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# At Event in ABQ, Udall Calls for Immediate Funding for Critical Health Programs

Federal funding for Community Health Centers and the Special Diabetes Program for Indians at risk in divided Congress

At roundtable in ABQ, Tribal and community health providers tell Udall that without long-term funding ASAP, they will be forced to cut staff, hours, and vital services

**ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.** – Today, U.S. Senator Tom Udall heard from Tribal and community health care providers and experts that they are deeply concerned about the future of federal funding for health programs that are critically important in New Mexico, including the Community Health Centers Program and the Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI). The two programs provide care for thousands of New Mexicans regardless of their ability to pay, but their future is uncertain thanks to the deadlock in Congress over the budget.

The health experts' comments came during a roundtable that Udall organized in Albuquerque to hear about how uncertain funding for the programs is impacting New Mexicans. Technically, funding for both programs expired at

the end of September, though Congress has given each program temporary funding that will run out next month. But if a long-term agreement isn't put in place very soon, SDPI-funded activities could cease. And health clinics across the state could be forced to cut their budgets by a drastic – and potentially deadly – 70 percent.

Udall, who serves as vice chairman of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, said the information he learned at the roundtable will help him in Washington as he continues his fight for full funding for both health programs.

"The Community Health Centers Program and the Special Diabetes Program for Indians are critical to providing that care to thousands of New Mexicans. Community health centers are the backbone of health care in New Mexico, providing care to many of our most vulnerable. And the Special Diabetes Program for Indians is making real progress to combat diabetes so it never again becomes a death sentence in Indian Country," Udall said.

"Unfortunately, while congressional Republicans and President Trump were prioritizing tax cuts for millionaires and corporations, they neglected to pay the bills for these health care programs that working families depend on. I'm not going to stand by and let hundreds of thousands of New Mexicans lose their vital health care services. We must work together and put people's health and well-being first. I am very grateful to today's speakers, who gave me important information that will help me continue my effort to convince Congress that we must fund these programs urgently."

Over 325,000 New Mexicans in 90 underserved and rural communities rely on the care they receive from the state's 17 community health centers, which operate at 195 branches and locations and employ almost 3,000 people

across the state. Separately, SDPI provides grants for diabetes prevention and management programs for Pueblos and Tribes throughout Indian Country, including 29 programs in New Mexico. Through SDPI, Pueblos and Tribes have had tremendous success fighting diabetes – a public health crisis that disproportionately affects Native Americans.

Eileen Goode, CEO of the New Mexico Primary Care Association commented on the importance of Community Health Centers in New Mexico:

"Over 325,000 patients, one in six New Mexicans, receive access to high quality, cost effective, health care services at over 180 Community Health Center clinics. Eighty percent of the sites are located in rural or frontier areas. Sixty percent of New Mexicans living below the federal poverty level rely on them for comprehensive medical, dental, and behavioral health care," Goode said. "In the absence of a federal funding reauthorization, over 50,000 New Mexicans will lose access to care; including over 15,000 patients suffering from diabetes, hypertension, or asthma, and over 10,000 patients with depression or other serious mental illnesses. The loss of access to primary care will be disastrous for these patients, their families, and the health care system in New Mexico."

Linda Son-Stone, CEO of First Nations Community Health Source commented about SDPI funding:

"Continued funding for Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI) is extremely necessary. Native Americans have the highest rates of Type 2 diabetes and the highest death rates from diabetes in New Mexico and in the country. At our clinic, we have close to 500 Native American patients with a known diagnosis of diabetes. We depend on SDPI funding to decrease the onset of diabetes and its costly complications among the urban Indians in

Albuquerque," Son-Stone said. "With SDPI funds, we use treatment and prevention practices that have been proven effective in reducing diabetes rates. The loss of these funds will have a devastating impact that will include the unnecessary loss of human lives to diabetes. We urge Congress to reauthorize SDPI funding immediately."