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August 18, 2021

The Honorable Joe Manchin III
Chairman
Committee on Energy & Natural Resources
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Barrasso
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy & Natural Resources
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman
Committee on Energy & Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy & Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Hispanic-Serving Institutions' (HSIs) Priority for Reconciliation Bill

Dear Chairman Manchin, Ranking Member Barrasso, Chairman Pallone, and Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers:

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, write to **underscore the urgency of creating two nationally recognized laboratories focused on climate change and its impacts on underserved populations that would be anchored on two HSI campuses through an open competition among all eligible HSIs.** These national labs would address the severe impacts of climate change, climate gentrification, and weatherization in the communities and regions they would serve, but also the dearth of Hispanics and other minorities in science and engineering.

The [American Jobs Plan](#) calls for a \$40 billion investment in upgrading research infrastructure in laboratories across the country, and half of this funding is earmarked for HSIs and other Minority-Serving Institutions, which includes the creation of a new national lab focused on climate to be affiliated with an HBCU. HACU applauds this proposal and, **again, as you proceed through the reconciliation process, I urge you to consider the strong tradition of HSI climate research and resilience on a local, national, and global scale and set aside funding for two different HSI national labs.**

HSIs that are research intensive or very research-intensive universities would serve as anchor research centers for consortia of HSIs, including community colleges and regional universities, to operate as innovative and decentralized cluster labs. This distributed but strongly coordinated approach would also allow consortia members to identify and support talented and promising underrepresented and underserved students for science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) careers. These HSI national labs would democratize STEM opportunities and promote greater collaboration across institutions.

The following are some examples of research on a national and global scale performed at HSIIs:

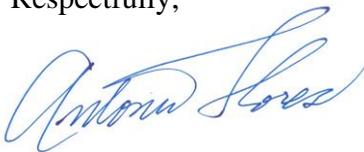
- Conducting global environmental research and engaging in investigation and collaboration with other countries to analyze data-driven models using different carbon-neutral and resilient scenarios.
- Leading collaborations on multiple disciplines and leaders on environmental, economic, and social challenges of sustainability to provide a comprehensive evaluation of climate and land-use changes and their impacts on water supply, further assisting local, state, and federal entities with drought contingency planning.
- Performing research for the integration of ecosystem and local community planning to build resilience to climate change and to examine a comprehensive approach to other landscape features such as wildfire risk and water sustainability. This also includes critical new research on sustainability of natural ecosystems under climate change and other human disturbances.

In an effort to promote innovation, creativity, and ingenuity in finding climate solutions that are critical in serving our economy and communities, and promote scientific inquiry, the selection of an anchor HSI for each national lab would be an open competition among all HSIIs.

HACU, our 569 institutions of higher education, and over 5 million students **respectfully request your support of this proposal that recognizes the value and importance of the local, national, and global research delivered by HSIIs**. HACU is ready to work with you to meet the needs of our communities by creating two national laboratories focused on climate change that can serve as a hallmark for academic inquiry for all HSIIs through an open competition.

If HACU or I can be of assistance in 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 Martin Heinrich, Member, Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources
The Honorable Mark Kelly, Member, Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources
The Honorable Ben Ray Luján
The Honorable Bob Menendez
The Honorable Catherine Cortez Masto, Member, Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources
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 Nanette Diaz-Barragan, Member, Energy Subcommittee, House Committee on Energy & Commerce