The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
Chairwoman  
Senate Agriculture Committee

The Honorable Glenn “GT” Thompson  
Chairman  
House Agriculture Committee

The Honorable John Boozman  
Ranking Member  
Senate Agriculture Committee

The Honorable David Scott  
Ranking Member  
House Agriculture Committee

July 27, 2023

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow, Ranking Member Boozman, Chairman Thompson, and Ranking Member Scott:

On behalf of the undersigned national, state, and local organizations, governments, corporations, and leaders, we write to you to call for a historic investment in land access in the 2023 Farm Bill by authorizing, expanding, and funding the Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access Program, which was offered by the USDA Farm Service Agency as a one-time funding opportunity in August 2022.

Land access, retention, and transition are critical to the success of the future of agriculture in this country. Yet, access to land is the number one challenge facing young farmers in the United States. Given the systemic challenges in finding secure land tenure, this barrier is even greater for Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) farmers. Finding affordable land to purchase is the top challenge for this new generation, regardless of geography, number of years in farming, or whether or not they are first generation farmers. With the average age of U.S. farmers approaching 60 years old and nearly half of U.S. farmland expected to change hands over the next two decades, the 2023 Farm Bill is our best chance at creating real and lasting policy solutions to this daunting trend that keeps farmland out of reach for so many, while at the same time jeopardizing our country’s food security and threatening the vitality of our urban and rural communities.

Land access is critical not only to farmer success but also the health and well-being of our environment, economy, and marginalized communities. Supporting equitable access to land means addressing the climate crisis, facilitating farm transition, investing in community-driven initiatives, and providing support to young farmers and ranchers to access capital, find markets, and strengthen their operations. Investing in equitable land access is an investment in the future of agriculture.

We have an opportunity in the 2023 Farm Bill to answer the call of the upcoming generation of farmers with forward-thinking, equitable policy change. We are asking for your help and support in securing a key component of that necessary change: expanding, securing, and funding the Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access Program.

Over the past decade, land access has been our call to action. As a broad and diverse coalition of voices in shared ambition, we work together to drive progress in both incremental and systemic policy change. In
2021, together with generous funding and support from Chipotle, Young Farmers launched the One Million Acres for the Future Campaign, calling on Congress to make a historic investment in the 2023 Farm Bill to facilitate equitable access to one million acres of land for the next generation of farmers. From the beginning of this campaign, we have been focused on bringing something new to the table: a new programmatic function at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) that would clearly address the deeply interconnected challenges in accessing land, capital, and markets.

USDA heard us, and launched the Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access Program in August 2022, the only USDA program that is designed as a flexible source of support and investment in eligible re-granting entities already immersed in the farming communities they serve to increase land, capital, and market access for farmers nationwide. An investment of this kind in secure access to land in the next Farm Bill will generate immense returns for taxpayers, increase food access, strengthen local supply chains, grow rural economies, and build climate resilience.

USDA recently announced 50 recipients of this funding—organizations spread across the country serving the needs of their communities through diverse and innovative projects. We know that there was much more demand for this program than there were funds available. We are thrilled about the decisions made to fund these powerful land access and sustainability projects and are determined to make opportunities like the Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access Program permanent for farmers across the country.

Most recently, our collective voices have been heard by key legislators in Congress. Introduced by U.S. Representatives Nikki Budzinski (D-IL-13), Zach Nunn (R-IA-03), Joe Courtney (D-CT-02), and Abigail Spanberger (D-VA-07), and by Senator Tina Smith (D-MN), the Increasing Land Access, Security, and Opportunities Act (H.R.3955, S.2340), would authorize and expand USDA's Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access Program with appropriations of $100 million per year over five years.

Specifically, the bill would authorize USDA to:

- Make grants to, and enter into cooperative agreements with, State and Tribal governments, non-profit service providers, community lending institutions, farmer cooperatives, and other eligible entities to strengthen land, capital, and market access outcomes for historically underserved farmers, ranchers, and forest owners and for producers operating in high-poverty areas.
- Provide funding for direct assistance and services to help farmers and ranchers afford and acquire land, cover closing costs and down payments, secure clear title on heirs’ property farmland, capitalize infrastructure and site improvements, acquire business technical assistance and farm viability training.
- Prioritize projects that provide direct financial assistance to producers through collaborative networks and partnerships, projects that utilize innovative land access and farmland protection and affordability tools, and projects that facilitate the transition of farmland from existing producers to the next generation.
- Establish a stakeholder committee to develop a participatory process for evaluating applications and distributing funds to ensure the program is responsive to the needs of farmers, ranchers, and their communities.

Our nation must take action now to facilitate secure, affordable access to land for underserved producers—there is no time to wait. This is the moment for Congress to take action and ensure that the 2023 Farm Bill delivers material benefits for historically underserved farmers, ranchers, and forest owners striving to establish and grow their operations.

Though the challenges stacked against them are significant, many young farmers have reported that the fulfillment they feel from the act of farming, providing more healthful food for their communities, and
stewarding natural resources has not diminished since their very first season. By and far, the majority of young farmers that participated in the 2022 National Young Farmers Coalition National Survey named one of their farm’s primary purposes as stewarding and regenerating natural resources. Further, the majority of young, BIPOC farmers find motivation for their farming work in antiracism. **We are asking for an investment in the next generation not only because it is the right thing to do, but because it will yield manifold economic, environmental, and social returns.**

This investment is critically important for the success of this new generation of farmers, ranchers, and forest owners. If we fail to make a historic investment in land access in this Farm Bill, the health and vibrancy of both urban and rural communities, the strength and security of our food and agriculture systems, and thus our national security—will face greater uncertainty and risk. The role that local and regional food systems play, especially in times of crisis, is undeniable. The needs are clear, and the work of responding to and addressing those needs has already begun. Community-led land access efforts are underway across the country, from creative financing models to market development and infrastructure work, cooperative ownership models, and more. To continue thriving and creating lasting change, these efforts need strong policy support and investment from our policymakers in Congress.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please join us in supporting expanding, securing, and funding the *Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access Program.*

Sincerely,

The undersigned