



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Health, Education, and Human Services Committee receives report to oppose amendments to AZ Senate Bill 1092

WINDOW ROCK – On Monday, the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee received a report from members of the Fort Defiance Indian Hospital Board, Inc. regarding a request for the Navajo Nation to oppose the inclusion of American Indians/Alaska Natives within the proposed Arizona Section 1115 Waiver amendment to Arizona Senate Bill 1092. The Arizona state legislature is currently in session.

According to the Arizona Section 1115 Waiver amendment, it would require “able-bodied adults” receiving Medicaid services through the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System to adhere to the following:

- Become fully employed, actively seek employment, or attend school or a job training program
- Must verify compliance with the work/school/training requirement on a monthly basis
- AHCCCS would have the authority to ban an eligible person from enrollment for one year if the person knowingly fails to report a change in family income or has made a false statement
- AHCCCS would have the authority to limit lifetime coverage for all able-bodied adults to five years, except for certain circumstances.

HEHSC chair Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels) said that the Navajo Nation Department of Health met with him recently and discussed the implications of the proposed waiver amendment.

“Having this issue is not fair to the indigenous peoples of Arizona. The state can do what it must, but they should not include our native population in their proposed waiver amendment language because we have a treaty with the United States, and that encompasses the state of Arizona,” said Delegate Hale, stating that it was the trust responsibility of the federal government to the Navajo Nation.

Delegate Hale introduced Legislation No. 0082-17, regarding the opposition of the proposed amendments to the Arizona Section 1115 waiver to S.B. 1092, which will be considered by the Naabik'iyáti' Committee.

The Fort Defiance Indian Hospital Board, Inc. passed a resolution opposing the proposed waiver amendments, and members stated that they have been reaching out to local chapters to obtain support for the opposition of waiver language and have done some community outreach to educate the public on the potential affects of the amendments.

HEHSC member Council Delegate Nelson S. BeGaye (Lukachukai, Rock Point, Round Rock, Tsaille/Wheatfields, Tsé Ch'izhí) said although he supports the opposition of the proposed amendments, he hopes that Navajo citizens will begin the path to self-reliance for the betterment of their families.

“We even have women who are out working while their husbands are unemployed at home – from that standpoint, I support this initiative,” said Delegate BeGaye. “I encourage our Navajo people to do the best they can to help themselves and increase their self-reliance and independence.”

Delegate BeGaye added that the proposed legislation to oppose the waiver amendments should also be considered by the Navajo Nation Council, and garner the support of the Office of the President and Vice President to continue advocating on behalf of the Navajo Nation.

On Tuesday, Delegate Hale sent a letter to the AHCCCS Office of Intergovernmental Relations on behalf of the HEHSC to oppose the inclusion of American Indian/Alaska Natives within the proposed Arizona Section 1115 Waiver amendments to Arizona Senate Bill 1092.

“As Navajo leaders, we must continue to advocate as much as possible to get the best outcome for our Navajo people. The future of the Navajo economy is uncertain and unemployment rates on the Navajo Nation are significantly higher than anywhere else in Arizona, so we understand that the proposed amendments to the Section 1115 Waiver is unrealistic in serving the needs of Diné citizens,” said Delegate Hale.

HEHSC members voted 4-0 to accept the report.

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