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Xavier University
New Orleans, LA

June 21, 2017

The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chairman
Commerce-Justice-Science Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
304 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Culberson, Chairman
Commerce-Justice-Science Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
H-310, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen, Ranking Member
Commerce-Justice-Science Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
503 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable José Serrano, Ranking Member
Commerce-Justice-Science Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Shelby and Culberson and Ranking Members Shaheen and Serrano:

On behalf of UNCF (the United Negro College Fund) and our 37-member private historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), I write to thank you for recognition of the tremendous contributions that HBCUs are making to increase the next generation of minority researchers and scientists in STEM disciplines. Additional investments in FY 2018 in the science agencies within your jurisdiction are critically needed to continue to build the scientific infrastructure at HBCUs that enable them to produce the scientific discoveries and new, diverse scientists that the nation needs.

Our country's economic competitiveness and national security will depend upon our ability to effectively address the workforce needs of rapidly growing STEM industries. Yet, only 150,000 of the 4 million students entering high school each year will graduate with a bachelor's degree in a STEM field ten years later. Fortunately, HBCUs play a critical role in advancing STEM education for African American students.

HBCUs represent approximately 3 percent of all two- and four-year colleges and universities; enroll 10 percent of all African American undergraduates; confer 17 percent of all African American undergraduate degrees; and graduate 24 percent of African Americans with undergraduate degrees in STEM fields. A key factor in our institutions' success is federal investment in their research, research training, and scientific collaboration. As deliberations on the FY 2018 Commerce-Justice-Science Appropriations Bill proceed, UNCF asks that you provide the following funding levels for the important programs listed below:

National Science Foundation (NSF)

- HBCU Undergraduate Program (HBCU-UP) - \$64 million
- Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation - \$51 million
- Alliances for Graduate Education and the Professoriate (AGEP) - \$9 million

- Centers for Research Excellence in Science and Technology (CREST) - \$26 million
- NSF INCLUDES - \$25 million
- HBCU Excellence in Research - \$10 million

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

- Minority University Research & Education Program (MUREP) - \$33 million

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

- Educational Partnerships Program/Minority Serving Institutions (EPP/MSI) - \$16 million

As you know, the National Science Foundation (NSF) Education and Human Resources Division houses the “Broadening Participation” programs that invest in HBCU STEM curriculum, instrumentation, and academic supports. Creating opportunities and developing innovative strategies to broaden participation among diverse individuals, institutions and geographic areas are critical to the NSF mission of identifying and funding work at the leading edge of discovery. These programs create educational opportunities for thousands of minority students; provide important resources for basic research; encourage minority engagement in the STEM fields; and increase opportunities to diversify the STEM professoriate. We urge that a total of \$185 million be provided for the NSF programs listed above.

NASA’s Minority University Research & Education Program (MUREP) is investing in undergraduate research training and fostering new aerospace science and technology capabilities at MSIs across the country. MUREP projects are funded through multi-year grants. These projects address the difficulties associated with recruiting and retaining scientific talent. Projects offer opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate students in NASA-related research and mission specific technology development. Faculty research and curriculum improvement initiatives are also eligible for funding. We urge that you increase the federal investment in MUREP to \$33 million.

The NOAA Educational Partnership Program/Minority Serving Institutions (EPP/MSI) provides important financial assistance to MSIs to graduate students who are well prepared in NOAA mission-relevant fields. EPP/MSI also supports collaborative research projects to better understand the significance of changes in the Earth’s oceans, coasts, Great Lakes, weather, and climate. The President’s FY 2018 budget request proposes to eliminate funding for the NOAA Education Program, which includes the EPP/MSI Program. We ask that the NOAA Education Program is restored and the EPP/MSI Program remain a specific line item in the budget and that its funding be increased to \$16 million.

While we are proud of the work that UNCF’s 37 member HBCUs are doing in STEM research, education and innovation, the federal government must do more to invest in HBCUs to continue and expand this critical work. Thus, we appreciate your consideration of our FY 2018 appropriations requests and look forward to your support.

Sincerely,



Michael L. Lomax, Ph.D.
President & CEO