



# NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

December 11, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Majority Leader  
S-230 The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Senate Minority Leader  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

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RE: Reauthorization of the Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI)

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer,

On behalf of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), the oldest, largest, and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization serving the broad interests of Tribal governments and communities, we are writing to encourage the Senate to promptly consider bipartisan legislation to reauthorize the Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI).

SDPI was established by Congress in 1997 to address the diabetes epidemic in Indian Country. American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs) are twice as likely as whites to have diabetes and the death rate due to diabetes for AI/ANs is 1.6 times higher than the general U.S. population. Further, AI/ANs were nearly 5 times more likely than whites to have kidney failure from diabetes in 1996.

Today, SDPI provides grants for diabetes treatment and prevention services to over 300 Indian Health Service, Tribal, and Urban Indian health programs in 35 states. Since its inception, the success of SDPI has been undeniable. Kidney failure from diabetes dropped by 54%, diabetic eye disease rates decreased 50%, obesity and diabetes rates in youth have not risen in more than 10 years, and diabetes rates in adults have not increased since 2011.

Despite the overwhelming success of SDPI, it is set to expire on December 31, 2017 unless Congress acts. NCAI passed several resolutions in support of SDPI reauthorization over the last decade. Most recently, NCAI approved Resolution [#MOH-17-038](#), Support for Reauthorization of SDPI, which calls for Congress to permanently reauthorize SDPI at \$200 million annually with medical inflation increases, or alternatively, reauthorize SDPI through Fiscal Year 2024 at the current level (\$150 annually) with medical inflation rate increases.

NCAI strongly encourages the Senate to pass bipartisan legislation that reauthorizes the Special Diabetes Program for Indians before it expires on December 31, 2017. Doing so will protect and build upon the great strides that have been made in reducing diabetes and diabetes-related complications for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Respectfully,

Jacqueline Pata  
Executive Director