

# *Paraguay Debates Law Protecting Indigenous Traditional Medicine*

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Asunción, April 24 (teleSUR-RHC)-- The Paraguayan Senate debated on Thursday a legislation seeking to guarantee universal health coverage to indigenous citizens, as well as to protect and promote indigenous traditional medicine.

The legislation called “On Indigenous Health” aims to guarantee access to health of the 20 indigenous peoples of the country — representing two percent of the population with 120,000 members. It plans the creation of a National Office of Indigenous Health that would depend from the Ministry of Public Health but counting with its own funds and human resources.

It will also define indigenous people as the “owners of a distinct medical knowledge, practices and resources,” and grant them the “exclusive right” to benefit from the potential profits that could generate their cultural knowledge, medical resources and other by-products.

Indigenous leader Taguide Picanerai welcomed the initiative, recalling that “there is a structural discrimination by the state toward the indigenous peoples in general,” limiting their access to health services.

According to official estimates, three quarters of the indigenous people in Paraguay are facing poverty, with a limited access to land, and other basic rights like education, health or food.

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