



August 18, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor & Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor & Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Chairman
Committee on Education & Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Ranking Member
Committee on Education & Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Murray, Ranking Member Burr, Chairman Scott, and Ranking Member Foxx:

As the House and the Senate consider funding priorities for the upcoming reconciliation bill, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) and the more than 500 Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) located throughout the United States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, request that the committees you so ably lead address the persistent inequity plaguing our institutions that have been severely underfunded since Fiscal Year (FY) 1995. Specifically, **we urge Congress to ensure that HSIs receive equitable funding to effectively educate and serve their diverse student populations.** Even though HSIs are requesting equitable funding, **we are not suggesting that this be done at the expense of other Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs); rather, we endorse the idea that each MSI cohort receive a fair share of funding proportionate to the number of institutions it represents or to the number of students it enrolls.**

COVID-19 also exacerbated the funding needs of HSIs: delayed deferred maintenance, access to broadband, enhanced classroom facilities, and wrap-around student services. HSIs are in dire need of substantial federal funding to support the interrupted education of college students due to the pandemic.

As the pandemic lingers on, HSI funding needs will persist and become more critical to meet the requirements of facilities and health mandates, upgrade classrooms, provide access to broadband and technology, offer mental health resources, and deliver general student support services. Without this financial support, many HSIs will undoubtedly succumb to financial distress due to these insurmountable economic burdens. Sadly, some have already done so.

During this time, we request the final budget reconciliation bill include the following key areas of funding for HSIs:

- As Congress makes the historic investment in HSIs and other MSIs, we call to ensure that **there is sufficient funding for those students who choose to enroll at HSIs and MSIs**, as outlined in the American Families Plan.

- **Increased funding for Title V Programs:**

- **Title V, Part A, Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions:** Since 1995, funds received from Title V, Part A, have allowed HSIs to expand their academic and faculty programs, administration, infrastructure, technology, endowment, and other urgently needed resources. However, federal funding has not kept pace with the growing number of HSIs, from 311 in 2010 to 569 in 2019, creating inequitable funding. **We urge you to increase the authorization level for Title V, Part A to \$500 million and appropriate this funding in the reconciliation package.**
- **Title V, Part B, Promoting Postbaccalaureate Opportunities for Hispanic Americans:** In the 2018-19 academic year, HSIs throughout the U.S. and Puerto Rico awarded 42% of all Hispanic graduate degrees. However, many underfunded HSIs, do not have the infrastructure to offer advanced degree programs. Title V, Part B funding took a significant hit in 2014 when an annual \$10 million mandatory appropriation expired. **We urge you to reauthorize the mandatory appropriation of Title V, Part B and to fully appropriate the program through reconciliation at \$100 million.**

- **HSIs Capital Financing Grant Program:** Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, HSIs lacked sufficient funding and resources for up-to-date and “smart” technology equipped classrooms, modern science labs, human patient simulators and skills labs, libraries, and other infrastructure needs. Currently, many HSI classrooms are out of date, libraries lack essential digital assets and holders, and buildings are not equipped with the necessary broadband technology to enhance the learning experience for all students. Now these needs are compounded and even more urgent. **HACU and its members call on Congress to invest in HSIs by establishing an HSIs Capital Financing Grant Program with an authorization and appropriation level of \$10 billion to address the pressing infrastructure needs of HSIs.**

- **Pell Grants:** HSIs serve 33% of Pell recipients in the country and some of them are the most financially needy students. The Pell Grant award has not kept up with the rising cost of college. Therefore, we call upon Congress to **make necessary investments to restore the purchasing power of the Pell Grant by doubling the Pell amount** and allowing it to cover the full cost of college, including books, computers/laptops, internet, and room and board expenses. HACU is also calling on Congress to extend Pell Grant eligibility for DACA-eligible and temporary protected status students.

As the nation looks to rebuild the economy after the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical that existing federal investments strengthen our workforce by enhancing the educational infrastructure of HSIs to pave a path of success and opportunity for all the students that our institutions serve. We request this funding increase on behalf of the 569 HSIs and the 5.24 million students that they serve.

The Honorable Patty Murray, The Honorable Richard Burr
The Honorable Bobby Scott, The Honorable Virginia Foxx
August 18, 2021
Page 3

HSIs receive a mere 68 cents for every dollar going to all other colleges and universities annually, per student, from all federal funding sources. HSIs comprised 17% of colleges and universities nationally, they educate more than two-thirds of the estimated 3.8 million Hispanic college students in the U.S. They also enroll 41.3% of Asian, 35.6% of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, 26.2% of multi-racial, 24.2% of Black, and 15% of White students. **Therefore, HACU and HSIs are calling for equitable funding for each MSI cohort so that they receive a fair share of funding that is proportionate to the number of institutions they represent or to the number of students they enroll.**

If HACU or I can be of assistance during the reconciliation process, please do not hesitate to contact me at antonio.flores@hacu.net or at 210-576-3214.

Respectfully,



Antonio R. Flores
President and CEO

cc: The Honorable Ben Ray Luján, Member, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions
The Honorable Catherine Cortez Masto
The Honorable Bob Menendez
The Honorable Alex Padilla
The Honorable Raul Ruiz, Chair, Congressional Hispanic Caucus
The Honorable Joaquin Castro, Co-Chair, Congressional HSI Caucus
The Honorable Raul M. Grijalva, Co-Chair, Congressional HSI Caucus
The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart, Co-Chair, Congressional HSI Caucus
The Honorable Jenniffer Gonzalez-Colon, Co-Chair, Congressional HSI Caucus
The Honorable Teresa Leger Fernandez, Member, House Committee on Education & Labor
The Honorable Adriano Espaillat, Member, House Committee on Education & Labor