

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 23, 2019

The Honorable James M. Inhofe
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Room SR-228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives
2216 Rayburn House office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Room SR-228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives
2216 Rayburn House office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Inhofe, Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Reed, and Ranking Member Thornberry,

We write today to respectfully urge you to adopt the House of Representatives' funding level for the Department of Defense's Historically Black College and University and Minority Institution (HBCU/MI) program in the final National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for fiscal year 2020. The HBCU/MI program is designed to increase the participation of HBCU/MIs and minority students in the Department of Defense's (DoD's) research, development, test and evaluation (RDT&E) programs and activities. Robust support for this essential program will improve access to pipelines to opportunity for aspiring leaders, researchers, and innovators from HBCUs and other minority-serving institutions, bolstering and diversifying our STEM workforce while strengthening our national security.

Congress supports research and development activities at DoD primarily through the funding of DoD's RDT&E funding. These funds support the development of the nation's future military hardware and software, as well as the science and technology base upon which those products rely. Through the RDT&E program, the U.S. Military explores new technologies and capabilities and develops them into weapons systems and platforms that are crucial to the nation's national security. Furthermore, DoD encourages the participation of minority-serving schools and research institutions of varying sizes through grants, cooperative agreements, and contracts in the HBCU/MI program.

The fiscal year 2019 NDAA included \$40.414 million in funding for the HBCU/MI program.

However, for fiscal year 2020, the bipartisan Senate bill included just \$32.708 million for the program, a reduction of \$7.7 million, while the House of Representatives' version included a total of \$50.708 million. We believe that this program plays a vital role in providing HBCUs and other minority-serving institutions with the ability to compete for DoD grants and contracts on a more level playing field with other stakeholders, and, accordingly, urge you to adopt the House's funding level in the final NDAA for fiscal year 2020.

HBCUs and other minority-serving institutions are integral education institutions that provide pipelines to opportunity for scores of students, many of whom come from underserved backgrounds. Funding reductions for the HBCU/MI program would run the risk of reducing access to avenues for participation and engagement in rapid-growth and high-return fields such as science, technology, engineering, and math, where communities of color and low-income students have traditionally been underrepresented. Participants in the HBCU/MI program will undoubtedly continue to play a vital role in assisting the DoD in countering the emerging threats facing our nation.

We appreciate your attention to this important matter and request that the final NDAA for fiscal year 2020 include the total \$50,708,000 for the HBCU/MI program at the Department of Defense.

Sincerely,



Tim Scott
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator