



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Health, Education, and Human Services Committee approves expenditure plan for proposed nursing home in Chinle

DILKON, Ariz. – On Monday, the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee considered Legislation No. 0324-16, which would approve an \$8 million Síhasin Fund Chinle Nursing Home Community Development and Housing Expenditure Plan, and to hold the Navajoland Nursing Home Inc. Board of Directors accountable for the expenditure of the funds.

According to the legislation, in Dec. 2015 the Navajo Housing Authority awarded the Chinle Nursing Home approximately \$21.5 million to plan, design, and construct a new elderly care center, which funds nearly 75-percent of the entire project planning and construction. The proposed allocation of \$8 million from the Síhasin Fund would fund the remaining 25-percent to complete the care center project.

HEHSC chair and legislation sponsor Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels) said the current facility, which was constructed in 1968 and holds 79 beds, currently does not meet the Center for Medicare/Medicaid Services federal requirements and is fined annually for the lack of compliance.

“There is certainly a need for this on-reservation elderly care facility because it will have the capacity to serve many more of our Navajo people and provide them with the top-tier type of care they deserve. Right now with the compliance issues, it causes our Navajo elderly to be admitted to off-reservation care facilities and causes hardships on the elders and their families,” said Delegate Hale.

Delegate Hale added that if the expenditure plan is approved and the project can begin, the Navajoland Nursing Home Inc. Board of Directors would have to provide the status of the plan, design, and construction phases of the proposed nursing home facility to the Navajo Nation Council’s Naabik’íyáti’ Committee and the Office of the President and Vice President on a quarterly basis.

HEHSC member Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi’i’áhi/To’Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé atnáoz’t’l’í) said she is in support of the legislation, however, she said there could be an issue with the size of the elderly care center.

“The way you care for your clients diminishes when you have so many people in your facility. When we talk about how we want to plan out elderly homes, what is it we are looking for? Do we want to mimic what [off-reservation entities] do or do we want to use our [own traditional Navajo] way of how we care for our elders? Those should have been the core questions—how to care for our aging mothers and fathers,” said Delegate Crotty.

Delegate Crotty added that there needs to be a firm regulatory plan and efficient monitoring implemented to ensure that elderly Navajo are provided the best services possible and to hold nursing home staff and administrators accountable to the well-being of elders.

HEHSC member Council Delegate Nathaniel Brown (Chilchinbeto, Dennehotso, Kayenta) emphasized the importance to care for Navajo elderly in a respectful manner and to avoid common issues in nursing homes such as elderly injuries and abuse.

“Are we going to have the adequate manpower to take care of our elders? Are we going to make sure they are not going to be neglected or abused? At most institutions, the humane part of care is sometimes absent and results in mental and physical injuries. I support the proposed nursing home, but I would like to remind the board that these concerns be put at the forefront when they begin to implement the plan of operation,” said Delegate Brown.

HEHSC members voted 5-0 to approve Legislation No. 0324-16, which moves forward to the Resources and Development Committee. The Navajo Nation Council serves as the final authority on the bill.

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