

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 19, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington D.C., 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington D.C., 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C., 20510

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Chairman Shelby, and Ranking Member Leahy,

As the Senate anticipates consideration of a third supplemental appropriations package in response to COVID-19, we respectfully request that a one-time increase of \$1.5 billion is added to Minority-Serving Institutions and Historically Black Colleges and Universities under Title III, Part A and B, Title V, and Title VII of the *Higher Education Act* and such sums as necessary for Howard University for the ongoing fiscal year 2020. We ask that this funding become available immediately due to the extra costs these institutions are facing in light of having to close their schools early and switch to distance education.

Title III, V, and VII institutions are facing unique challenges in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These institutions include under-resourced community colleges and four-year colleges, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Predominantly Black Institutions, Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities, and Native American-Serving, Nontribal Institutions, serve some of our nation's most promising, yet vulnerable students. Further, these schools too often struggle financially due to having smaller endowments, less money from alumni giving, and lower levels of federal investment. As a result, Title III, V, and VII funding plays a vital role in supporting these institutions by providing funds for activities such as developing or improving academic programs, establishing endowment funds, and integrating computer technology into institutional facilities.

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As institutions of higher education respond to the threat of COVID-19 around the country, a one-time immediate increase of Title III, V, and VII funding is needed now more than ever. Specifically, the move to distance education, is presenting a challenge for these institutions. Many of these institutions did not have distance education embedded in their curriculum and are now having to struggle to provide the infrastructure to continue instruction remotely. For example, Morehouse College in Atlanta, GA does not yet have access to mobile learning technology and is now buying 1,000 WiFi hotspots for students to use. Additionally, students moving off of campus are potentially asking for refunds for both room and board from these institutions with the potential to cause a \$2-\$4 million-dollar debt. Lastly, many of these institutions are picking up the extra cost of housing those students that are experiencing the harshest hardships.

An immediate one time increase of \$1.5 billion dollars to Title III, V, and VII funding and such sums as necessary for Howard University will provide these institutions with the flexibility they need to continue serving our nation's students. Title III, V, and VII institutions are a refuge for the communities of students that they serve, and in these uncertain times they are needed now more than ever. Assuring an increase in funding for Title III, V, and VII will allow these schools to continue operating without fear of going bankrupt or having to raise tuition next year.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and for your continued attention to this important priority.

Sincerely,



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Tim Kaine

Tim Kaine
United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Doug Jones
United States Senator

Kamala D. Harris

Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Jon Tester
United States Senator

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Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator