



The Navajo Nation **DR. BUU NYGREN** *PRESIDENT*

Yideeskáadi Nitsáhákees | *Think for the Future*

March 18, 2025

The Honorable Teresa Leger Fernandez
1510 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Telehealth Access for Tribal Communities Act of 2025

Dear Congresswoman Leger Fernandez:

I am writing to express my strong support for the Telehealth Access for Tribal Communities Act of 2025. This critical piece of legislation aims to ensure that Medicare beneficiaries who receive care under an Indian health program or from an urban Indian organization can continue to access audio-only telehealth services after 2024. Accessing audio-only telehealth is a vital tool to address the healthcare disparities faced by tribal communities.

The Navajo Nation is one of the largest tribes in the United States with over 400,000 members, half of whom are spread out across the Navajo Reservation, which encompasses over 17.5 million acres spanning across Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. Thousands of our people live in remote locations and access modern medical services by first travelling across miles of dirt road that can become impassable during the winter and the wet spring. During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE), Medicare's temporary reimbursement policies for audio-only telehealth services provided by the Indian Health Service (IHS) demonstrated the importance of audio-only telehealth services on the Navajo Nation. The ability for patients to receive care from their homes, without needing high-speed internet, proved indispensable. With the end of the PHE on May 11, 2023, and the subsequent extension of telehealth flexibilities under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, it is imperative that Congress acts now to make audio-only telehealth provisions permanent.

The Telehealth Access for Tribal Communities Act ensures that services such as behavioral health counseling and group psychotherapy, which are vital to many Medicare beneficiaries, remain accessible. By removing the originating site requirements, this legislation will allow patients to receive care from the comfort of their homes, reducing the need for travel to healthcare facilities and thereby improving health outcomes.

Ensuring continuity of audio-only telehealth services will have a profound impact on the health and well-being of not just Navajo, but all tribal Medicare beneficiaries, providing them with the reliable and accessible care they deserve. Please contact Mr. Justin Ahasteen, Executive Director of the Navajo Nation Washington Office at (202) 682-7390 or by email at jahasteen@nnwo.org with questions or any other follow up. *Ahéhee'* (thank you).

Sincerely,



Dr. Buu Nygren, *President*
THE NAVAJO NATION