

# Parliament approves GH¢6.87bn for NHIA

By Doreen Andoh

**P**ARLIAMENT has approved GH¢6.87 billion to enable the National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA) to pay health insurance claims and undertake its activities earmarked for the year.

The House also approved the 2024 distribution formula for disbursing the funds, which for the first time includes emergency support for needy dialysis patients.

Enhanced funding for dialysis will be made available when a committee set up to evaluate the actuarial model of absorbing the ailment on the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) completes its work.

Parliament approved the funds at its 28th sitting on Wednesday, March 20, this year.

The objective of the fund is to pay for the healthcare services of members of

## • Dialysis for needy, promoting health check covered

the NHIS as well as its administrative activities.

Aside from the payment of claims, NHIA operations, support for district offices and projects, among others, the formula also made provision for disbursement to support dialysis for the needy, promoting regular health check-ups, support for health-related research, sensitisation, publicity, tools and marketing.

Section 40 (2) of the National Health Insurance Scheme Act, 2012 (Act 852) specifies that money from the National Health Insurance Fund were to be used to pay for the healthcare cost of members of the NHIS, pay for administrative expenses of the NHIS, and to facilitate the provision of access to healthcare services, among others.

The sources of proceeds into the fund include the National Health Insurance Levy (NHIL) of 2.5 per cent of a person's Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) contribution,



• Joseph Osei-Owusu  
—First Deputy Speaker/Chairman,  
Committee of the Whole

money approved for the fund by Parliament, money that accrue to the fund from investments made by the authority, grants, donations, gifts and any other voluntary contributions made

to the Fund.

However, by the passage of the Earmarked Funds Capping and Realignment Bill, 2017 (Act 947), not more than 30 per cent of the proceeds accruing into the fund goes to the NHIA.

It, therefore, takes Parliament to approve fresh funds for use by the authority and other beneficiary activities.

The *Daily Graphic* has gathered that the NHIA received GH¢4.53 billion from the Ministry of Finance for last year and collected premiums of GH¢260.45 million.

## Parliament

The First Deputy Speaker and Chairman of the Committee of the Whole, Joseph Osei-Owusu, moved the motion for the adoption of the formula by the House and it was seconded by the

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Minority Leader, Dr Cassiel Ato Forson.

The members of the house welcomed the introduction of promotive health checks also known as a 'wellness package' by the NHIA to encourage Ghanaians to undergo regular health checks without paying directly.

The new public policy initiative, which formed part of policy proposals approved by the Committee of the Whole of Parliament, seeks to allow subscribers of the NHIS to undergo basic vital checks on their birthdays.

On the allocation to dialysis, the National Democratic Congress Member of Parliament (MP) for Tamale South, Haruna Iddrisu, urged the NHIA to allocate GH¢10 million for dialysis support to needy patients in the country this year.

He explained that given the national emergency of the lack of dialysis centres across the country, an allocation of GH¢2 million for dialysis support to needy patients in the country was not enough and that an allocation of GH¢10 million would have been sufficient.

Mr Iddrisu said he did not think that the GH¢2 million expected to be used to support poor people needing dialysis was enough, particularly considering the authority's

corporate social responsibility allocation of GH¢30 million.

Responding to the comments at the committee, the Chief Executive Officer of NHIA, Dr Dacosta Aboagye, who initiated the health wellness package, said it had been designed to offer NHIS members access to essential health assessments, which would potentially include vital checks such as blood pressure, heart rate, temperature, among others, and that the authority had costed it at GH¢3 million and funds had been allocated for the exercise accordingly.

Dr Aboagye assured the committee that the GH¢2 million was for emergency dialysis support for the aneedy but an actuarial modelling was currently ongoing for the authority to determine the actual cost.

"Mr Speaker, "page 24 of the expenditure explanation details that the formula has factored in expected medical inflation, a 30 per cent increase in tariffs and expansion of the package to absorb mental health and dialysis after actuarial modelling," Dr Aboagye said.

On payments for biometric ID cards and authentication systems, the committee noted that the NHIA planned to procure three million Ghana Cards for GH¢245.70 million at a unit cost of GH¢81.90, for all children aged between six and 14 years.

On whether procuring Ghana Cards for children was a mandate of the authority, the NHIA CEO explained that the authority had the mandate to provide NHIA Cards to the children, however, instead of procuring those cards, it wanted to enrol the children onto the Ghana Card.

## Cards for children

Dr Aboagye told the *Daily Graphic* that children in that age group currently did not have Ghana Cards, and as such printing them instead of the NHIS Cards would in the long run save costs on data integration with the NIA.

In addition, doing so extended the NHIS cards' validity from five to 10 years.

The CEO of NHIA said the authority would be able to produce the cards once funds were allocated.

Dr Aboagye said the committee acknowledged the potential cost-saving the initiative would yield and recommended that a periodic progress report be submitted to it before the mid-year budget review to adjust the allocation of the NHIA to continue with the initiative.

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