



March 18, 2020

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

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

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Ranking Member
House Committee on Education and Labor
2101 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Lowey, Ranking Member Granger, Chairman Scott, and Ranking Member Foxx:

We, the undersigned organizations, represent a collective group of institutions of higher education (IHEs) that are eligible to receive financial assistance under Titles III and V of the *Higher Education Act of 1965* (HEA). To allow our institutions to properly provide the needed services for their students, faculty, and staff in response to the virus named “SARS-CoV-2” causing a disease named “coronavirus disease 2019” (COVID-19)¹, we respectfully request that Congress set aside no less than \$1.5 billion specifically for the following institutions: Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs); Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs); Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs); Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs); Alaska Native-Serving Institutions and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions (ANNH); Native American-Serving, Nontribal Institutions (NASNTIs); and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs).

To be eligible to receive assistance under Titles III and Title V, institutions, with the exception of HBCUs and TCUs, must serve a percentage of students that meet a certain minority demographic, meet the requirements of a formula encompassing the percentage of students receiving need-based

¹ U.S. Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). *Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID 19)*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/summary.html>

aid, including Pell grants, and have a lower average amount of educational and general expenditures in comparison to like institutions.² Together, we serve over 6 million students nationwide and represent over 50% of all IHEs in the United States.³

Like all sectors of our society, the higher education system has been drastically impacted by COVID-19. There have been announcements of IHEs moving classes online, extending spring break, changing their grading systems to pass/fail, adapting their campuses to permit students to shelter in place, and simply shutting their doors all together while working to protect the health and safety of their students. While COVID-19 is having an obvious impact on all IHEs, the effect of this virus impacts our institutions to a much greater degree because our IHEs are under-resourced, often do not have the infrastructure to allow for distance education, and have historically lacked the requisite funding to address the inequities in the higher education system.

Our institutions are having to adapt quickly to many students not being on campus; providing quality academic programming through distance education; providing the professional development of faculty and staff to operate and teach in an online environment; and the potential loss of enrollment due to present circumstances. Also, because the vast majority of our students are low-income, first-generation college students, they are challenged with gaining access to the proper technology and equipment in their homes, assuming they are able to return to a place they call home, to successfully complete online work. While institutions with larger endowments and access to greater resources may find this period of time more manageable and are able to exercise greater flexibility, our institutions face the reality of wanting to allow for a seamless transition for faculty, staff, and students but unable to effectively achieve this due to the lack of available funding to support such a transition.

Again, it is our request that Congress set aside no less than \$1.5 billion specifically for institutions eligible to receive funding under Titles III and V to allow these institutions to properly provide the needed services for their faculty, staff, and students in response to COVID-19. We also request that Congress grant the Secretary of Education the flexibility to temporarily modify Titles III, V, and VII to allow for institutions to use current grant awards for emergency needs and provide the requested funding amount of no less than \$1.5 billion through current funding structures in Titles III, V, and VII.⁴ Doing so would not require the creation of a new grant program leading institutions to submit separate applications as this would only decrease the speediness of providing these urgent resources to address their immediate needs. In addition, we ask that Congress direct the Secretary to provide flexibilities to our institutions when complying with their program participation agreements in Title IV of the HEA and provide the necessary and needed relief to students regarding their financial aid in Title IV to reduce their financial burdens given this unforeseen circumstance.

We thank you for your favorable consideration of this request.

² Both HBCUs and TCUs are statutorily defined in the law and are not subject to the loss of financial assistance in Title III of the HEA.

³ The 2020 list of all minority-serving institutions (MSIs) from the Rutgers Center for Minority Serving Institutions shows that there is a total of 3,870 in the United States compared to a total of 7,021 Title IV institutions as identified by the National Center for Education Statistics.

⁴ For the purposes of this letter, Title VII of the HEA is in regard to programs in Part A, Subpart 4.

Sincerely,



Michael L. Lomax
President and CEO
UNCF



Harry L. Williams
President and CEO
TMCF



Lezli Baskerville
President and CEO
NAFEO



Antonio R. Flores
President and CEO
HACU



Carrie L. Billy
President and CEO
AIHEC



Rita Pin Ahrens
Executive Director
OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates

Cc:

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS (House Committee on Appropriations)

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS (House Committee on Appropriations)