



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Health, Education, and Human Services Committee calls for senior center repairs and construction**



**The Health, Education, and Human Services Committee calls for immediate progress on senior center repairs and construction efforts.**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** — On Tuesday, the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee (HEHSC) met with the Division of Community Development (DCD) and the Navajo Department of Health (NDOH) to review the implementation of CO-43-24, the Council's major investment in senior center repairs, renovations, and new construction across the Navajo Nation.

Committee members raised significant concerns regarding inconsistencies between the agencies' presentation and the directives outlined in CO-43-24.

"The legislation laid out exactly what needed to happen, and now it's time to execute. Our elders deserve completed repairs, functioning facilities, and real progress, not new processes that slow everything down. This committee will ensure the legislation is followed and that every dollar goes exactly where it was intended," said HEHSC Chair Vince R. James.

DCD Acting Division Director Candice Yazzie, Department Manager Michelle Peterson, and Senior Project Manager Virgil Loretto provided an overview of internal planning efforts, conceptual construction timelines, and standardized design options for proposed 3,000- and 6,000-square-foot facilities. Their update referenced a five-phase construction approach and ongoing coordination with NDOH and its contracted assessment team.

NDOH Director Sherylene Yazzie also reported on expenditures for minor repairs, installation of security systems at senior centers, and upcoming assessments related to roof leaks, equipment failures, and other high-priority deficiencies.

Committee members underscored that the report did not reflect the legislation's requirements, noting that CO-43-24 already includes chapter-submitted assessments, scopes of work, and funding levels within the approved exhibits. They emphasized that numerous chapters had completed substantial planning and site-preparation work prior to the legislation, and that new layers of internal review risk delaying urgently needed improvements for elders.

HEHSC Chair Vince R. James raised specific concerns regarding the creation of separate planning tracks and the hiring of additional consultants. He reiterated that the committee expected updates on direct implementation—such as contracts issued, equipment ordered, and repairs underway—rather than new planning frameworks. He further noted that several senior centers require immediate action, including HVAC replacements, roof repairs, electrical upgrades, and improvements to parking lots.

“Chapters have already submitted their designs, scopes, and funding needs. CO-43-24 directs the execution of those items—not the creation of new planning documents,” said James.

Committee members also highlighted the need to prevent expenditures outside the scope of the legislation. Delegates raised questions about procurement processes, the use of contingency funds for additional assessments, and the importance of monitoring project budgets to prevent cost overruns. Several delegates expressed concern that elders in high-need areas are still waiting for basic repairs nearly a year after the legislation's passage.

Vice Chair Germaine Simonson emphasized that communities were told their existing plans and assessments would be used to move projects forward without delay. Council Delegate Dr. Andy Nez added that certified chapters must not be slowed by centralized procedures when they already have the documentation, contractor relationships, and procurement capability to begin work.

Committee members further noted growing frustration from senior center staff, chapter officials, and elders who continue to contact their representatives about stalled improvements. The committee called for stronger communication from both agencies, including timely notices on contractor mobilization, assessment schedules, and procurement status.

Director Sherylene Yazzie reported that NDOH has established 90 project folders for senior centers and is coordinating HVAC, equipment, and repair orders as business units become available. She committed to providing more detailed written updates and quarterly reports as required under CO-43-24. DCD Director Candice Yazzie acknowledged the need for clearer, project-specific reporting and committed to submitting a revised update aligned with legislative expectations.

The committee concluded by directing DCD and NDOH to review CO-43-24 in full, ensure all expenditures comply with the resolution's exhibits, and prepare a supplemental report detailing each senior center's status, contracts in progress, funding utilization, and next steps.

The Health, Education, and Human Services Committee accepted the report with a vote of three in favor and one opposed.