



**SUBMISSION TO THE MINISTRY OF  
INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE ON  
MANDATORY COVID-19 RAPID  
TESTING AS A CONDITION FOR  
BUSINESS TO REOPEN**

**05 MAY 2020**

## Mandatory employee testing for Covid-19 before reopening of businesses

---

After the extension of the National Lockdown by Government by a further two weeks, the Chamber recognises the importance testing in order to contain the spreading of the Covid-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, following the announcement of a Plan to Operationalize the Policy on a Mandatory Employee Testing for Covid19 before reopening of businesses which stated the Testing logistics where companies are set to procure approved Covid-19 rapid test kits for themselves, in line with specifications provided by the Ministry of Health and Child Care; the Chamber would like to make the following submissions;

- i. While it is important to conduct the testing and prevent the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, compulsory testing before going to work is an expense to Businesses given that the pandemic has already weighed on business operations and most businesses had not been operating over the past 35 days.

From the ZNCC Survey, which was conducted over the first 21 days national lockdown, to capture the impact of the pandemic from various private sector players - businesses indicated that they have lost a lot of revenue with the pandemic having had some negative impacts on most sectors of the economy. Of the 210 survey respondents; businesses indicated that they have lost a lot of revenue due to the pandemic

- *27% of the respondents have lost revenue above \$5m, 8% lost revenue of between \$3m-\$5m 17% lost revenue of between \$1m-\$3m, 48% lost revenue of below \$1m*

Given the loss in monetary terms above, most businesses are not in a position to carry the costs for the testing of employees

- ii. Cost of reopening Businesses – around US\$50 million will be required to re-open businesses in level 2 lockdown

- iii. SI99 of 2020 does not stipulate that businesses should carry the cost of covid-19 testing, hence according to law there is no mandate for businesses to carry the costs
- iv. The designated testing laboratories have no capacity to test all the companies within a week, hence the two week period in which the country should be on level 2 will be unproductive
- v. Businesses will not be able to resume operations anytime soon given the confusion emanating from the unexpected unilateral decision on testing
- vi. The Chamber recommends that;
  - There is need for temperature checking on employees by businesses which is more economical than covid-19 compulsory testing. Upon detecting high temperatures, businesses would then contact the Ministry of Health and Child Care for further diagnosis. Compulsory testing is a huge cost to businesses which are trying to recover from the impact of the pandemic
  - There is need to put more emphasis on the need for businesses to **disinfect** work environments ahead of testing. It is not economic to spend resources on testing when the environment is affected
  - Part of the \$18 billion Covid-19 Economic recovery and Stimulus Package should be channelled towards acquisition of the test kits. The cost of test kits should be pegged in local currency given that test kits are costing as much as US\$25 which is very high in an environment where business operations are constrained by the impact of covid-19
  - National Social Security Authority (NSSA) should contribute funding towards the testing of employees given that workers that have been allowed to go back to work, on level-2 lockdown, are formal sector employees who are contributors to NSSA

**END**