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NATIONAL INDIAN HEALTH BOARD

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June 27, 2006

Ms. Betty Gould, Regulations Officer
Division of Regulatory Affairs
Records Access and Policy Liaison
Indian Health Service
801 Thompson Ave., Suite 450
Rockville, MD 20852

Re: Comments on Section 506 of the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003--Limitation on Charges for Services Furnished by Medicare Participating Inpatient Hospitals to Indians

Dear Ms. Gould:

The National Indian Health Board (NIHB), the only organization representing all federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) tribes, welcomes the opportunity to comment on "Section 506 of the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003--Limitation on Charges for Services Furnished by Medicare Participating Inpatient Hospitals to Indians" as published in the Federal Register/Vol.71 No. 82/ Friday, April 28, 2006.

The NIHB supports the proposed rule as written and hopes that the Indian Health Service (IHS) can publish a final regulation as soon as possible. There have been extensive reviews during its lengthy development by the Tribal Operated Health Programs, Area Health Boards, IHS, and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). It is imperative that this rule be finalized so that Indian Health Service/Tribally Operated Health Programs/Urban Programs (I/T/Us) can maximize their bargaining power to purchase contract health care at Medicare-like rates, instead of having to pay full billed charges. The money saved will enable I/T/Us to provide more services to Indian people.

Once again, the NIHB appreciates this opportunity to comment and we do strongly support the proposed rule as published. The NIHB looks forward to working with the IHS and CMS in implementing the final rule in Indian Country. If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Stacy Bohlen, Executive Director, NIHB, at 202-742-4262.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "H. Sally Smith".

H. Sally Smith, Chairman
National Indian Health Board

Cc: The Board
Stacy Bohlen
TTAG