

August 25, 2021

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Chairman
House Education & Labor Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Ranking Member
House Education & Labor Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Senate HELP Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Senate HELP Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Foxx, Chairwoman Murray, and Ranking Member Burr:

As the House and Senate consider funding priorities for the upcoming reconciliation bill, we, the undersigned organizations representing the interests of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) students and Asian American, Native American, and Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs) write to ask you to ensure that the reconciliation provisions under the purview of the Education Committees maintains a focus on addressing educational equity issues and ensures that AANHPI students and AANAPISIs share in that educational equity. **Specifically, we ask that Congress increase funding for AANAPISIs to \$1 billion dollars for the 10-year length of the reconciliation bill** to establish a base of support for students that have both been historically underserved in higher education and disproportionately harmed by the health, economic, educational, and racist impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. Of course, HBCUs, HSIs, TCUs, and other Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) are all underfunded compared to state flagship universities and other research institutions. That is why, although it is critical to equitably increase funding levels for AANAPISIs, **any increase should not come at the expense of other MSIs.**

The COVID-19 crisis has elevated the need to address long-standing racial, social, and economic inequalities and their intersections, and nowhere is it more evident than in our nation's schools. Students across the country have encountered disruptions, including the transition to online learning; lack of consistent peer and school staff relationships; the loss of treasured activities and needed jobs; and the overall stress and emotional toll of the pandemic on their families and communities. Food insecurity, unreliable access to remote learning technology, and reduced access to student supports and education services are just some of the elements that have played a role in disrupting and diminishing vulnerable students' learning opportunities and growth. AANHPI populations in particular have been traumatized during this pandemic, with an increased incidence of racially driven violence having been well-documented.

To address students' interrupted instruction, and to meet the range of student needs and supports brought on by the crisis and the lack of connectivity to schools, states, and districts are in need of substantial additional federal support. The recession induced by COVID-19 has impacted and will continue to impact AANAPISIs and the students they serve and these institutions will face additional costs to provide the academic, health, and emotional support that students will need as they return to school.

During this unprecedented time of need and through the recognition of grave inequities within our education system, we request that the final budget reconciliation bill:

- Address the historic underfunding of AANAPISIs by increasing funding for AANAPISIs under the Higher Education Act Title III and Title V, Parts A and F, to \$1 billion over the ten years of the bill (\$100 million dollars annually). The increased funding will establish a base of support for students that have both been historically underserved in higher education and disproportionately harmed by the health, economic, educational, and racial impacts of the COVID-19 crisis.
- Ensure sufficient funding for MSIs generally so that such institutions are able to meet the increased needs of the students they serve and so that increases in AANAPISI funding do not come at the expense of other MSIs.

We are requesting this funding increase because AANAPISIs have been chronically underfunded since their establishment and remain the category of MSI with the lowest levels of Title III & V funding. For example, in FY 2021, AANAPISI appropriations received only 1% of all Title III & V funding for MSIs, totaling just \$9.8 million. Per capita, AANAPISIs receive the least amount of federal funding compared to all other MSIs, averaging \$59,606 per AANAPISI compared to \$589,167 per HSI. In spite of this small allocation, AANAPISIs enroll 40% of all AANHPI undergraduates even though AANAPISIs make up only 5% of all colleges and universities in the United States.

Three-quarters of low-income AANHPI students attend an AANAPISI, and AANAPISIs are conferring a large concentration of both associate's and bachelor's degrees to AANHPI students. Low-income AANHPI students have a lower college-going rate and are at higher risk to leave without a degree or certificate. AANAPISIs provide critical support for these students by cultivating environments that promote the success of underserved AANHPI students and attending to their distinct needs.

Currently, 166 institutions have been identified by the U.S. Dept. of Education as an eligible AANAPISI, while only 20 of those institutions are actually receiving AANAPISI funding given the underfunding of this set of schools and students. If Congress were to equitably fund all 166 eligible AANAPISIs at the same level as HSIs, the AANAPISI program would require an annual funding amount of \$100 million—the reason for our request for \$1 billion over the 10-year length of the reconciliation bill.

COVID-19 has exacerbated and highlighted inequalities in our nation's education system. Without continued intervention and attention, these opportunity gaps will continue to widen, threatening to further entrench them. We urge you to attend to the needs of AANHPI students and address the inequities in current federal funding for AANAPISIs by including these critical resources in the final reconciliation bill. Thank you for your attention to these critical issues.

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