

**United States Senate**  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 27, 2020

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services,  
Education, and Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services,  
Education, and Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As you evaluate spending priorities for Fiscal Year 2021 (FY 2021), we encourage you to increase federal funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs). Now, perhaps more than ever, as minority, low-income, and first-generation students make up an increasing share of K-12 and college enrollment, America must increase its share of adults with college degrees to remain competitive. HBCUs and MSIs have a critical role to play in improving America's overall college completion rates and global competitiveness.

Authorized in the Higher Education Act (HEA), the federal HBCU and MSI programs generally support institutions with a significant enrollment of in-need students, a high minority population, and limited non-federal funding from endowments or state support. Federal HBCU and MSI programs provide grants to institutions for a variety of strategies to improve college access and completion for minority and low-income students, among other purposes—thus contributing to a more diverse workforce and strengthening our economy.

With this in mind, we request strong funding for each of the following programs:

- **Strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Historically Black Graduate Institutions, HBCU Capital Financing Program, and Endowment Challenge Grants** (Sec. 331), Masters Degree Programs (Sec. 723, VII-A-4)—included later; Howard University: Despite limited endowments and underinvestment, HBCUs continue to play a vital role in providing an affordable, high-quality education to minority students who are underrepresented among the college-educated. In 2018, there were 101 HBCUs across 19 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. Virgin Islands,<sup>[1]</sup> comprising more than 2 percent of degree-granting institutions.<sup>[2]</sup> From 1976 to 2010, the number of students enrolled in the fall at degree-granting HBCUs increased by 47 percent from 223,000 to 327,000.<sup>[3]</sup> Furthermore, African-American

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<sup>[1]</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (March 2020) (Link: <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=667>)

<sup>[2]</sup> Ibid (Link: [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator\\_csa.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_csa.asp)).

<sup>[3]</sup> Ibid. (Link: [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19\\_313.20.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_313.20.asp)).

student enrollment at HBCUs increased by 17 percent between 1976 and 2018. Historically, HBCUs have been disproportionately successful in helping more African-American college students earn bachelor's degrees, and more. In 2014, HBCUs produced 17 percent of all bachelor's degrees earned and 24 percent of all science, technology, engineering and math "STEM" degrees earned by African-American student graduates.<sup>[4]</sup> The success of HBCUs, while doing more with less, justifies a stronger federal investment in these institutions.

- **Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) and Promoting Postbaccalaureate Opportunities for Hispanic Americans** (HEA Title V, Part A; Title V, Part B; and Title III, Part F, Sec. 371): According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the enrollment of Hispanic undergraduates had more than quadrupled from 782,000 students in 1990 to 3.5 million students in 2017.<sup>[5]</sup> While the Hispanic college age population has grown dramatically in recent years,<sup>[6]</sup> HSIs continue to be under-resourced and only a fraction of these institutions receive HSI grants. This critical funding will help build the capacity of Hispanic-Serving Institutions and support Hispanic and low-income students in pursuing a college degree and graduate study.
- **Strengthening Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities (TCUs) and Tribally Controlled Postsecondary Career and Technical Institutions** (HEA Title III, Part A, Sec. 316; HEA Title III, Part F, Sec. 371; and Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, Sec. 117): The nation's 32 fully-accredited TCUs are tribally and federally chartered institutions of higher education, offering more than 358 total programs, including apprenticeships, diplomas, certificates, and degrees<sup>[7]</sup>. The vast majority of these TCUs are located on federal trust lands yet they do not receive state operations funding and have been chronically underfunded throughout the more than 35 years since the Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities Assistance Act was first funded. According to the 2020 Department of Education Eligibility Matrix for grants to minority and low-income serving institutions, there are 35 institutions that are currently TCU grantees.<sup>[8]</sup> TCUs serve American Indian/Alaska Native students from more than 250 federally recognized tribes, as well as non-Native students, and in general serve high-poverty, geographically isolated populations with very limited access to postsecondary education opportunities.
- **Strengthening Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions (ANNHSIs)** (HEA Title III, Part A, Sec. 317; HEA Title III, Part F, Sec. 371): ANNHSIs serve significant populations of low-income and Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian students,

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<sup>[4]</sup> 2015 Gallup-USA Minority College Graduates Report. (March 2020). (Link: [https://www.uncf.org/wp-content/uploads/HBCU\\_Consumer\\_Brochure\\_FINAL\\_APPROVED.pdf](https://www.uncf.org/wp-content/uploads/HBCU_Consumer_Brochure_FINAL_APPROVED.pdf)).

<sup>[5]</sup> Ibid. (Link: [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18\\_306.20.asp?current=yes](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_306.20.asp?current=yes)).

<sup>[6]</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (Link: [https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings/2017/08/school\\_enrollmentof.html](https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings/2017/08/school_enrollmentof.html)).

<sup>[7]</sup> U.S. Department of Education, White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education (March 2020). (Link: <https://sites.ed.gov/whiaiane/tribes-tcus/tribal-colleges-and-universities/>).

<sup>[8]</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Eligibility Matrix 2020 (March 2020) (Link: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/itudes/2020eligibilitymatrix.xlsx>).

and generally have relatively low educational resources compared to the national average. ANNHSIs are often the only postsecondary institutions available to these historically underserved and geographically isolated populations.

- **Strengthening Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs), Master's Degree Programs at HBCUs and PBIs** (HEA Title III, Part A, Sec. 318; Title III, Part F, Sec. 371; Title VII, Part A, Subpart 4): According to the 2020 Department of Education Eligibility Matrix for grants to minority and low-income serving institutions, there were about 102 institutions either eligible for or currently receiving a PBI Grant. These colleges generally have relatively low educational resources compared to the national average. Grants help institutions better serve low- and middle-income Black American students through a variety of targeted projects.
- **Strengthening Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs)** (HEA Title III, Part A, Sec. 320; Title III, Part F, Sec. 371): The “model minority myth” that all AANAPI students perform well, both academically and professionally, masks major disparities in educational attainment, including very low graduation rates and inequitable college access among certain Asian American ethnic subgroups. For example, less than 19 percent of Cambodians, Hmong, Laotian, or Samoan adults 25 years or older have a bachelor's degree, compared with the national average of 33 percent.<sup>[9]</sup> AANAPISIs serve significant populations of low-income and AANAPI students, and generally have relatively low educational resources compared to the national average.
- **Strengthening Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions (NASNTIs)** (HEA Title III, Part A, Sec. 319; HEA Title III, Part F, Sec. 371): NASNTIs are state institutions with limited financial resources that report significant numbers of Native American students. Competitive grants support a variety of targeted strategies to improve student success.
- **Minority Science and Engineering Improvement Program** (HEA Title III, Part E): This program helps institutions with significant minority enrollment to improve the pathway to STEM careers for underrepresented minorities. Grant projects focus on reducing barriers throughout the educational pipeline.
- **First in the World, with set-aside for MSIs** (HEA Title VII, Part B). The First in the World program provides competitive grants to support implementing and evaluating evidence-based strategies to dramatically improve high-need students' college completion. The program includes a set-aside for HBCUs and MSIs

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<sup>[9]</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (March 2019) (Link: <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019038.pdf>); U.S. Census Bureau (Link: <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2017/cb17-51.html>).

- **Innovation for Completion Fund:** This proposal would support competitive grants to HBCUs and MSIs to provide research-based strategies to significantly improve minority student enrollment and completion.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

/s/ Mazie K. Hirono

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MAZIE K. HIRONO  
United States Senator

/s/ Robert Menendez

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ROBERT MENENDEZ  
United States Senator

/s/ Cory A. Booker

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CORY A. BOOKER  
United States Senator

/s/ Sherrod Brown

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SHERROD BROWN  
United States Senator

/s/ Richard Blumenthal

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RICHARD BLUMENTHAL  
United States Senator

/s/ Tim Kaine

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TIM KAINE  
United States Senator

/s/ Brian Schatz

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BRIAN SCHATZ  
United States Senator

/s/ Catherine Cortez Masto

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CATHERINE CORTEZ MASTO  
United States Senator

/s/ Tammy Duckworth

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TAMMY DUCKWORTH  
United States Senator

/s/ Christopher A. Coons

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CHRISTOPHER A. COONS  
United States Senator

/s/ Bernard Sanders

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BERNARD SANDERS  
United States Senator

/s/ Dianne Feinstein

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DIANNE FEINSTEIN  
United States Senator

/s/ Jacky Rosen

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JACKY ROSEN  
United States Senator

/s/ Edward J. Markey

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EDWARD J. MARKEY  
United States Senator

/s/ Kyrsten Sinema

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KYRSTEN SINEMA  
United States Senator

/s/ Elizabeth Warren

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ELIZABETH WARREN  
United States Senator

/s/ Tina Smith

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TINA SMITH  
United States Senator

/s/ Kamala D. Harris

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KAMALA D. HARRIS  
United States Senator

/s/ Richard J. Durbin

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RICHARD J. DURBIN  
United States Senator