STATEMENT OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION CONSORTIUM
SUBMITTED TO THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES
April 5, 2017

Summary of Requests

The Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act, the legislation that created the 1994 (tribal college) land-grant institutions, was signed into law 23 years ago. In that time, the number of 1994s has grown to 34, but funding for the five 1994-specific programs has grown very little and remains wholly inadequate. We recognize the current economic constraints. However, the gross inequities of funding within the nation's land-grant system must be addressed. The 1994 land-grant programs are administered by USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and Rural Development. In NIFA, the TCUs request: 1994s' competitive Extension, $7 million in FY 2018; 1994s' competitive Research program, $4 million in FY 2018; 1994s' Education Equity Grants, $4 million in FY 2018; a doubling of the corpus in the Native American Endowment fund; and in Rural Development, TCU Essential Community Facilities Grants program, $8 million to help address the critical facilities and infrastructure needs that advance their capacity to participate as full land-grant partners and better serve their communities. Additionally, funding levels are not the only inequities that exist within the nation's land-grant system. The 1994 institutions are the only federal land-grant institutions that are prohibited from participating in the McIntire-Stennis (forestry) grants program and competing for grant funds through programs authorized through Smith-Lever 3(d), including Children, Youth and Families at Risk (CYFAR) and Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program (FRTEP) grants, which would greatly benefit our reservation residents.

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- **McIntire-Stennis**: In 2008, McIntire-Stennis was amended to include Tribal lands in the formula calculation for funding of *state* forestry programs. However, the 1994 Institutions, which are the Tribal Land-Grant colleges, were not included in the funding formula; nor were states required to include them in funding distributions. This oversight is significant, because 75 percent of Tribal land in the U.S. is either forest or agriculture holding. In response to the dearth of American Indian professionals in the forestry workforce in Montana and across the United States, Salish Kootenai College (SKC) launched a forestry baccalaureate degree program in 2005. In 2013, SKC became the first tribal college land-grant to join the National Association of University Forest Resource Programs, a consortium of 85 forestry schools, the vast majority of which receive McIntire-Stennis funding. However, when SKC recently sought specialty accreditation for its program, the college was told that it was "one forestry researcher short" of the optimum number needed. Participation in the McIntire-Stennis program, even with the required 1-1 match, would help SKC secure the researcher it needs to gain this accreditation.
- **Children, Youth, and Families at Risk (CYFAR) and Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program (FRTEP):** The 1994 Institutions are the only land-grant institutions that are statutorily barred from participating in programs administered under Smith-Lever 3(d). However, certain programs therein are intended to address serious situations that are prevalent in Tribal communities. Access to two programs in particular would be particularly valuable to the 1994s in serving their communities.
    - **CYFAR**: In some of the 1994 tribal communities, suicide among Native youth is nine to 19 times as frequent as among other youth. Native youth have more serious problems with mental disorders, including substance abuse and depression, than other

youth. American Indians also have the highest high school drop-out rates in the nation and some of the highest unemployment and poverty rates, as well. Yet, our Native children and youth are the only group in the country essentially excluded from the benefits of the CYFAR program, because the 1994 institutions cannot even apply for competitively awarded grants under this program.

- **FRTEP:** The USDA's Federally-Recognized Tribes Extension Program is only open to 1862 and 1890 Land-Grants. The program's stated purpose is: "supports extension agents on American Indian reservations and tribal jurisdictions to address the unique needs and problems of American Indian tribal nations. Emphasis is placed on assisting American Indians in the development of profitable farming and ranching techniques, providing 4-H and Youth development experiences for tribal youth, and providing education and outreach on tribally identified priorities (e.g., family resource management and nutrition) using a culturally sensitive approach." Ironically, the 1994 Land-Grants, which are chartered by and directly serve federally recognized American Indian tribes and are located on or near Indian reservations are the only category of land-grant institution that is barred from participating in this program. This omission in eligibility rights needs to be rectified. A clear step toward recognizing the 1994 Institutions as true partners in the nation's land-grant system would be to afford them eligibility to compete for grant funding under the Smith-Lever 3(d) programs, particularly the Children, Youth, and Families at Risk (CYFAR) program; and (2) Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program (FRTEP).

Bill/Report Language Requested: We strongly urge the committee to include language in the FY 2018 Agriculture Appropriations bill or accompanying report, recognizing the 1994 Land-Grant Institutions as full partners in the nation's land-grant system and to help level the playing field by making them eligible to participate in these programs administered under Smith-Lever 3(d) and open to all other land-grants.

Stark Illustration of Inequities in Land-Grant System Funding: The first Americans were not granted Federal Land-Grant status until 1994. As earlier stated, initial funding of programs established under this Act was very modest and today, over 20 years since the enactment of the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994, funding remains untenably inadequate. A clear illustration of the inequity in land-grant programs funding can be found in the latest appropriations for land-grant programs. In FY 2016, Congress appropriated $476M for extension activities. The 1862s (state) received $300M in formula-driven extension funds; 1890s (18 HBCUs) received $46M; and 1994s (34 TCUs) received $4.5M for competitively awarded grants. Further, the 1994s are barred from accessing over $85.5M in Smith-Lever 3(d) grant funds. Similar comparisons are reflected in the funding of the three land-grant groups research grant programs. These inequities cannot be justified or allowed to continue. The first Americans, last to join the nation's land-grant family, deserve parity.

Programs—Solid Investment in Advancing Economic Capacity

In the past, due to lack of expertise and training, millions of acres on Indian reservations lay fallow, underused, or had been developed using methods that caused irreparable damage. The Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994 is helping to address this situation and is our hope for the continued improvement of our reservation lands. While our current land-grant programs remain very small, they are of critical importance to us. It is essential that Native

people explore and adopt new and evolving technologies for managing our lands and natural resources. With increased capacity and program funding, American Indians and Alaska Natives will become even more fundamental contributors to the economic and agricultural base of the nation and the world.

Conclusion

The 1994s have proven to be efficient and effective vehicles for bringing educational and career opportunities to American Indians/Alaska Natives and the promise of self-sufficiency to some of this nation's poorest and most underserved regions. The small federal investment in the 1994s has already paid great dividends in terms of increased employment, access to quality higher education, and economic development. Our reservation communities are second-to-none in their potential for benefiting from effective land-grant programs; and no institutions better exemplify the original intent of Senator Morrill's land-grant concept than the 1994s. Our FY 2018 requests are made with a goal of increasing the capacity of the 1994 Institutions so that they might truly begin to fulfill their land-grant vision and mission of self-sufficient, place-based peoples employing an Indigenous model that incorporates holistic planning, traditional knowledge, and the integration of education, research, and extension activities. We truly appreciate your support and recognition of the 1994s' important role in the nation's land-grant system. We ask you to renew your commitment to help move our students and communities toward self-sufficiency and request your full consideration of our FY 2018 appropriations requests.