

Congress of the United States
Washington, D.C. 20515

October 23, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader McCarthy, and Minority Leader Schumer:

As negotiations progress on additional COVID-19 relief, we urge you to ensure that such measures do not perpetuate longstanding inequities in resources for marginalized communities and the institutions critical to their success. Specifically, we request that you include a set-aside of at least \$1.56 billion in research and development funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in any future relief package to provide equitable access to those funds.

HBCUs are a cornerstone of opportunity and access in higher education for the African American community. While only representing roughly 3 percent of all four-year colleges and universities, HBCUs produce upwards of 17 percent of all bachelor's degrees awarded to African Americans.¹ Additionally, despite enrolling a disproportionately high percentage of first generation and low-income students (nearly 60 percent), HBCUs outperform their peers in supporting and graduating these students.² In STEM fields, this impact is even more evident. HBCUs graduate 27 percent of African Americans with bachelor's degrees in STEM subjects, as well as a significant portion of African Americans with doctorates in science and engineering.³ On an annual basis, HBCUs contribute nearly \$15 billion to their communities, produce 134,000 jobs, and create \$46.8 billion in alumni career earnings that can be directly attributed to their degrees.⁴ Further, research has found that HBCUs are more successful at boosting students out of

¹ U.S. Department of Education, *Fact Sheet: Spurring African-American STEM Degree Completion*, 2016, <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/fact-sheet-spurring-african-american-stem-degree-completion>.

² Postsecondary National Policy Institute, *Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs): What They Are, Who They Serve, and the Related Federal Grant Program*, 2019, https://pnpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/PNPI_HistoricallyBlackCollegesAndUniversities.pdf.

³ U.S. Department of Education, *Fact Sheet: Spurring African-American STEM Degree Completion*, 2016, <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/fact-sheet-spurring-african-american-stem-degree-completion>.

⁴ Humphreys, J, *HBCUs Make America Strong: The Positive Economic Impact of Historically Black Colleges and Universities*, 2017, Washington, DC: UNCF Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute.

the lowest income distributions than other institutions of higher education (IHEs). Nearly 70 percent of students at HBCUs attain at least middle-class incomes after graduation and two-thirds of low-income students at HBCUs experience that outcome as well.⁵

HBCUs have long been drivers of equity, access, and advancement, not just for African American students, but for our society more broadly. However, it is important to note that the incredible success of HBCUs has been achieved despite over a century of systemic underfunding at both the state and federal levels. HBCUs have navigated the expounding effects of chronic underfunding while also lacking access to alternate capital, such as tuition increases, private gifts, or endowments, which other institutions can use to offset financial shortages.⁶

While the broader issue of resource inequity for HBCUs is critically important, today we are writing to you about one specific source: federal research and development funds (R&D). IHEs received a total of \$79.436 billion in R&D funding in 2018 with \$42.018 billion coming from the federal government.⁷ Unfortunately, HBCUs receive significantly less than their peer institutions. HBCUs received a total of \$534.045 million dollars in overall R&D funding with \$400.349 million coming from the federal government, equating to only 0.67 percent of total funding.⁸ Further, while HBCUs produce 27 percent of all African American STEM graduates, they receive less than 0.5 percent of all Department of Defense R&D funding.

Despite these challenges, HBCUs have remained steadfast in pursuing excellence, progress, and inclusion, even as they grapple with the ongoing global pandemic. HBCUs have long conducted vital research on our nation's most pressing issues, including public health disparities for rural and minority communities. Today, these institutions have been at the forefront of making sure our nation's response to COVID-19 is one that includes all communities. Howard University, for example, has served as a critical treatment and research facility in the Washington, D.C. metro area, examining the disparate impacts COVID-19 is having on people of color.

In order to ensure that HBCUs can continue to expand their crucial research and development work, we request a set-aside for these institutions of at least \$1.56 billion in research relief funding provided for IHEs through federal agencies and institutes such as the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institute of Minority Health Disparities (NIMHD). This funding would not only support groundbreaking work on COVID-related health disparities for minority communities, but also bolster existing programs like NSF's Centers of Research Excellence in Science and Technology (CREST) and HBCU Research Infrastructure for Science and Engineering (HBCU-RISE). Additionally, this set-aside would advance innovative research

⁵Nathenson, R., Castro Samayoa, A., & Gasman, M, *Onward and upward: Income mobility at Historically Black Colleges and Universities*, 2019, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Center for Minority Serving Institutions, https://cmsi.gse.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/EMreport_R4_0.pdf.

⁶ Committee on Education and Labor, U.S. House of Representatives, *Investing in Economic Mobility: The Important Role of HBCUs, TCUs, and MSIs in Closing Racial and Wealth Gaps in Higher Education*, 2019, https://edlabor.house.gov/imo/media/doc/Ed_and_Labor_HBCU_TCU_and_MSI_Report_FINAL.pdf.

⁷ National Science Foundation, *Higher education R&D expenditures, by source of funds, R&D field, and survey population: FY 2018*, 2019, <https://ncesdata.nsf.gov/herd/2018/html/herd18-dt-tab001.html>.

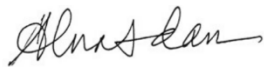
⁸ National Science Foundation, *Higher education R&D expenditures at historically black colleges and universities, ranked by all R&D expenditures, by source of funds: FY 2018, 2020*, <https://ncesdata.nsf.gov/herd/2018/html/herd18-dt-%20tab031.html>.

HBCUs already conduct in fields ranging from engineering, agriculture, and nutrition, to education, law, and technology.

HBCUs have always generously served their communities, despite limited means, because they understand the critical role they play in advancing equity – something that could not be more dire as communities of color face disproportionate effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we cannot afford to continue to underfund these essential institutions, and the critical research they produce, as they struggle to cope with the impacts of this public health crisis. Now, more than ever, HBCUs cannot be subjected to further systemic neglect.

In providing for COVID-19 research funds and relief, it is critical that Congress advances equity for HBCUs.

Sincerely,



Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress



Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress

/s/ Chris Van Hollen
Chris Van Hollen
U.S. Senator

/s/ Chris Coons
Chris Coons
U.S. Senator

/s/ Tom Carper
Tom Carper
U.S. Senator

/s/ Sherrod Brown
Sherrod Brown
U.S. Senator

/s/ Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/ A. Donald McEachin
A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress

/s/ Jim Cooper
Jim Cooper
Member of Congress

/s/ Joyce Beatty
Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress

/s/ Frederica S. Wilson
Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress

/s/ Bennie G. Thompson
Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress

/s/ Steve Cohen
Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

/s/ Alcee L. Hastings
Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

/s/ Jahana Hayes
Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress

/s/ David Trone
David Trone
Member of Congress

/s/ Eleanor Holmes Norton
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

/s/ André Carson
André Carson
Member of Congress

/s/ Dwight Evans
Dwight Evans
Member of Congress

/s/ Lisa Blunt Rochester
Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress

/s/ Karen Bass
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Member of Congress

/s/ Mary Gay Scanlon
Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress

/s/ Marcia L. Fudge
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Member of Congress

/s/ William Lacy Clay, Jr.
William Lacy Clay, Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/ Chrissy Houlahan
Chrissy Houlahan
Member of Congress

/s/ Sheila Jackson Lee
Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

/s/ G. K. Butterfield
G. K. Butterfield
Member of Congress

/s/ Barbara Lee
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

/s/ Kweisi Mfume
Kweisi Mfume
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