



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Health, Education, and Human Services Committee receives update report from Navajo Tribal Utility Authority's wireless service program

WINDOW ROCK – The Health, Education, and Human Services Committee received a report on Monday from the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority's Choice Wireless cellular phone program regarding services throughout the Navajo Nation.

According to the report provided by Choice NTUA Wireless representative Velena Tsosie, the inception of the program began in 2008 and actual cellular service was implemented in 2014, which includes 3G and 4G LTE voice and data options. Individuals that utilize Choice NTUA Wireless receive up to 1 GB of data, unlimited voice, text, and long distance calling, and any unused data can be carried over to the next month.

NTUA is a subsidized enterprise of the Navajo Nation, and the Resources and Development Committee serves as oversight for the program.

HEHSC member Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi'i'áhi/To'Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé ahnáož't'í'í) raised concerns regarding the program's participation in emergency communication.

"It has come to our attention that NTUA has preliminary decided to charge a fee during any Amber Alert notification. That's disappointing if that's the case, because Frontier Communications and Cellular One are both willing to provide that service free of charge to its customers," said Delegate Crotty. "It is a government function as well as a critical communication function."

Delegate Crotty requested that Tsosie provide information regarding the Amber Alert system notification fee, if there is any, and to send the updated report to the committee at a later date.

In addition to the Amber Alert system concerns, HEHSC vice chair Council Delegate Norman Begay (Alamo, Ramah, Tóhajiilee) asked if NTUA's wireless towers work in conjunction with radio frequency systems for police officers in remote areas.

"How is NTUA working with the police? In my satellite areas, some police have to go to special locations in order to get reception to make calls or receive calls. Is there a plan in place to improve the reception for them?" asked Delegate Begay.

Tsosie said that with each cellular tower that goes up, a radio frequency device is attached and provided for the police officers to increase efficient radio communication, and that additional towers will be erected in the area of Alamo soon.

She added that Choice NTUA Wireless also partners with community health representatives by providing them Internet service to allow for home visits to patients, and said they hope to expand the service by increasing partnerships with other health providers.

HEHSC member Council Delegate Nelson S. BeGaye (Lukachukai, Rock Point, Round Rock, Tsaile/Wheatfields, Tsé Ch' izhí) recommended that Choice NTUA Wireless increase community outreach to smaller and more rural Navajo communities who are in need of cellular services.

“I commend NTUA wireless for creating competition with other cellular carriers, but I believe there can be improvement in regards to reaching out to all Navajo communities and let them know of these services available to them. Let’s promote this Navajo Nation business to all our citizens,” said Delegate BeGaye.

HEHSC members voted 4-0 to accept the report.

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