United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 4, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell and Leader Schumer:

We write today to respectfully request immediate Senate consideration of the *Fostering Undergraduate Talent by Unlocking Resources for Education (FUTURE) Act*. This important bipartisan legislation would reauthorize funding for Title III, Part F of the Higher Education Act of 1965, which provides mandatory funds for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), and other minority serving-institutions (MSIs). Mandatory funding benefiting these institutions lapsed on September 30, 2019.

HBCUs, TCUs, and MSIs are an essential component of America's higher education and workforce development system. MSIs serve nearly 6 million students, accounting for more than one-quarter of all undergraduates across the nation. These institutions enroll a significant share of all students of color. For example, HSIs account for nearly 15 percent of all non-profit colleges and universities, but enroll two-thirds of all Hispanic students. Also, while HBCUs only comprise 8.5 percent of all four-year institutions, they enroll, on average, 24 percent of all black undergraduates pursuing a bachelor's degree, graduate 26 percent of all black bachelor's degrees, and graduate 32 percent of STEM degrees earned by black students. The student population across all TCUs is 78 percent American Indian and Alaska Native. Similarly, these schools disproportionately enroll low-income students – more than 75 percent of students at HBCUs and 90 percent of students at TCUs receive Pell Grants, compared to only 32 percent of all students.

Title III, Part F funding is critical to ensuring these institutions are able to best serve their students. This funding is used for an array of purposes across campuses. Many schools use these funds to improve student services and academic programs like counseling, tutoring, mentoring, and STEM and career training programs. Numerous institutions use the funding to perform technology maintenance and expansion in order to provide students with up-to-date technology and vital learning opportunities such as computer labs, research institutes, and educational experiences. Others put the investment toward capital improvements like constructing affordable housing, renovating facilities, and creating learning spaces for students. All told, the Title III, Part F funding is a lifeline for these institutions to strengthen their academic, administrative, and fiscal capacities.

The bipartisan *FUTURE Act* will allow HBCUs, TCUs, and MSIs across the country to keep their doors open and continue to generate more opportunities for their students, disproportionate percentages of whom are for the low-income students and students of color. This funding stream plays a vital role in increasing institutional capacity at MSIs and in generating more opportunities for students of color to attain degrees in STEM fields and secure good-paying jobs, generating a strong economic impact. HBCUs, for example, have created over 134,000 jobs and have produced over $10 billion in gross regional product and a total annual economic impact of nearly $15 billion.

Unfortunately, funding for this program lapsed due to Senate inaction last month. The House of Representatives passed the *FUTURE Act* by a voice vote last month. Given the importance of this funding to hundreds of institutions and millions of students, we request that the Senate delay no longer and take up the bipartisan *FUTURE Act* immediately to avoid permanent damage to our nation's historic colleges.

Sincerely,

Doug Jones

Jon Tester

Patty Murray

Christopher A. Coons

Chris Van Hollen

Kamala D. Harris

Michael F. Bennet

Tom Udall

Richard J. Durbin

Elizabeth Warren

Cory A. Booker

Sherrod Brown

Catherine Cortez Masto

Dianne Feinstein

Jacky Rosen

Tina Smith

Tammy Baldwin

Kyrsten Sinema

Robert P. Casey, Jr.

Mark R. Warner

Benjamin L. Cardin

Amy Klobuchar

Tim Kaine

Christopher S. Murphy

Brian Schatz

Joe Manchin III

Thomas R. Carper

Tammy Duckworth

Kirsten Gillibrand

Bernard Sanders

Mazie K. Hirono

Gary C. Peters

Maria Cantwell

Richard Blumenthal

Martin Heinrich

Edward J. Markey

Robert Menendez

Debbie Stabenow