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UNCF.org

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Xavier University
New Orleans, LA

August 23, 2017

The Honorable Andrew Bremberg
Director, Domestic Policy Council
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Betsy DeVos
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Director Bremberg and Secretary DeVos:

On behalf of UNCF and our member historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), I am writing in regard to the 2017 National HBCU Week Conference sponsored by the White House Initiative on HBCUs and the U.S. Department of Education.

After thoughtful deliberation, UNCF joins with other HBCU advocacy organizations in requesting a postponement of the annual HBCU conference in September sponsored by the White House Initiative on HBCUs, and we ask you to reconsider yesterday's announcement that the White House will move forward with the conference. At a critical time in our nation, and in the spirit of unity among our HBCUs, we believe this postponement would allow us to work together to develop a common agenda that will serve the best interests of our HBCUs, and especially our students.

UNCF recommends that the White House postpone the HBCU conference in order to focus on appointing an Executive Director of the White House Initiative who has the respect of the HBCU community and establishing this office as part of the Domestic Policy Council, as set forth in Executive Order 13779 signed in February; convening the President's Board of Advisors on HBCUs; and developing a meaningful plan of action with concrete commitments to invest in and advance HBCUs. UNCF previously has provided the Administration with a [roadmap](#) for such investments, and we look forward to working with you to identify the highest short-and long-term priorities.

UNCF and our member institutions believe that these actions would best actualize the Administration's commitment to HBCUs in lieu of the convening planned for September. Further, UNCF will not release, as part of the conference, an important national HBCU economic impact study that we have commissioned if the conference occurs as planned.

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We make this recommendation in the spirit of sincerely advancing our mutual goals of promoting excellence and innovation at the nation's HBCUs and enhancing their unique educational, economic and civic contributions to the country.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like additional information on UNCF's views.

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 and CEO

cc: UNCF member presidents
General John Kelly, Executive Office of the President
Omarosa O. Manigault, Office of Public Liaison
Ja'Ron Smith, Domestic Policy Council
Robert Goad, Domestic Policy Council
Joshua Venable, U.S. Department of Education
James Manning, U.S. Department of Education
Arthur McMahan, White House Initiative on HBCUs