

Washington, DC — Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) announced today that the US Department of Health and Human Services, through its Bureau of Primary Health Care, has awarded \$553,780 to the Native American Rehabilitation Association of the Northwest (NARA). The grant will be used to provide access to Primary Care for low income and uninsured Native Americans and Alaska Natives.

“This award recognizes the important role NARA plays in providing critical health care to Native Americans and Alaska Natives.” Blumenauer said. “This organization has every right to be proud of their service to our community.”

NARA Executive Director Jackie Mercer said, “We are grateful for this award and appreciate the Bureau’s recognition of our community’s need. This grant will improve access to basic health care for more than 6,000 Native Americans and Alaska Natives in Portland and across the region. At a time when resources are scarce, this grant becomes more important to our people.”

The grant will allow NARA to hire two full time and one half-time medical providers, a half-time pediatric psychiatrist, two licensed clinical social workers, and one new chemical dependency treatment counselor. Supporting medical staff, including three nurses, two medical assistants, and four office staff, will also be hired.

Isolation, lack of economic opportunities, and failed promises from government at all levels make access to basic services a critical issue for both Native Americans and Alaska Natives. They are more than twice as likely as whites to have diabetes and two to three times more likely to be unemployed. Nationally, American Indians experience greater health disparities than any other minority population. Their rates of alcoholism are three times greater than whites and Indians are twice as likely to be uninsured. When a culturally appropriate resource is not available, Native Americans and Alaska Natives often forego basic health care.

Over 57 per cent of Native Americans live and work off reservation nationally. In Oregon, approximately 60 per cent of Native Americans live in urban areas, most of them in the Portland region.

For 33 years NARA has provided integrated health, mental health and chemical dependency treatment to the Native American and Alaska Native people in the Portland metro area. Last year NARA served more than 4,000 people with culturally appropriate health, mental health

Blumenauer Announces Grant for Native American Health Care

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and or chemical dependency treatment services from its four locations in Multnomah County. NARA's primary clinic is located in North Portland at the corner of North Morris and Williams Avenue.