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For Budget 2023, Time to Invest More in Public Healthcare

The Malaysian Health Coalition (MHC) is concerned that Malaysia's average life expectancy at birth has dropped from 74.4 years (in 2012) to 73.4 years (in 2022), as reported by the [Department of Statistics](#). Malaysians now have a lower life expectancy than Brunei, Singapore and Thailand.

The reduced life expectancy reflects the impact of Covid-19 and the need for more ambitious public health funding because [citizens live longer](#) in countries that invest more in their health systems. Therefore, we strongly support the Health Minister's call to increase the budget for public healthcare from 2% of GDP to 5% of GDP, and we call for this to be reflected starting with Budget 2023. We expect an expansionary budget that significantly supports public healthcare and reverses the drop in our population health. Additional funds must be spent in transparent and non-corrupt ways.

We recommend the following:

1. Systematically Increase the Allocation for Public Healthcare

According to the World Health Organization, 5-6% of the country's GDP should be set aside to achieve [universal health coverage](#). Most upper-middle-income countries spend [3.2%](#) of their GDP on public healthcare while Malaysia invested only [2.6%](#). Meeting global standards may be ambitious given Malaysia's budgetary limits and [growing inflation](#), but it is crucial to provide effective care for Malaysians. We expect a [gradual increase](#) in public healthcare allocation in the coming years, with predictable allocations accompanied by robust governance strategies.

2. Increase the Resilience of Our Health System: NCDs + Financing + Digital Health

Investments must be made to increase the nation's health system resilience, particularly during times of crisis. We highlight three strategies. First, we must strengthen our control for NCDs. Therefore, we support the Minister's proposal to enact the Tobacco and Smoking Control Bill and the Generational End Game. Second, we must consider a mandatory social health insurance programme for both Malaysian citizens and foreign workers in which a minimum contribution is devoted to a health insurance card or to a healthcare fund. Third, we suggest additional investment to cater further digitalize healthcare to increase access. This must be accompanied by strong 5G and telecommunications infrastructure development.

3. Align the Budget to the Health White Paper

Budget 2023 must be linked with the Health White Paper (HWP). Although Budget 2023 will be tabled in Oct 2022, before the HWP that is only expected to be tabled in Nov-Dec 2022, we hope that the budget will seek preliminary inputs from the HWP Secretariat and Advisory Council to address key policy priorities. This will enable Budget 2023 to begin supporting the long term implementation of proposed reforms. The budget should have enough flexibility to accommodate the needs of HWP once it is passed in the Parliament.

We ask for an expansionary budget for health in 2023 along with better health system resilience, incorporation of the Health White Paper and strong governance and accountability. An adequate and responsive budget is essential to support our transformation into a more sustainable and effective health system.

BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA.

Malaysian Health Coalition (Full Signature List on myhealthcoalition.org)

5 OCTOBER 2022

Full signature list:

Organisations

1. Academy of Medicine Malaysia
2. Association of Malaysian Optometrists
3. College of Anaesthesiologists
4. College of Physicians Malaysia
5. College of Surgeons Academy of Medicine of Malaysia
6. Islamic Medical Association of Malaysia
7. Lung Cancer Network of Malaysia
8. Malaysian Association for Bronchology and Interventional Pulmonology
9. Malaysian Association of Clinical Biochemists
10. Malaysian Association of Dental Public Health Specialists
11. Malaysian Association of Environmental Health
12. Malaysian Association of Medical Assistants
13. Malaysian Coalition on Ageing
14. Malaysian Dental Association
15. Malaysian Paediatric Association
16. Malaysian Pharmacists Society
17. Malaysian Society of Anaesthesiologists
18. Malaysian Society of Clinical Psychology
19. Malaysian Society of Geriatric Medicine
20. Malaysian Society of Ophthalmology
21. Malaysian Thoracic Society
22. Medical Mythbusters Malaysia
23. Medical Practitioners Coalition Association of Malaysia
24. National Cancer Society of Malaysia
25. Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society of Malaysia
26. Perinatal Society of Malaysia

Individuals

1. Assoc Prof Dr Uma Devi Palanisamy
2. Dato' Dr Amar Singh-HSS
3. Dato' Dr Jahizah Hassan
4. Prof Datuk Dr Zulkifli Ismail
5. Prof Dr GR Letchuman Ramanathan
6. Prof Dr Mohd Zamrin Dimon
7. Prof Dr Roslina Abdul Manap
8. Prof Dr Zaleha Abdullah Mahdy

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