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September 24, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Chairman Bobby Scott
Committee on Education & Labor
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairwoman Patty Murray
Committee on Health, Education, Labor &
Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Schumer, Chairman Scott, and Chairwoman Murray:

On behalf of the 569 Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), located in 28 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, that the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) represents, **I urge you to retain the language in the Education & Labor Committee's Committee print of its portion of the *Build Back Better Act*, by ensuring the Research & Development Infrastructure Competitive Grant Program remains open and competitive.** The current text provides an open and competitive grant program for Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) with no set asides for any specific MSI subgroup, which keeps grant funding opportunities open and accessible to HSIs, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs), and all other MSIs.

HSIs educate and serve the most diverse and neediest college student population, representing 5.24 million students. Although HSIs account for 17% of U.S. colleges and universities, 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.

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 Currently, many HSI classrooms are out of date, libraries lack essential digital assets and holdings, and buildings are not equipped with the necessary broadband technology to enhance the learning experience for all students. Now during the pandemic these needs are compounded and even more urgent.

HSIs not only need substantial funding to address the interrupted education of students due to the pandemic, but they are also long overdue for investments to help bolster their research capacity through technology and facility improvements. Although only 5% of all 4-year HSIs are classified as R1, according to the Carnegie Classification, they are making immeasurable contributions and performing research on a national and global scale.

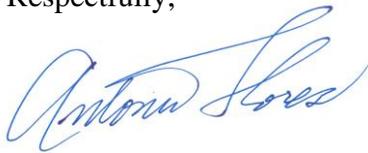
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We are at a critical juncture to upgrade America's research infrastructure. U.S. leadership in new technologies—from cybersecurity to biotechnology to climate change research—is critical to both of our future economic competitiveness and our national security. The Research & Development Infrastructure Competitive Grant Program in the *Build Back Better Act* would help hundreds of HSIs without the necessary and sufficient infrastructure funding to invest in classrooms and laboratory space, deferred maintenance projects, and hire and retain faculty, students, and research-related staff to advance academic programs and facilities. It is imperative that Congress ensures that this program remains to be open and competitive so that HSIs can compete equally for these desperately needed funds. **However, if the reconciliation package moves away from an open and competitive grant program for MSIs, I request that you consider the mandatory formula used in the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) as a compromise, even though this formula is far from equitable for HSIs and other MSIs.**

As you consider historical investments for MSIs in the reconciliation process, I urge you to ensure that programs do not further isolate and underfund HSIs by providing for an open and inclusive funding process. To promote innovation, creativity, and ingenuity that are critical in serving our economy and communities, and promote scientific inquiry, **I respectfully request that you recognize the importance of HSIs and their academic and research contributions by ensuring that the Research & Development Infrastructure Competitive Grant Program remains open and competitive with no set asides for any specific MSI subgroup.**

Thank you for considering this request. I am ready to work with you and to serve as a resource. Please do not hesitate to contact me antonio.flores@hacu.net or at 210-576-3214.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Antonio Flores". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Antonio R. Flores
President and CEO