

Senate Committee Passes Bipartisan Bill to Reauthorize the Special Diabetes Program for Indians, Marking First Increase in Nearly Two Decades

Category: Policy Blog

written by Jeremy Grabiner | June 20, 2023

On June 15, 2023, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee passed the bipartisan *Special Diabetes Program Reauthorization of 2023* ([S.1855](#)), introduced by Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME) and Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH). The bill would reauthorize the Special Diabetes Program for Type 1 Diabetes and the Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI) at \$170 million for fiscal years (FY) 24-25 for each program. This is the first time the program has seen an increase in funding, as the program has been funded at \$150 million annually since 2004, **and is set to expire in September 2023**. The bill passed out of the committee with a 20-1 vote.

On May 17, 2023, the House Subcommittee on Health passed the bipartisan *Special Diabetes Program for Indians Reauthorization Act* ([H.R. 2547](#)), introduced by Representative Tom Cole (R-OK-04) and Representative Raul Ruiz (D-CA-25). Similar to S. 1855, the bill would reauthorize the program for fiscal years 2024 and 2025 at \$170 million per year. The bill will now be moved to the full Energy and Commerce Committee.

SDPI's integrated approach to diabetes healthcare and prevention programs in Indian Country has become a resounding success and is one of the most successful public health programs ever implemented. Currently, 31 urban Indian organizations (UIOs) receive SDPI funding that enables UIOs to provide critical services that reduce the incidence of diabetes-related illness among urban Indian communities. The program is currently set to end in September 2023, and it remains critical that Congress reauthorizes SDPI to ensure there is no lapse in funding.

Bipartisan Letters from the Diabetes Caucus

In March 2023, The House Diabetes Caucus Leaders Rep. Diana DeGette (D-CO-1) and Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL-12) sent a [letter](#) to Speaker McCarthy and Minority Leader Jeffries, and Senate Diabetes Caucus Leaders Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME) and Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) sent a [letter](#) to Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell regarding the reauthorization of the Special Diabetes Program (SDP) comprised of Special Statutory Funding Program for Type 1 Diabetes Research and SDPI. The House Diabetes Caucuses letter closed with 238 signatures and the Senate Diabetes Caucus letter closed with 60 signatures.

The letter outlines that the programs fund research that led to new therapies improving the lives of those with diabetes and notes that "SDPI has been one of the most successful programs ever created to reduce the incidence and complications due to Type 2 diabetes. Communities with SDPI-funded programs have seen substantial growth in diabetes prevention resources, and, for the first time, from 2013 to 2017, diabetes incidence in the AI/AN population decreased each year." This funding invests in necessary research to develop a cure for diabetes as well as support programs, like SDPI, that help prevent and treat the disease and its complications.

The letter notes developments from the SDP and SDPI include:

- Type 1 (T1D) Prevention Research
- Artificial Pancreas (AP) System Research Led to the First Fully Automated Insulin-Dosing System Available to Patients
- Kidney Disease Research on Reduction in End-Stage Renal Disease
- Eye Therapy Research on Diabetic Eye Disease
- Glucose Control Research for the American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) Population that Reduced the Risk of Eye, Kidney, and Nerve Complications
- Diabetes Prevention in the AI/AN Community that Leads to a Reduction in the Incidence and Complications due to Type 2 Diabetes

Background on SDPI and American Indians/Alaska Natives

SDPI includes research-based interventions for diabetes prevention and cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk reduction AI/AN community-based programs and healthcare settings. AI/ANs have [the highest diabetes prevalence rates of all racial and ethnic groups in the United States, with AI/AN adults almost three times more likely than non-Hispanic white adults to be diagnosed with diabetes](#). The program has demonstrated success with a [50% reduction in diabetic eye disease rates, drops in diabetic kidney failure, and a 50% decline in End Stage Renal Disease](#). SDPI is therefore a critical program to address the disparate high rates of diabetes among AI/ANs.

The 31 UIOs currently receiving SDPI funding have used these funds to [purchase blood sugar monitoring devices, medication, wound care, endocrinology, and retinal imaging services](#). Other projects include: [a robust preventative education and support system and a Garden Project to teach classes about creating and maintaining a healthy diet](#).

NCUIH Action

The National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) has long supported SDPI and after conducting focus groups for the 2022 Policy Assessment, UIOs have requested an increase in SDPI funding from current FY23 levels of \$150,000,000 to \$250,000,000. NCUIH will continue to advocate for the UIOs' requested amount of \$250,000,000.

Resources

- [H.R. 2547 - Full Bill Text](#)
- [S.1855 - Full Bill Text](#)
- [House Diabetes Caucus Letter](#)
- [Senate Diabetes Caucus Letter](#)
- [Press Release-Senator Collins-Special Diabetes Program Reauthorization Act](#)