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COPE SLAMS PREMIER LETSOHA-MATHAE OVER CORRUPTION, DEMANDS BUDGET OVERSIGHT

The Congress of the People (COPE) has expressed its disappointment that Free State Premier Maqueen Letsoha-Mathae continues to hold office despite ongoing allegations of corruption stemming from a breach of the Executive Members' Ethics Act (82 of 1998), which she has yet to be cleared of by the authorities.

Premier Letsoha-Mathae's quiet return to the position of the province's top citizen after taking leave to clear her name raises serious concerns. COPE believes the ANC is more focused on enriching its members than on serving the public.

The State of the Province Address was held at Limo Mall, a privately owned venue, even though the government owns both City Hall and Raadsal, venues specifically meant for such events. COPE questions how much money has been spent redirecting funds to the same Premier, who continues to face corruption accusations. Under Letsoha-Mathae's administration, the ANC continue to be caught with their hands in the cookie jar, eroding public trust in state institutions and negatively impacting service delivery, added Nathane Makalo.

COPE has previously called for an investigation into the Premier's actions under Sections 3 and 4 of the Executive Members' Ethics Act, in line with the powers granted to the Public Protector by the Public Protector Act, 23 of 1994. However, we have yet to receive any feedback. "We did not expect her to be addressing the Free State's State of the Province Address," said Acting COPE Provincial Chairperson in Free State Nathane Makalo, "We will not stand idly by while ordinary citizens continue to suffer due to corruption, which directly impacts the delivery of essential services to the communities who vote politicians into power."

In light of the Premier's announcement today that a budget of R335.821 million has been allocated for Early Learning Programmes in the Free State for the 2025/2026 financial year, along with R993 million earmarked for special road maintenance, COPE is calling on both National Treasury and Provincial Treasury to implement citizen-based monitoring of projects and real-time auditing of the newly approved Free State budget. COPE vows to act as a watchdog to ensure that these funds are used to benefit the citizens of Free State. "COPE remains firm in its stance against corruption," concluded Nathane Makalo.

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