



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Health, Education, and Human Services Committee members testify in support of federal funding

WINDOW ROCK— This week members of the Navajo Nation Council’s Health, Education, and Human Services Committee provided testimony before federal officials in support of funding for health and human services needs on the Navajo Nation for Fiscal Year 2017.

On Wednesday, HEHSC members Amber Kanazbah Crotty, Norman M. Begay, Nathaniel Brown, and Tuchoney Slim, Jr. participated in Tribal Resource Day as part of the 17th Annual Tribal Budget Consultation hosted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in Washington D.C.

The session allowed the four delegates to gain an overview of the programs, grants, and services that the Department offers for tribes across the country.

“The session provided us with a solid foundation and better understanding of the vast variety of programs under the Department of Health and Human Services,” stated Delegate Crotty.

On Thursday, delegates testified before U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Mathews Burwell and other federal officials, in regards to budget priorities such as Indian Health Services, behavioral health services, and Medicaid and Medicare Services.

Delegate Brown advocated for funding from Indian Health Services, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration, and other federal agencies to increase staff training to enhance treatment of patients with co-occurring disorders.

In addition, Delegate Brown urged the federal officials to increase funding for the Methamphetamine and Suicide Prevention Initiative, a program that uses Navajo cultural teachings as a method of substance abuse prevention among Navajo people.

“This is a critical initiative, congressionally funded in response to public health needs,” Delegate Brown said. “It is important to maintain or increase the level of funding.”

Delegate Begay provided testimony in support of funding for technical assistance to conduct due diligence for the possible establishment of a Navajo Nation Medicaid Agency.

“Funding and technical assistance are the next steps to establish this tribal agency,” Delegate Begay stated.

Among other issues, HEHSC members also continued to urge the federal department to assist in funding construction costs for health facilities in the communities of Dilkon, Pueblo Pintada, Bodaway-Gap, Kayenta, and for a new Gallup Indian Medical Center facility.

“My colleagues and I realize the importance of our oversight committee in terms of affecting the livelihood of our people,” added Delegate Crotty. “As elected leaders, we are pulled in many directions but our duty is to our people and this is where we can make the biggest impact.”

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services will also host regional tribal consultation sessions in the coming months, which includes the Navajo Nation in April. Details will be announced at a later date.

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