**[Date]**, 2018

The Honorable **[Name]**

**[Address 1]**

Washington, D.C. **[Zip code]**

Dear Senator **[insert member name]**:

On behalf of the **[insert name of tribe, governing body, or relevant organization]**, **[we/I]** request that you quickly introduce the attached legislation as stand-alone “marker bills” and move immediately to persuade Senators Roberts (R-KS) and Stabenow (D-MI), Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, to include these bills in the Committee’s 2018 Farm Bill they are planning to release in the coming days. These two bills enjoy widespread and top-level support among Native American tribes.

The first bill would apply the long-standing authority of Pub.L. 93-638 (Indian Self-Determination Act) to permit tribal administration of U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) food and nutrition programs, including supplemental nutrition assistance (e.g., SNAP), food distribution (e.g., FDPIR), and any job training and assistance funding that Congress may link in some way to food assistance programs. It goes beyond question that tribes, like mine, have the capacity to fully administer these programs to our tribal members. We have been administering far more complex federal programs (e.g., clinics and hospitals) for more than 40 years. **[If relevant, demonstrate the capacity of your program. How many people do you feed? What methods are you using to feed people?]** Tribal governments can and will run SNAP, commodity, and job training and assistance programs much more effectively than state governments, whether measured by cost efficiencies or by outcomes, on our **[reservations/territories/within our service delivery areas/etc.]**. However, without enactment of the attached bill language, we cannot.

The second bill would expand the Substantially Underserved Trust Areas (SUTA) authority to programs within the USDA Office of Rural Development (RD). SUTA was first applied to a few programs within the USDA Rural Utilities Service in 2008 and enhances applications from entities like tribes in rural areas that are far behind the rest of America. Applying SUTA to all of RD would provide Indian Country with the opportunity to “catch up” on transportation, water-sewer, telecommunication infrastructure, small business development, housing, and community facilities supported by RD grant and financing assistance. Without enactment of this bill language, SUTA will remain limited to a few utility service programs.

Unfortunately, while many senators have expressed strong general support for the Indian Country issues prioritized by the Native Farm Bill Coalition, and some senators have introduced marker bills to advance some of those Native priorities, no senator has introduced any legislation to apply full Pub.L. 93-638 authority to all food assistance and linked jobs programs, or any legislation to expand SUTA authority to its full potential.

**[We are/I am]** urgently asking you to take the lead on introducing these two bills, giving them priority attention in continuing Farm Bill negotiations.

Please feel free to call me or our counsel **[insert contact information]** at your earliest convenience to discuss. Thank you for all you and your staff do for Indian Country.

Sincerely,

**[Insert signature, name, position/department, and tribe]**

Attachments:

1. Tribal OASIS Act of 2018 (applying “638” authority to SNAP, FDPIR, and linked-jobs)

2. Expand SUTA Act of 2018 (applying Substantially Underserved Trust Areas authority to all Office of Rural Development assistance)

CC: **[Names of legislative assistants]**