

10 June 2026

The Honourable Mr Velenkosini Hlabisa
Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
Private Bag X802
Pretoria
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Per email: ministry@cogta.gov.za

Dear Minister Hlabisa,

RE: THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT: MUNICIPAL STRUCTURES AMENDMENT BILL (“COALITIONS BILL”) AND THE NEED FOR A MEANINGFUL PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

1. My Vote Counts and the undersigned organizations write to you to express our concern regarding indications that government intends to expedite the passage of the Coalitions Bill before the Local Government Elections scheduled for November 2026.
2. As an organisation committed to transparency, accountability, democratic participation, and a fair and open political system, MVC recognises the challenges that coalition governments have presented in many municipalities over recent years. We understand the desire of government to introduce legislative reforms aimed at improving stability, predictability, and governance outcomes within coalition administrations. There may be disagreement on the merits of the proposals in the Coalitions Bill, but what should not be in dispute is the need for adequate time and space for South Africans to engage with them.
3. We are concerned that the current timeline creates a significant risk that legislation with profound consequences for South Africa's democratic system may be rushed through Parliament without adequate scrutiny or public participation.

Background

4. Your department first published the Coalitions Bill for public comments two years ago in 2024. MVC made a submission as part of the public participation process. Since then, government has had ample opportunity to refine and reintroduce the legislation and incorporate related private members' bills that had multiple overlaps with the Coalitions Bill. Yet, despite repeated indications that the matter was receiving attention, the Bill has still not been tabled in Parliament. At a presentation by the Department in November 2025, it was indicated that the anticipated timeline for introduction to Parliament was February or

March 2026. We are now several months beyond that date, with only five months remaining before the local government elections.

5. We are also mindful that, as recently as late 2025, several elements of the proposed reforms appeared to remain under consideration and subject to further legal opinion. This is entirely understandable given the complexity and constitutional significance of many of the proposals under discussion. However, it further underscores the importance of ensuring that Parliament, stakeholders and the public are afforded adequate opportunity to engage with the final version of the Bill once it is reintroduced.
6. Given these realities, we believe it is essential to ask how government intends to ensure that sufficient time remains for a meaningful legislative process.

The need for proper public consultation

7. It is our understanding that the version of the Bill that will be tabled in Parliament will differ from the original 2024 version. If this is the case, the legislation will require thorough consideration by Parliament and meaningful opportunities for public engagement. As legislation affecting local government structures and electoral representation, it is also likely to require consideration by both the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces. Following parliamentary approval, the President must also be afforded adequate time to consider the legislation before deciding whether to assent to it.
8. Furthermore, the legislative process does not end when a Bill is passed by Parliament. It is generally recognised that following Presidential assent, a reasonable implementation period is often required to allow government departments, municipalities, political parties, electoral institutions and the public to prepare for the new legal framework. This period enables the development of administrative systems, the drafting of any necessary regulations, the publication of guidelines, and the adjustment of institutional practices to ensure effective implementation. Compressing the period between enactment and the 2026 local government elections risks creating uncertainty for both electoral participants and the institutions responsible for administering the system.
9. The proposed reforms have potentially far-reaching implications for political representation and accountability in South Africa. We acknowledge that there has been public participation on the original version of the Bill. However, if the new version differs from the 2024 version, which seems to be unavoidable, a rushed process would be inappropriate.
10. Reforms affecting electoral representation and coalition governance should be approached with particular caution when introduced shortly before an election. Public confidence in both the process and the outcome depends on the perception that changes have been carefully considered, openly debated, and implemented in a manner that is fair to all participants in the political system.

Questions of Clarity

11. MVC therefore respectfully requests clarity from your office on the following matters:
1. What is the Department's current timeline for introducing the Coalition Bill to Parliament?
 2. Does the Department still intend for the legislation to be enacted before the November 2026 local government elections?
 3. If so, what steps are being taken to ensure adequate time for public participation and parliamentary scrutiny?
 4. Has the Department considered delaying implementation of any elements of the legislation that materially affect political representation until after the 2026 elections?
12. We believe that South Africa would be better served by a thorough and inclusive process than by a rushed legislative intervention, particularly where the proposed reforms may reshape political representation and accountability within local government for years to come.
13. Given the legislative stages still required, the need for meaningful public participation, the possibility of extensive parliamentary deliberation, the President's consideration of the legislation, and the practical implementation period ordinarily required before new laws take effect, it is increasingly difficult to see how legislation of this significance could be enacted responsibly before the November 2026 elections without placing undue pressure on the democratic process.
14. MVC remains committed to constructive engagement on these issues and would welcome the opportunity to engage further with you. Considering the urgency of this matter, we kindly request that you respond by **19 June**.

Yours sincerely,



Minhaj Jeenah

Executive Director, My Vote Counts

Endorsed by:

Black Sash

Equality Collective

Planact

Social Change Assistance Trust