



American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 121 Oronoco Street, Alexandria, VA 22314

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT
THE AMERICAN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION CONSORTIUM
ON:
CULTIVATING RESOURCES, OPPORTUNITY, PROSPERITY, AND SUSTAINABILITY
FOR INDIAN COUNTRY ACT (CROPS ACT)
MAY 9, 2018

We applaud Senators Hoeven and Udall for their proactive leadership in this reauthorization of the Farm Bill and for doing all that they can to ensure that Native people have the tools and resources needed to become significant contributors to the agricultural base of the nation and the world once again. More and more, Tribes and Tribal Colleges are beginning to re-assert sovereignty over our food, agriculture, livestock, and fisheries systems, but we are doing it without parity of resources, with only minimal support from USDA, and with a shrinking Native agriculture workforce. The bipartisan CROPS bill will do exactly what its name implies: it will make more accessible the resources, tools, and partnerships Tribes and Tribal Colleges need to cultivate opportunity, prosperity, a revitalized Native agriculture workforce, and sustainability in Indian Country. With 75 percent of our land being forest or agriculture holdings, Tribes and tribal communities will never have sustainable economic and social prosperity without robust, innovative, and sustainable agri-business development. Conversely, think of the potential if we are able to harness the resources needed to use our land, water, and traditional food sources more efficiently and in ways that strengthen our people, both economically and culturally.

Tribal Colleges, as 1994 Land-Grant Institutions, are uniquely positioned to provide the next generation of technically and culturally competent agricultural scientists, researchers, farmers, ranchers, and fishers – in fact, our Native students represent a unique competitive advantage in an increasingly culturally diverse global agriculture science world. Yet, we will not succeed without some level of parity in terms of resources, ownership, and decision-making. Again, we applaud Senators Hoeven and Udall for introducing the CROPS Act, and more important, for recognizing the vast potential and opportunity for Indian Country that lies within a thoughtful reauthorization of the Farm Bill.

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The American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) comprises the nation's 38 Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), of which 34 are 1994 Land-Grant Institutions. TCUs are public institutions of higher education operating more than 75 sites in 17 states and serving approximately 160,000 American Indians, Alaska Natives, and other rural residents each year in academic and community-based programs. In 1994, the Tribal Colleges took a significant step toward greater participation in the American higher education system when American Indian reservations became the last lands under the American flag to receive federal land-grant status, and with that designation, to participate in vital agriculture and natural resource programs operated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). This historic – and long overdue – recognition occurred with the passage of the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994.

