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The Honorable Mitchell McConnell
Majority Leader, U.S Senate

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Senator McConnell and Speaker Pelosi:

In 1887, The University of North Carolina at Pembroke was founded to train Lumbee Indian teachers. Situated in the heart of the ancestral homelands of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina, charitable acts of giving by members of the tribe in 1909 to construct a building on campus symbolized the connection between the Lumbee community and the institution. During a fund-raising drive, the local newspaper reported, "Many of the old [Lumbees], gray headed, stooped and tottering with age, who have never had the opportunity of spending the day in school, could be seen pushing their way through the crowd to hand over their hard-earned money in order that their children may have the advantage of an education." UNC Pembroke, through its graduates, has and continues to play an integral role in supporting the identity, self-determination, self-governance, and education of the Lumbee people. Between 1939 and 1953, UNC Pembroke was the only state-supported four-year institution for the education of American Indians in the United States. Today, UNC Pembroke is North Carolina's historically American Indian university. As such, UNC Pembroke is proud to support the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina's pursuit of full federal recognition.

The histories of the Lumbee Tribe and UNC Pembroke are closely intertwined. Since its founding, UNC Pembroke has supported Lumbee agency and, consequently, full federal recognition efforts. Leaders of the university have aligned with the tribe to fight for federal recognition since the tribe's initial quest began in 1888, while simultaneously working to create meaningful opportunities for Lumbee people to obtain jobs, education, and boost the economy of Robeson County. The creation of the university facilitated the establishment of a middle class among the Lumbee, becoming a hub for American Indian teachers across North Carolina and paving the way for improved access to higher education and careers in industries beyond agriculture. Lumbee graduates of UNC Pembroke have made significant contributions to the field of medicine, education, the U.S. armed forces, and Indian Country. We hope you will align with UNCP in acknowledging that the culture, knowledge, and history of the Lumbee people is undeniable, and the tribe is long-overdue for federal recognition.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Robin Gary Cummings, MD
Chancellor