Dear Congressional Leaders:

We put forward today a simple part of the complex solution you wrestle with in this time of uncertainty, and ask that you include this provision in any legislation you may develop and pass, in an effort to stem the economic impacts of this crisis.

A letter sent to you on April 10th, 2020 from the National Rural Lenders Association, American Bankers Association, Independent Community Bankers of America, Ag Credit, American Farm Mortgage and Financial Services, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, and the National Association of Credit Specialists - FSA, stressed the importance of access to capital and other forms of disaster assistance being critical to our farming and ranching operations in times like this. We wholeheartedly share the sentiment of that letter and endorse the flexibility offered in their solutions.

We would add however, that timely access saves operations. Our solution takes a proactive approach to the coming production years that is not solely centered around new capital and federal assistance, but rather it starts from where our producers are now, and enables planning.

Over 600,000 farmers and ranchers across the country currently have ag debt, and are facing tough decisions as they weigh their options for the coming production years. Current practices and prospective solutions to this crisis do not allow for timely assistance, nor do they empower producers. The proposal offered by the Intertribal Agriculture Council and the Native Farm Bill Coalition does just that.

With the proper authorization, the Secretary can allow producers to work with their lenders to mitigate impacts from the economic disruption with the money they already have borrowed; both through flexible proactive loan servicing in direct loans, in addition to forging a more solid relationship with other ag lenders through grants to buy down the interest rate of their ag borrowers.

Currently, the assistance being contemplated is tightly tied to speculative market prices, marketing products, investigations, and further federal expenditures. We do not disagree that those are needed, however, we offer that implementation of the simple solutions outlined herein, will multiply the impact of other aid, empower producers to plan for the future instead of feeling like hopeless victims, and can tremendously accelerate the recovery from this crisis.

We ask you to consider the following solutions so producers can enter the heart of their production year with some peace of mind, and some semblance of control of the path forward:

- Authorize the Secretary to immediately defer all principal payments due on federal farm program loans in 2020 and 2021.
- Authorize the Secretary to make grants to lenders equal to a 2% interest buy-down for the life of existing loans, in exchange for those lenders offering their producers the same two year principal deferral and extension.
- Significantly increase the FSA Farm Ownership Loan budget authority to $10 Billion and allow refinancing of all types of debt through this program, to enable producers to leverage their equity on their ability to produce.

We thank you for your efforts thus far, and wholeheartedly support the passage of legislation that would bring these timely solutions to bear.