United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 18, 2017

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to call attention to the ongoing economic struggles of the thousands of cotton farming families across the United States and their need for a stabilizing policy. Without some action by the Federal government, these families will continue to see their equity erode or take on a greater debt load as they hope to keep their family farms in operation.

In the past decade, the U.S. cotton industry has endured a World Trade Organization (WTO) challenge, increasing foreign subsidies, tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade, and a weakened U.S. safety net. This is all on top of the high risk, uncertain nature of farming. In recent years, these factors have resulted in the U.S. experiencing a 30-year low in cotton planted area; global cotton prices approaching $2.00 per pound before plummeting to as low as 57 cents per pound; and record production costs outpacing market returns for the last three years.

America's cotton farming families have been forced to compete on a global playing field heavily weighted to the advantage of competitors in countries like China and India who benefit from significant government subsidies and intervention.

In addition, U.S. cotton is not on par with the safety net available for other row crops, meaning cotton producers are much more exposed to the highly cyclical nature of commodity markets and global policy manipulations by foreign governments. This scenario is weakening the U.S. cotton industry's infrastructure that includes farms, gins, warehouses, marketing cooperatives, merchants, cottonseed processors and merchandisers, and textile manufacturers that sustain economies across the 17-state Cotton Belt from Virginia to California. Over the past decade, the numbers of businesses involved in the ginning and warehousing of cotton have declined by 33 and 21 percent, respectively. It is imperative that we protect the remaining 20,000 businesses in this industry that employ 126,000 people and generate over $21 billion in revenue.

In an effort to help stabilize the industry, we respectfully request that the administration, through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), operate on an ongoing basis the Cotton Ginning Cost Share Program beginning with the 2016 crop year. The cost share program is needed to provide policy stability in the absence of a comprehensive policy for cotton in the existing farm bill to respond to deep and sustained price and revenue declines. This cost share program was operated by the previous administration for the 2015 crop, and it is an effective and efficient means of providing economic relief to America's cotton farming families.

We strongly support the administration taking this action and stand ready to work with you, USDA, and the cotton industry to address this important need as quickly as possible. Thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,

John Boozman
U.S. Senator

Mark R. Warner
U.S. Senator

John Cornyn
U.S. Senator

Richard Burr
U.S. Senator

Thom Tillis
U.S. Senator

Roger F. Wicker
U.S. Senator

Tim Kaine
U.S. Senator

Luther Strange
U.S. Senator

Jerry Moran
U.S. Senator

Pat Roberts
U.S. Senator

Lindsey O. Graham
U.S. Senator

Claire McCaskill
U.S. Senator

Johnny Isakson
U.S. Senator

Thad Cochran
U.S. Senator

Richard C. Shelby
U.S. Senator

Bill Cassidy, M.D.
U.S. Senator

Roy Blunt
U.S. Senator

John Kennedy
U.S. Senator

Bill Nelson
U.S. Senator

James M. Inhofe
U.S. Senator

Lamar Alexander
U.S. Senator

David Perdue
U.S. Senator

Bob Corker
U.S. Senator

Tom Cotton
U.S. Senator

Ted Cruz
U.S. Senator

Martin Heinrich
U.S. Senator

CC: The Honorable Sonny Perdue, Secretary of Agriculture