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MPs Speaking:	Mr Christopher de Souza, Mr Masagos Zulkifli B M M

HELP FOR STATELESS PERSONS WHO REQUIRE SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

48 **Mr Christopher de Souza** asked the Minister for Social and Family Development what avenues are available for stateless persons who require social and financial assistance for their families' healthcare and educational needs.

Mr Masagos Zulkifli B M M: The majority of stateless persons in Singapore are Permanent Residents (PRs), with the rest possessing special passes. For healthcare and education benefits, stateless persons who are PRs would be treated no differently from other PRs.

Government subsidies and financial assistance programmes at public healthcare institutions are generally targeted at Singapore Citizens (SCs) and PRs. However, we recognise that stateless persons who are not PRs may also require financial support in certain healthcare settings. For instance, lower-income stateless individuals staying in government-funded nursing homes or disability homes can receive subsidies for their care. Medisave can also be used for immediate family members who are not SCs or PRs, including stateless persons who are not PRs. This would allow SCs or PRs who are the spouses, parents or children of stateless persons to help lessen the out-of-pocket payment required for the medical bills of their stateless family member.

For education, admission to mainstream schools and publicly-funded tertiary institutions is subject to students meeting the admissions criteria and availability of places. Stateless students who are Singapore PRs will be charged PR fees, while other stateless students will be charged International Students fees in our schools and tertiary institutions. Government financial assistance schemes for education are for SC students only. However, schools and tertiary institutions have tapped on non-government resources, including donations, to offer some financial assistance to PRs and International Students, including stateless children.

ComCare financial assistance is targeted at Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents with family ties to Singaporeans. When a stateless person who is not a PR seeks financial assistance, the Social Service Office (SSO) will assess his or her needs, and can exercise flexibility to provide ComCare on a case-by-case basis, particularly if the stateless person is elderly, has been living and working in Singapore for a long time, and is now unable to work and has no family support. If the non-PR stateless person has healthcare needs, such as medical bills or arrears, or educational needs, such as school or examination fees, the SSO would refer them to community partners for assistance. The community plays a key role in helping vulnerable groups, including stateless persons and their families, to improve their well-being.