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New Orleans, LA

June 21, 2017

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Interior Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
131 Dirksen Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Chairman
Interior Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
B-308 Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom Udall
Ranking Member
Interior Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
125 Hart Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Ranking Member
Interior Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen Murkowski and Calvert and Ranking Members Udall and McCollum:

On behalf of UNCF (the United Negro College Fund), our 37-member private historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and the students they serve, thank you for your robust support of historic preservation included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (P.L. 115-31). We greatly appreciate the \$4 million investment in the HBCU Historic Preservation Program and the provision that waives the match requirement. These funds will revive this program after 8 years without an appropriation. For FY 2018, we ask for your continued support for this vital initiative through a \$50 million investment, which will help preserve the legacy of hundreds of historic buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places across HBCU campuses.

The federal government has been an integral partner in preserving HBCU campuses. In 1987, the Department of Interior's Office of Historically Black College and University Programs and Job Corps launched the HBCU Historic Preservation Initiative. The purpose of the initiative was to identify and preserve historically significant and critically threatened structures at our nation's HBCUs. After surveying 106 HBCUs, the Department awarded \$10 million to 11 HBCUs with historic buildings with the greatest need of repairs. To date, there are 61 HBCUs with historic properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. And the HBCU Historic Preservation initiative has helped to fundamentally strengthen neighborhood stabilization through heritage tourism, economic development and job creation.

While the HBCU Historic Preservation Program has been successful, the threat to the legacy of HBCUs persists. In 1997, the Congressional Black Caucus requested a study by the Government Accountability Office which determined that more than 700 historic buildings at 103 HBCUs needed over \$755 million in repairs. That would be over \$1 billion in today's dollars. Additionally, in 1998 the National Trust for Historic Preservation designated HBCUs as one of eleven most endangered historic sites in the nation. Just last month Azikiwe-Nkrumah Hall was added to the list; it is the oldest building at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, the site of the first degree-granting institution in the world to educate former slaves. Azikiwe-Nkrumah Hall was in use for nearly a century and a half but recently closed.

Further investments in HBCUs are needed to save historic national treasures that are deteriorating on campuses due to insufficient resources. The President's FY 2018 budget request proposes to eliminate competitive grants-in-aid for the HBCU Historic Preservation Program despite a \$4 million appropriation in FY 2017 to jumpstart the initiative. This proposal shortchanges HBCUs which operate on shoestring budgets. Due to the great needs at HBCU campuses, we ask for \$50 million to revive this program and that the match requirement provision is again waived in FY 2018. Funding for this initiative is overdue and will renew our nation's commitment to the stewardship of a critical aspect of American history.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and, again, we urge your support in helping HBCUs get the resources they need to restore America's national treasures.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael L. Lomax". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "L".

Michael L. Lomax, Ph.D.
President & CEO