



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 10, 2016

MEDIA CONTACTS

Jared Touchin (928) 221-9253
Jolene Holgate (928) 380-4174
Crystalyne Curley (928) 286-7918
nnlb.communications@gmail.com

Health, Education, and Human Services Committee discusses proposed subcommittee to tackle sexual assault issues on the Navajo Nation

WINDOW ROCK – On Monday, the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee added a report to the committee’s proposed agenda to discuss Legislation No. 0127-16, that seeks to establish the Naabik’íyáti’ Committee’s Navajo Sexual Assault Subcommittee, which would be tasked with addressing sexual assault offenses committed on the Navajo Nation.

The proposed legislation is sponsored by HEHSC chair Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels), who said the goal of the subcommittee would be to strengthen the response to sexual assault victims, explore data sharing and cross-deputation with outside agencies, develop a coordinated community response to sexual assault, strengthen sexual assault laws, and to address any other issues relating to sexual assault crimes on the Navajo Nation.

HEHSC member Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi’i’áhi/To’Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé ałnáoz’t’l’í), who requested for the report, said due to recent events related to the kidnapping and murder of 11 year-old Ashlynne Mike, the subcommittee should be a top priority so the group can begin looking into amending Navajo criminal codes to ensure swift apprehension and prosecution of sexual predators and offenders.

“I appreciate this proposed legislation. It’s the initial step that we need to address the issue. I hope that [Delegate Hale] can help guide this subcommittee to make sure that politics are cast aside. We need that from our leadership, we need that from our warriors,” said Delegate Crotty.

Delegate Crotty stressed the importance of addressing the public “outcry” to develop solutions to protect children and all victims of sexual assault crimes.

The legislation states that American Indians are twice as likely to be victims of sexual assault in comparison any other race, according to the federal Bureau of Justice Statistics. The BJS also indicates that in 2013, 565 violent crimes were known to Navajo Nation law enforcement that included 320 sexual assaults and 210 aggravated assaults.

HEHSC member Council Delegate Herman Daniels, Jr. (Shonto, Naa’tsis’áán, Oljato, Ts’áh Bii Kin) voiced his disappointment regarding the lack of an Amber Alert system on the Navajo Nation, regarding the case of Ashlynne Mike, he stated that “the Navajo Nation failed her.”

“My condolences go out to the Mike Family, they have been in my prayers. As a Nation, we need to all work together to ensure the passage and implementation of this subcommittee, which will need to look into improving the Amber Alert system so we can prevent further tragedies. We need long-term solutions,” said Delegate Daniels.

He added that the proposed legislation would need collaboration between the HEHSC, Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President, Navajo Nation Department of Health, and the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety.

According to the legislation, the proposed Navajo Sexual Assault Subcommittee would be comprised of three members from the HEHSC and three members from the Law and Order Committee, who would report monthly to transfer information and recommendations to the Speaker of the Council. The Office of the Speaker would then aid in addressing proposed actions from the subcommittee.

HEHSC members voted 5-0 to accept the report regarding Legislation No. 0127-16. The legislation will be on the proposed agenda for the upcoming Naabik’íyáti’ Committee meeting scheduled for May 12 at 10:00 a.m. at the Council Chamber in Window Rock, Ariz.

The Naabik’íyáti’ Committee serves as the final authority for the proposed bill.

#

For news on the latest legislative branch activities, please visit www.navajonationcouncil.org or find us on Facebook and Twitter, keywords: Navajo Nation Council