April 20, 2020

The Honorable Robert “Bobby” Scott The Honorable Lamar Alexander Chairman Chairman

House Education and Labor Committee Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor Washington, DC 20515 and Pensions

Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Virginia Foxx The Honorable Patty Murray

Ranking Member Ranking Member

House Education and Labor Committee Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor Washington, DC 20515 and Pensions

Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Scott and Alexander and Ranking Members Foxx and Murray:

On behalf of the 19 University leaders that comprise the Council of 1890 Universities, I write to you with an urgent request for additional federal funding and support. Our higher education institutions are continuing to experience great losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We appreciate the resources that have been allocated thus far by the Congress. However, the situation for our Universities becomes more dire each day.

We have all had to quickly pivot and transition from primarily on-campus teaching and instruction to strictly online and distance-learning. None of us had the necessary infrastructure or resources available or in place for such a dramatic shift. In addition, we have had to refund institutional fees and provide many students – especially our international students – with temporary housing. As we plan for the remainder of this disrupted school year, our summer and fall sessions, and look beyond, we also anticipate losses due to significant drops in student enrollment, state budget cuts, reduced research funding and additional technology infrastructure expenses.

To that end, the Council of 1890 Universities is respectfully submitting for your consideration a Three-Point Plan that addresses our top needs at this time. The primary goal of our request is to ensure that we are able to maintain our Universities at their full capacity in our communities and make certain that resource needs created by the pandemic are met.

While the 1890 Universities face many of the same challenges as other schools in the larger Association of Public Land Grant Universities (APLU), our history and heritage present additional, unique challenges. The 1890 Universities were so named in the Morrill Act of 1890, which allowed Land Grant Colleges to create separate (but not equal) colleges for citizens of African descent

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rather than integrate their existing, established 1862 Land Grant schools. In return, Congress was to provide annual appropriations to each state to support such schools. As such, federal and state support represent an overwhelming majority of our Universities’ annual budgets.

In addition to being part of the Land Grant system, our 1890 Universities are among the more than 100 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the United States. Collectively, the 1890 Universities serve more than 93,000 students, with more than 61,000 (74%) of these students being of African descent. We are also home to many first-generation and low-income students who attend our institutions.

In addition to the three points below, one step that you can immediately take on our behalf is to urge the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to release our appropriated FY 2020 funding as soon as possible and issue guidance that we will be able to “carryover” our extension funding to future fiscal years in accordance with the language Congress included in the 2018 Farm Bill. This carryover change brings us to equity with the 1862 Land Grant Universities. To date, none of our institutions have received any of our allocated research and extension funds for FY 2020. Given our increased financial pressures during COVID-19, releasing this money immediately is critical to the proper functioning of our Universities.

Our Three-Point Plan:

1. **Temporarily Tripling Pell Grants** - A concerted student enrollment and revenue recovery effort should be centered around a temporary tripling of Pell Grants. Sixty-three percent (63%) of 1890 Universities’ students are awarded Pell Grants each year, and at seven of our schools, that number rises to more than 90% of students. By contrast, only 31% of college students overall received Pell Grants in the 2018-19 school year.

Given our students’ already precarious financial position, the skyrocketing number of students (and their parents) who are becoming unemployed because of the pandemic will affect many students’ ability to return to school. 1890 institutions are facing an expected 35% decline in enrollment for the summer and fall semesters and will need to make-up for that revenue without having to layoff key staff and faculty members. A significant increase in federal financial aid through the Pell Grant system will ensure that low-income students do not lose ground in attending post-secondary institutions.

In addition, one of the best ways to provide stimulus while simultaneously providing incentives for people to become trained and/or retrained for the new economy is to increase the Pell Grant beyond the cost of attendance. This would provide much-needed funds for students and Universities that serve people with the highest need.

1. **$190 million to Build and Solidify Technology Infrastructure** – As we continue to build our online capacity and utilize distance learning, significant allocations will be needed at

each of our Universities in order to build this new technology infrastructure. This includes ensuring that our students, faculty and staff have access to all needed technology resources and for the training of faculty and staff on the implementation of this technology.

1. **$1.4 Billion to Maintain and Expand Research Capacity and Bolster Health Care Degree Programs to address Health Disparities** – We have a unique research and extension relationship with the USDA through our 19-University collaboration efforts. This built-in regional structure allows us to leverage resources and learn best practices efficiently. However, our institutions have almost no research collaboration with the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

This pandemic has shown that this missed opportunity with NIH should be corrected immediately. We should look to the existing partnership that the 1890 HBCUs have in addressing regional and national issues related to agriculture in collaboration with USDA by creating a similar network to partner with NIH to address regional and national issues related to health disparities through research and extension to the communities we serve.

COVID-19 has exposed the continuing health care gaps in communities of color. Many 1890 Universities have undergraduate and graduate degree programs in the health professions. While our University health care programs for nursing, physician assistants and health care technicians are addressing some staffing shortages, a concerted investment in our programs is needed to provide greater support to the country. Increased funding for these programs will greatly improve the diversity of health professionals and help address the type of health disparities that are now highlighted in the disproportionate impact of the coronavirus on African American, Hispanic, low-income and rural communities.

As we look to the future, these investments would also include starting new programs in medicine, dental, nursing, and other health care fields. Critical to this effort would be the establishment of teaching hospitals on HBCU campuses to allow medical, dental and nursing students to receive the hands-on training they need to become effective health care providers.

The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) estimates that by 2023, the U.S. could face a shortfall of between 21,000 and 55,000 primary care doctors and between 46,000 and 121,000 physicians overall by 2032. In addition, thousands of medical students fail to secure a residency position every year because there are not enough teaching hospitals and residency positions available. Thus, expanding the number of residents that Medicare is allowed to fund each year beyond 1996 levels is also critical to the success of this effort. Budget caps were placed on residency funding in the 1997 Balanced Budget Act to limit the amount Medicare had to pay to reimburse hospitals for residents’ salaries.

Establishing teaching hospitals on HBCU campuses would not only help address these expected shortages, they would also help increase the number of minority doctors in the field and the potential for more research on the health of minority and low-income populations. However, doctors are not the only shortages we are facing. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects a shortfall of 203,700 registered nurses each year through 2026 to fill newly created positions and to replace retiring nurses. Moreover, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) projects that the United States will experience shortages of psychiatrists, mental health and substance abuse social workers, and school counselors of more than 10,000 full-time employees by 2025.

These shortages are most acute in rural communities where many of our 1890 Universities are located. Providing new hubs of teaching hospitals, research and education in these communities will go a long way in addressing the unique challenges these communities face.

Thank you for your careful consideration of our request. We urge Congress to take swift action to provide the necessary additional funding to support the 1890 Universities in response to COVID-

19. We stand ready to work with you to achieve this goal.

Sincerely,



Makola M. Abdullah, Ph.D.

Chairman, Council of 1890 Universities President, Virginia State University

cc: 1890 University Presidents and Chancellors The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House

The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Senate Majority Leader The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, House Republican Leader The Honorable Charles Schumer, Senate Democratic Leader

The Honorable Pat Roberts, Chairman, Senate Agriculture Committee

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow, Ranking Member, Senate Agriculture Committee The Honorable Collin Peterson, Chairman, House Agriculture Committee

The Honorable Michael Conaway, Ranking Member, House Agriculture Committee The Honorable Alma Adams, Co-Chair, Bipartisan HBCU Caucus

The Honorable Bradley Byrne, Co-Chair, Bipartisan HBCU Caucus