September 19, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Room S-230, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Room S-204, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lamar Alexander  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions  
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions  
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Chairman Alexander, and Ranking Member Murray:

On behalf of the nation’s 37 Tribal Colleges and Universities, which are the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), we respectfully request that you support swift Senate passage of the Fostering Undergraduate Talent by Unlocking Resources for Education (FUTURE) Act, H.R. 2486, as passed by the House with strong bipartisan support, while working to secure a permanent extension of Title III Part F of the Higher Education Act 1965.

Since FY2010, the Strengthening Institutions – Tribal Colleges and Universities program (HEA Title III Part F) has provided $30 million per year to help TCUs address the higher education needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students. TCUs use this funding for vitally needed student support services, faculty development, curriculum and program development to strengthen tribal nations, library services, facility modernization and construction and other important education activities. Without these funds, TCUs will be forced to reduce services, jeopardizing student completion and success, and some of our smaller institutions may face closure.

Tribal Colleges and Universities truly are developing institutions – the oldest TCU recently reached its 50th year; we are located in some of the most rural, remote, and economically challenged regions of the country; we are severely under-resourced; and yet, we are committed to affordable, high quality, place-based and culturally grounded higher education. Our ability to achieve our collective vision -- strong sovereign Tribal nations through excellence in Tribal higher education – would be impossible without the Title III Part F program.
We have always supported and worked for permanent reauthorization of the Title III Part F program for Tribal Colleges and Universities, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and other minority serving institutions. We are not wavering from this critical goal. However, the House-passed FUTURE Act, H.R. 2486, is the best path forward at this time. Indeed, the House-passed FUTURE Act is the only tangible strategy before us, and time is running out.

Thank you for your attention to this request and for your support of our institutions and the students we serve.

Sincerely,

Carrie L. Billy       David E. Yarlott, Jr.
President & CEO      Chair, AIHEC Board of Directors