

## **AIHEC Applauds Senate Passage of the Fostering Undergraduate Talent by Unlocking Resources for Education (FUTURE) Act**

**December 5, 2019**

**Washington, D.C.** – The American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), which comprises the nation’s 37 Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), applauds Senate Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-WA), Senator Tim Scott (R-SC), Senator Richard Burr (R-NC), Senator Doug Jones (D-AL), and Senator Chris Coons (D-DE) for their leadership in gaining Senate passage of legislation to permanently reauthorize \$50 million in vitally-needed, annual support for TCUs and other Native-serving institutions of higher education under Title III Part F of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

“The permanent reauthorization of this program is a lifeline for TCUs. It will support their efforts to ensure educational access and opportunity for American Indian and Alaska Native students across the country – generations of young people who will be our future Tribal leaders, teachers, entrepreneurs, and scientists,” said Carrie L. Billy, AIHEC’s President & CEO. “It will allow TCUs to continue critical student support services such as mentoring and retention programs, faculty development, and library services. Now, we urge the U.S. House of Representatives to swiftly pass the Senate bill and provide reassurance to students that TCU opportunities will be available next fall.”

Since mid-September, the Fostering Undergraduate Talent by Unlocking Resources for Education (FUTURE) Act (H.R. 2486), had been stalled in the Senate after passing the House. Because of the Senate’s inaction, new funding under the Title III Part F program expired on September 30 – threatening a \$30 million annual cut to TCUs alone. With today’s action, TCUs, Alaska Native-serving institutions, Native Hawaiian-serving institutions, and Native American Serving non-tribal institutions are a significant step closer to securing long-term financial stability for key programs. In addition, the Senate-approved amendment takes an important step toward streamlining and simplifying the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form and eliminating cumbersome program duplication.

“These two pieces – Title III Part F and FAFSA streamlining – are key parts of a strategy for Native student success in postsecondary education. Whether a student is seeking a short-term certificate or a 4-year degree, an affordable, place-based and culturally-grounded TCU is the best place for most AI/AN students to start, and a fundamental part of his or her success will be having the financial resources to stay in school. We have a lot more work to do – beginning with House passage – but the importance of today’s bipartisan action cannot be understated,” said Ms. Billy.

The amended FUTURE Act permanently extends mandatory funding at current levels: Tribal Colleges and Universities at \$30 million, Alaska Native-Serving Institutions and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions at \$15 million, and Native American-Serving Non-tribal Institutions at \$5 million. The bill, as passed by the Senate, will now be referred back to the House for consideration.

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