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November 30, 2021

The Honorable Robert Menendez  
United States Senate  
528 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senate  
313 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Ben Ray Lujan  
United States Senate  
498 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Alex Padilla  
United States Senate  
112 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Menendez, Cortez Masto, Lujan, and Padilla:

On behalf of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), I am writing to convey HACU's stance with respect to the *Institutional Grants for New Infrastructure, Technology, and Education (IGNITE) for HBCU Excellence Act* (H.R. 3294) and *Build Back Better Act* (H.R. 5376). Because of your steadfast support for Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) and your commitment to fair and equitable funding for HSIs and other Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs), we respectfully urge you to lead the way and ensure that our nation's 569 HSIs, many of them in your respective states, are funded in an objective, fair and equitable manner, proportionate to the student populations they serve, in comparison to other MSIs. The national Hispanic community has been consistently short-changed in federal funding negotiations and it is long past time the 5.24 million needy students educated by HSIs receive the same support as other MSI students.

HSIs are consistently compared to other MSI cohorts, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) but our institutions have yet to receive funding that is commiserate with the exponential growth of HSIs and of our student body population. In fact, HSIs increased from 293 in 2009 to 569 in 2019. HSIs are also consistently asked to do more with less. The first Congressional appropriation to HSIs in Fiscal Year (FY) 1995 was a meager \$12 million for more than 125 HSIs and at the most recent funding cycle (FY2021), the funding for HSIs was only \$314.8 million, a 25% increase in a span of 26 years.

We are optimistic that your exemplary dedication to the success of HSIs and commitment to fair and equitable funding will ensure that these institutions are funded in accordance with their considerable needs and those of the underserved students they educate. You can lead the way to ensure our institutions are appropriated funding matching their representation with the below pieces of legislation.

### **H.R. 3294 - *IGNITE HBCU Excellence Act***

HSIs represent 17% of the total higher education institutions nationwide and 81% of the HSI, HBCU, and TCU institutional total; however, they are dramatically underrepresented and underfunded when MSI legislation is considered. When first approached about supporting the *IGNITE HBCU Excellence Act*, HACU was asked to accept less than the CRRSSA mandatory formula (39%) allocated to HSIs, even though these 569 HSIs have a total enrollment of 5.24 million students, compared to 100 HBCUs with a total enrollment of 288,000 students<sup>1</sup>, and 32 TCUs with a total enrollment of approximately 30,000 students<sup>2</sup>.

In recent negotiations, it has been discussed that HBCUs receive 41% of the funding, TCUs 10%, and that HSIs, with the greatest number of institutions and enrollment, receive 38.5%, compared to the previously established formula of 39% in CRRSSA. Although 39% is far from fair and equitable for HSIs, HACU was asked to work within the confines of current COVID-19 relief formulae and this percentage is still less than equitable for HSIs. This percentage would set HSIs to receive unfathomable inequitable funding, when considering student population and the number of institutions, pitting HSIs against one another in competition for a meager amount of funding.

<sup>1</sup> <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=667>

<sup>2</sup> <https://sites.ed.gov/whiaiane/tribes-tcus/tribal-colleges-and-universities/>

**H.R. 5376 - Build Back Better Act**

HACU applauds the *Build Back Better* (BBB) Act's aim of providing much-needed resources to higher education and appreciates the increase in HSI STEM and Articulation Programs as well. Also, HSIs are home to 33% of Pell grant recipients and celebrate the bill's largest ever increase in Pell grant funding and its expansion to DACA and TPS students.

However, we urge your support of HACU's proposed allocation formula regarding the \$3 billion Research & Development Infrastructure for MSIs under BBB: Allocate funding for each MSI cohort based on each cohort's enrollment or Pell grant recipients. HACU recently reached out to the American Indian Higher Education Consortiums (AIHEC) and the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO) to discuss this proposed allocation but did not receive a response from our fellow MSI cohort representatives. HACU supports an open and inclusive funding process to promote innovation, creativity, and ingenuity that are critical in serving our economy and communities.

Demographically, HSIs are a microcosm of America's diversity and represent the largest cohort of MSIs. The 5.24 million students at HSIs includes 67% of the 3.8 million Hispanic college students across the country, 24% of all African Americans in higher education, 42% of Asian Americans, 36% of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, 26% of multi-racial, and 15% of non-Hispanic white college students.

Investing in HSIs is an investment in the success of the future workforce of the United States. Hispanics accounted for more than 51% of all the U.S. population growth between 2010 and 2020, and the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that the Hispanic population will grow by 93.5% from 2016 to 2060.<sup>3</sup> HACU respectfully asks you to voice our concerns on the inequity and the notable lack of fairness for HSIs to your colleagues in Congress and help us champion the many HSIs and Hispanic constituents in your respective states. Your leadership and advocacy for HSIs would not only benefit Hispanic students but all students attending HSIs. The pervasive inequities in funding HSIs will indeed negatively impact our country and its pressing needs for a diverse, skilled, and well-educated workforce.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration of this request. **Again, we ask you for your support on fair and equitable funding specifically as it relates to the *IGNITE HBCU Excellence Act* and the *Build Back Better Act*.** HACU is ready to work with you and to serve as a resource. Please do not hesitate to contact me at [antonio.flores@hacu.net](mailto:antonio.flores@hacu.net) or at 210-576-3214.

Respectfully,



Antonio R. Flores  
HACU President and CEO

cc: HACU Governing Board Members

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2020/demo/p25-1144.pdf>