

Fond du Lac Reservation Business Committee

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23 June 2006



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Betty Gould, Regulations Officer
Division of Regulatory Affairs, Records
Access and Policy Liaison
Indian Health Service
801 Thompson Avenue
Suite 450
Rockville, Maryland 20852

Dear Ms. Gould:

The Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa appreciates 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.

For years tribes in our region have paid the full price for health care for their patients as insurance companies and various health plans have negotiated generous discounts for their members. As the payor and provider networks have become more sophisticated, we believe that costs for all health care have shifted to those individuals and groups unable to negotiate discounts. Smaller, more remote tribes simply do not have the economic muscle to demand discounts.

Section 506, the Medicare Like Rates provision, is a long-overdue and welcomed regulation that will bring relief to Indian Health Service and tribal health programs that have been purchasing health care for American Indians using appropriated federal dollars. We are certain that it will stretch those federal dollars to buy more health care for more Indian people.

Federal responsibility for the health care of American Indians has a deep and abiding history. We believe that it is fitting and reasonable for the government to finally require health care payment rates for American Indians that are similar to those it requires for other groups dependent on federal health care assistance.

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6/28/06

We were greatly encouraged when this provision was included in the MMA of 2003 and have been anxiously awaiting its publication in the Federal Register. While we have been disappointed that this regulation has languished for over two years in the bureaucratic ozone, we are pleased to see its publication and urge you to implement this much needed regulation without further delay.

Thank you for your attention to these remarks. You may contact Mr. Phil Norrgard, Director of Human Services, should you require any clarification.

Sincerely,


Peter J. Defoe
Chairman

CC: Dr. Charles Grim
Dr. Kathleen Annette
Mr. Phil Norrgard