

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

December 17, 2019

The Honorable Mike T. Esper
Secretary of Defense
Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-3010

Dear Secretary Esper:

We write to you regarding the importance of strategically investing in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and other minority-serving institutions (MSIs) to support the U.S. Department of Defense's mission.

The Department of Defense (DoD) is the largest employer of scientists and engineers in the nation and the second largest funder of academic research and development. Universities received over \$4.1 billion in DoD science and engineering funding (including research and development funding) in Fiscal Year 2017. Unfortunately, the DoD grants HBCUs and minority-serving institutions 0.4 percent, or less than half of a percent of those funds. Additionally, in 2018, the National Science Foundation found that African Americans are underrepresented in the science and engineering labor force by 62 percent. HBCUs play a pivotal role in filling this void, graduating nearly 30 percent of all African-American STEM professionals.¹

HBCUs and MSIs must be a central component of our national defense strategy. They are in dire need of both sustainable federal funding and strategic broadening of research capabilities. Merely increasing funding for HBCUs and MSIs will not support the long-term development needed to maintain America's dominance in science and engineering. Preparing for future threats requires innovation and investment in research and development, as underscored in the National Defense Strategy. By leaving significant segments of intellectual capital untapped, we will fail to realize the full potential of military readiness in the future.

The House and the Senate have acted in a bipartisan manner for over a decade to address this issue. In the Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), Congress established a program in 10 USC 2362 to enhance defense-related research and education at minority institutions. In oversight of this objective, Section 233

¹ National Science Foundation, "Info Brief, National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics," <https://www.nsf.gov/statistics/2019/nsf19314/overview.htm#fn1>

of the FY2016 NDAA required all basic research entities of the Department of Defense to develop strategies for engaging and supporting STEM in HBCUs and other MSIs.²

As we believe the nation must be better prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century, Congress took additional action in the FY2020 NDAA by directing a study by the National Study on Defense Research at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Other Minority Institutions to review the state of defense research at minority institutions. The study will build on the previously required strategies and recommend actions that will build the necessary defense capacity at HBCUs and other MSIs in a self-sufficient and sustainable manner.

In support of the existing laws and in advance of the pending study, we request the following information:

1. In your response to Representative Hank Johnson last year, you stated that you were going to establish a baseline, in accordance with Section 233(a)(2)(B),³ which requires metrics for progress of HBCUs and other MSIs in competing for research funding from DoD's basic research entities. Have you established this baseline? If so, what were the results? If not, when will you establish this baseline?
2. Section 233(a)(1),⁴ requires the heads of each basic research entity to submit strategies to engage HBCUs and other MSIs. However, not all entities that conduct basic research have submitted such strategies. Can you provide an update on how many strategies are outstanding and from which entities?
3. What progress has been made in involving HBCUs and other MSIs in the development of research partnerships, mentoring, training and outreach programs to create a pipeline of trained, qualified personnel?
4. Does the DoD have plans to establish a technical development program to meet the manpower needs of the nation's arsenals, depots, supply centers, medical support, and other specialty facilities for new jobs required to support these activities? If so, please describe how the DoD plans to include HBCUs and other MSIs in such a program.

Strengthening STEM in HBCUs and other MSIs is a high priority for Congress, and we look forward to your written response no later than January 31, 2020. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

² Public Law 114-92 (2015). <https://www.congress.gov/114/plaws/publ92/PLAW-114publ92.pdf>

³ *Ibid.*

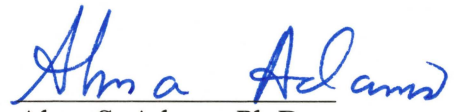
⁴ *Ibid.*



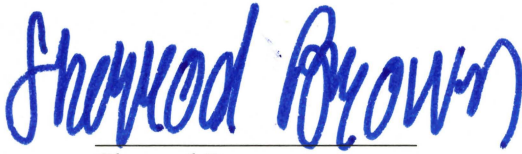
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress



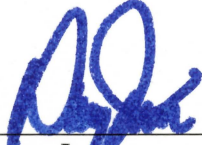
Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress



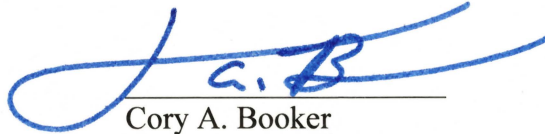
Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



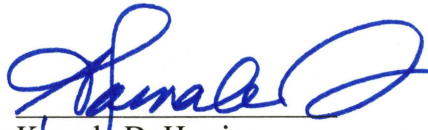
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



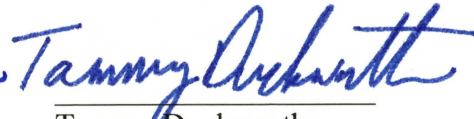
Doug Jones
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



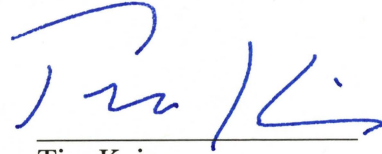
Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator



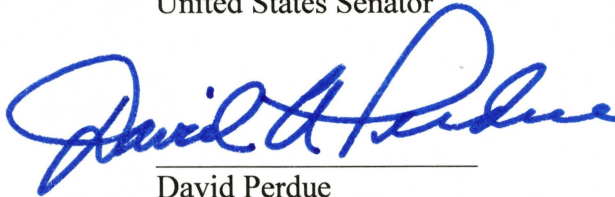
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



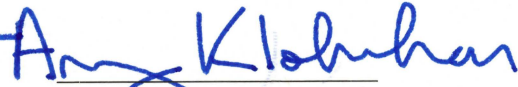
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



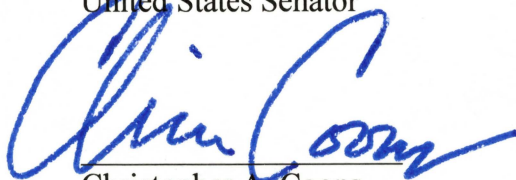
Tim Kaine
United States Senator



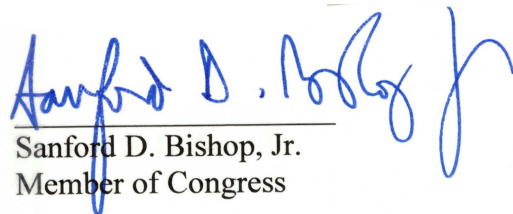
David Perdue
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



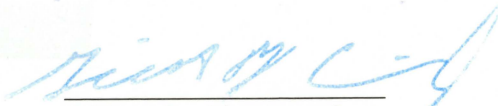
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress



André Carson
Member of Congress



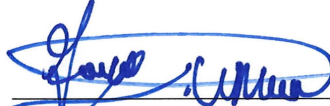
Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.
Member of Congress



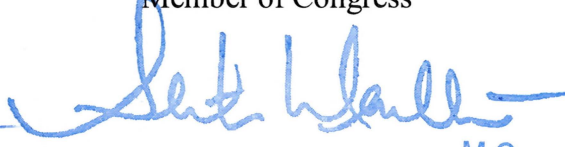
Wm. Lacy Clay
Member of Congress



Brenda L. Lawrence
Member of Congress



Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress

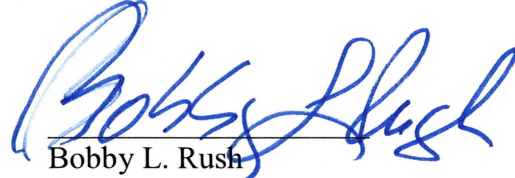


Seth Moulton
Member of Congress

M.C.



Cedric L. Richmond
Member of Congress



Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress



Terri Sewell
Member of Congress