

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 22, 2018

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As you prepare to finalize the FY 2018 appropriations process, we request that you restore and increase federal support to our nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). This is a critical time to invest in HBCUs, which collectively enroll more than 300,000 students. HBCUs serve a unique and crucial educational purpose, providing a gateway to the middle class for many first-generation, low-income, and minority Americans. Further, an HBCU education has been the common thread that runs through the stories of many of our nation's great leaders, innovators, and job creators.

HBCUs make substantial contributions to the nation's economic strength. A recent report by UNCF found that HBCUs generate \$14.8 billion in annual economic impact, as well as over 134,000 jobs, both on-campus and off. Having an HBCU degree lifted the lifetime earnings of their graduates by 56% -- or an estimated \$927,000 -- over what they would have earned without their degree.¹ Increased federal aid will only add to the job creating capacity of these institutions, and support even more students who will be able to reap the benefits of having a degree from an HBCU. We strongly support funds from the bipartisan budget agreement being invested in HBCUs, and ask for an additional investment for HBCU priorities in the final FY 2018 appropriations bill.

While there are many programs across the federal agencies that are important to HBCUs, we want to highlight two of the most pressing HBCU priorities:

Title III, Part B of the Higher Education Act, Strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities, is the key program providing institutional support for academic programs, student services, infrastructure, and technology needs at the 101 accredited HBCUs. Because HBCUs have traditionally been under-resourced, this formula-based program provides critical support to daily functions on campus as well as innovative efforts to produce graduates prepared for the modern, global workforce. The House and Senate appropriations bills each freeze discretionary funding at \$245 million for the program, but given increasing needs to serve the most economically and

¹ <https://www.uncf.org/hbcu-impact>

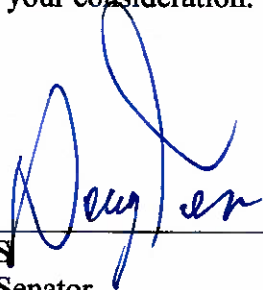
academically vulnerable students, additional resources are required. We ask for an increase in funding in the FY 2018 appropriations bill to help bring the program closer to full funding.

HBCU Capital Financing Program

Despite the important role HBCUs play in higher education, they have struggled financially due to having smaller endowments, less money from alumni giving, and lower levels of federal investment. As a result, the infrastructure of many of these institutions has not kept pace with their growing student bodies and the demands of training students for careers in the 21st century. The HBCU Capital Financing Program provides HBCUs with access to capital financing or refinancing for the repair, renovation, and construction of campus infrastructure. To aid in the effectiveness of this program, we ask that in the FY2018 appropriations bill, that the subcommittee reclassify the escrow account as a bond insurance fund so that public institutions participating in the program have the opportunity to use state funds to pay off loans more quickly.

Thank you for your consideration.

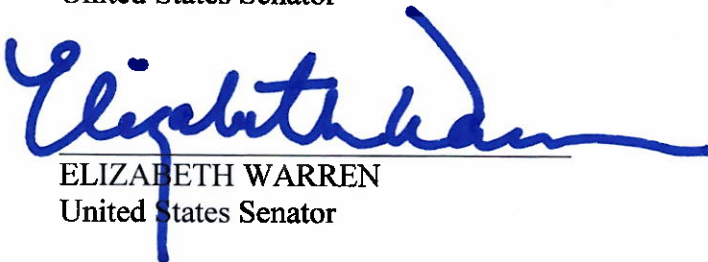
Sincerely,



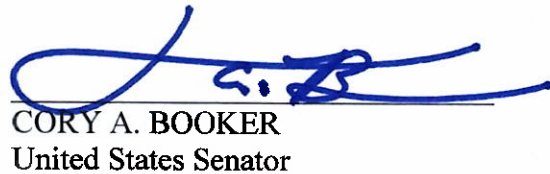
DOUG JONES
United States Senator




KAMALA D. HARRIS
United States Senator



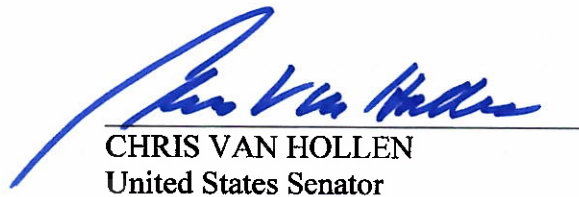
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