



September 7, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Senate Health Education Labor and Pensions Committee
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Chairman
House Education and Labor Committee
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Chairman Scott:

On behalf of the students, faculty and alumni of the 1890 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), we are writing to express our strong support of H.R. 3294/S. 1945, the Institutional Grants for New Infrastructure, Technology, and Education (IGNITE) for Historically Black Colleges and Universities Excellence Act sponsored by U.S. Reps. Alma Adams (D-NC) and French Hill (R-AR) and U.S. Senators Chris Coons (D-DE) and Tim Scott (R-SC). This bipartisan and bicameral legislation is a critical piece of the puzzle for the advancement of HBCUs and it will make a real difference in enhancing our academic and research programs, as well as improving the lives of so many people who live in our communities.

We represent 19 HBCUs that are also designated as Land-Grant Institutions by Congress. The incredible success of these institutions has been achieved despite over a century of systemic underfunding at both the state and federal levels. This bipartisan bill was written to extend new federal investments needed to ensure that HBCUs continue their mission, while enhancing their competitiveness. As you and your staffs consider infrastructure funding through the budget reconciliation process, we would ask that you take into account the minimal infrastructure funding that HBCUs have received over the years and address this shortcoming.

According to a report conducted by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the average deferred maintenance backlog per HBCU is \$46 million. However, on many campuses it is much higher, and that number does not take into account new investments that are desperately needed to compete for faculty, students and serve the broader community. These financial hindrances have stalled progress but can be resolved through direct action.

Chairman Scott and Chairwoman Murray, this bicameral bill, with almost 100 cosponsors in the House and Senate, would dramatically improve the infrastructure of the more than one hundred






HBCUs. The investment through federal funding would modernize academic and residential facilities, improve access to health care, increase high-speed broadband offerings, and allow HBCUs to continue to provide high-quality research and community development. The legislation would also enhance the student experience through upgrades to campus facilities and academic spaces. Facilities at HBCUs are aging and need support from the federal government to aid in repairing campuses that have significant deferred maintenance backlogs. This much-needed funding would lift our institutions and allow us to continue to sustain global competitiveness.


History has shown us that contributing to the financial and structural success of HBCUs is pivotal to academic discoveries and breakthroughs. Our universities have produced some of the nation's greatest minds and the funding proposed would allow us to continue producing scholars. We hope that we can count on your support of this request by adding significant funding for our institutions through the budget reconciliation process. Conversely, failure to include such investments would leave a significant gap as Congress and the Biden-Harris administration seek to rebuild our nation's public infrastructure.


Thank you for your consideration of our request. Please know we are here to be a resource.


Respectfully,

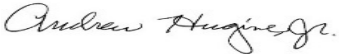

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cc: 1890 University Presidents and Chancellors
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Charles Schumer, Senate Majority Leader
The Honorable Debbie Stabenow, Chairwoman, Senate Agriculture Committee
The Honorable David Scott, Chairman, House Agriculture Committee
The Honorable Alma Adams, Co-chair, Bipartisan HBCU Caucus
The Honorable Chris Coons, Co-Chair, Bipartisan HBCU Caucus

