to and by so doing you can prolong life a bit rather than sitting and saying I have resigned to fate. There have been many concerns which members have raised here touching on the way services are offered by the public hospitals and this is the time to push for those services to be improved. As people increase their contributions we also ensure that our facilities are giving value for money to our people.

This is all about educating our people so that they get to know that this is a very important thing to do. If you look at the gross income of someone earning 6,000 that means that for as little as 160 shillings per month which translates into 5 shillings per day, you and your spouse and children are taken care of. Partnership with NHIF is open and anybody who is interested should go to their office and represent their cases and I know the officials there will be willing to go down to the wards sensitize and register the people.

Mr. Speaker, once again I want to sincerely thank my colleagues and encourage us to champion for courses that will change the lives of our people. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Omondi): Hon. Members, Hon. Faridah has replied to her motion and now I want to put a question that this House adopts the motion.

(Question put and agreed to)

Mr. Speaker (Hon. Omondi): This Motion has been adopted and I want to commit it to committee of health so that the sentiments of the Hon. Members be further addressed by the executive, NHIF and any other body that offers medical insurance. The committee of health should come up with the report on this matter within 2 weeks.

Adjournment

There being no any other business, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow Wednesday at 9 am.

(All rise)

(Speaker's Procession)

(End)