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Health, Education, and Human Services Committee urges congressional leaders to reopen all services at the Crownpoint Health Care Facility

WINDOW ROCK – The Health, Education, and Human Services Committee approved Legislation No. 0245-15, urging U.S. Congressional leaders to address the closure of essential services at the Crownpoint Health Care Facility, such as the emergency room, in-patient services, and obstetrics care unit.

According to the legislation, services ceased due to the lack of medical personnel at the CHCF. The health center serves approximately 20,000 Navajo people and treats around 5,500 patients in its emergency room alone.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau) said that the closure of the CHCF is a breach of the U.S.'s trust responsibility to the Navajo Nation in regards to providing adequate health services.

“This legislation is a step to wake up the congressional people. We can’t sit back on this because the people rely on the CHCF. As leadership, we are the ones looked at to fix this situation, and the [Navajo Treaty of 1868] that was written is being broke now,” said Delegate Yazzie.

Delegate Yazzie added that the medical personnel are leaving due to issues with the hospital administration and that a solution was needed to address the high turnover rate of highly specialized medical staff, such as doctors and surgeons.

Navajo Area Indian Health Services director John Hubbard informed HEHSC members that the ER was reopened and resumed its normal 24/7 operations on July 22, while the Urgent Care Clinic resumed on June 25.

Hubbard’s statements are also supported by a public service announcement issued by Navajo Area IHS on July 29, stating that NAIHS is working to resume Labor and Delivery/Obstetrical services and In-Patient Care services when additional staff becomes available.

“When the closure happened, the congressional representatives were notified. Since then I have reported to the Naabik’iyátí’ Committee twice, and went fairly in-depth into discussion on the issue. [CHCF] is open right now,” said Hubbard.

Hubbard added that due to the lack of staff and limited resources, Labor and Delivery/Obstetrical services and In-Patient Care services will continue to be diverted to other health care facilities, such as Farmington and Gallup, until staffing for those departments have been filled.

Delegate Yazzie said although the CHCF has reopened, he would continue to push the legislation to assert the Nation's position and to remind U.S. Congressional leaders of their trust responsibility and assist in developing solutions to the IHS issues on the Navajo Nation.

"The plea of the surrounding communities and local elected officials aided in the reopening the ER and Urgent Care services, but we still need to alert the federal government of the staffing issues in our hospitals, as well as prevent any other potential closures," said Delegate Yazzie, following the meeting.

HEHSC members voted 3-0 to approve Legislation No. 0245-15, which now moves on to the Naabik'iyáti' Committee who serves as the final authority on the bill.

NAIHS directs the public to contact Crownpoint Hospital at (505) 786-5291 with any questions.

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