**A Non-Governmental Organization, “EMPATHY’s”, Statement 26/06/2020:**

**On the new soviet - style initiative from the Ministry of Health**

**The briefing on this topic was held in the office of “EMPATHY”: S. Kandelaki Street 23, at 11 o’clock, June 26, the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.**

**Taking into account the situation due to COVID – 19, the briefing was held in an open space, following the rules of social distancing. The text from the briefing has been published on the website of centre, “EMPATHY”:** [**www.empathy.ge**](http://www.empathy.ge)

On June 24, 2020, In a joint meeting of the Healthcare and Social Issues Committee and the Sector Economy and Economic Policy Committee, the discussion of the Initiative submitted by the Government of Georgia, **„On Health Care Issues“ making amendments to the Georgian legislation“, „On Licenses and Permits” making amendments to the Georgian legislation“, „Administrative Offences Code of Georgia, making amendments“ and „On Control of Entrepreneurial Activity“ making amendments to the Georgia legislation“** (07-2/489/9; 16.06.2020) was summarily executed. <http://www.parliament.ge/ge/media/axali-ambebi/djanmrtelobis-dacvisa-da-socialur-sakitxta-da-dargobrivi-ekonomikisa-da-ekonomikuri-politikis-komitetebma-djanmrtelobis-dacvis-shesaxeb-saqartvelos-kanonshi-cvlilebis-shetanis-taobaze-kanonproeqze-kenchisyra-gadades.page>

* The initiator of the changes is The Ministry of Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia.
* Center “EMPATHY” condemns the package of initiated changes and considers that in terms of healthcare regulations, these changes imply a return to the Soviet approach.
* We summon the Parliament of Georgia not to adopt these legislative changes, as it violates the principles of democratic governance.
* The initiated changes limit the possibility to appeal to the administrative acts of the Regulatory Agency of the Ministry of Health. It gives the Agency the right to fine medical institutions without any litigation. It also means increasing penalties and changing licensing conditions.
* We believe that such changes pose significant risks to the use of political influence, corruption and the regulatory Agency of Ministry of Health for punitive purposes and represents a continuation of the Soviet system of government.
* At the same time, we would lie to emphasize that the issues of professional regulation in democratic governing countries are regulated by the professional associations, and the disputed issues are resolved through litigation between/among the parties. In this regard, no reforms have been implemented in Georgia since 2012. The multiplicity of regulations and changes have created the dangers of corrupt deals and/or politically motivated harassments.
* **It should be noted that in August 2019, three employees from the Regulatory Agency attacked the punitive mission of the center “EMPATHY,” with completely illegal demands to fine the organization. The court dispute was lost by the Regulatory Agency to the center “EMPATHY” in February 2020, however, despite their abuse of power, the Minister of Health did not take any action. Moreover, the said agency introduced completely unjustified Soviet-style changes that were not agreed upon by any professional association.**
* **To clarify, these changes have no relation in protecting the patient’s best interests. The Universal (community) Healthcare Program significantly violates the patient’s right to free choice.**