



February 23, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Joseph R. Biden,

We look forward supporting your campaign's education platform and assisting with new initiatives to ensure that all students have access to a high-quality education. We support your campaign's commitment to improve teacher diversity, and to work with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) to achieve this goal.¹

A teaching workforce that reflects the racial diversity of our nation's students is key to increasing achievement for all students. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) have been instrumental in educating our nation's racially and ethnically diverse teachers. To support these institutions of higher education, we write to request that you include \$40 million to fund the Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence grant program under Title II of the *Higher Education Act* (HEA) of 1965 in your FY2022 budget. This program provides competitive grants to HBCUs, TCUs, and MSIs to prepare current and future teachers and school leaders to be profession-ready, certified, and licensed.

There are clear benefits to having a teaching workforce that reflects our nation's population. Research shows that all students benefit from having diverse teachers. This is especially true for students of color who demonstrate greater academic achievement and social and emotional development in classes with teachers of color.² Studies show that Black teachers are more likely to recommend high-achieving Black students for talented and gifted programs, which eliminates the gap in access to these programs.³ Research also indicates that racially diverse students perform better in school when they have had at least one same race teacher.⁴ Yet, 80% of the United States teaching workforce identifies as white, while 40 percent of people and over half of all students in the United States identifies as non-white.⁵ We must invest in the strategies and interventions that have proven to be effective at producing a racially and ethnically diverse teaching workforce.

HBCUs, TCUs, and MSIs, collectively, award only 11% of the nation's bachelor's degrees in education, yet they produce more than 50% of the bachelor's degrees earned in education by Hispanic, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students.⁶ HBCUs graduate approximately 50% of the nation's African American teachers with bachelor's degrees.⁷ HSIs prepare 90% of Hispanic teachers, and along with other MSIs, constitute a vital pipeline to maintain diversity among our nation's teachers.⁸ We should continue to support the organizations that are already doing a great job at producing our nation's racially and ethnically diverse teachers.

Although the Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence Grant program was authorized under Title II of the HEA, the program has never been funded. We support this grant program because it would provide critical funding to HBCUs, TCUs, and MSIs that can be used to enhance educator preparation programs by providing extensive clinical experience amongst other things. This funding can also be used to provide financial aid to prospective teachers helping to eliminate a key barrier to a diverse educator workforce as students of color are more heavily impacted by the high cost of college and student loan debt.⁹ We believe that investing in this grant program is key to producing a diverse teaching workforce that better reflects our nation's student population.

We believe that \$40 million for the Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence grant program should be included in your FY 2022 budget. This grant program would provide support to educational institutions that have been instrumental in ensuring that our teaching workforce reflects the demographics of our students and the Nation.

Sincerely,



Khalilah M. Harris, EdD, JD
Acting Vice President, K12 Education Policy
Center for American Progress

¹ <https://joebiden.com/education/>

² Carver-Thomas, D. (2018). *Diversifying the teaching profession: How to recruit and retain teachers of color*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

³ Jill Barshay, "Bright Black Students Taught by Black Teachers Are More Likely to Get Into Gifted-and-Talented Classrooms," *The Hechinger Report*, January 19, 2016, available at <https://hechingerreport.org/bright-black-students-who-are-taught-by-black-teachers-are-more-likely-to-get-into-gifted-and-talented-classrooms/>; Baskerville, Lezli et al., "The Role of Historically Black Colleges and Universities in Faculty Diversity in American Federation of Teachers," *American Educator*, www.aft.org.

⁴ David Figlio, "The Importance of a Diverse Teaching Force" (Washington: Brookings Institution, 2017), available at <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-importance-of-a-diverse-teaching-force/>.

⁵ American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, “AACTE Releases First National Data Report on Teach Preparation Profession,” Press release, March 20, 2013, available at <https://aacte.org/2013/03/aacte-releases-first-national-data-report-on-teacher-preparation-profession/>.

⁶ Branch Alliance for Educator Diversity, “Homepage,” available at <https://www.educatordiversity.org/>

⁷ Jacqueline Jordan Irvine and Leslie T. Fenwick, “Teachers and Teaching for the New Millennium: The Role of HBCUs,” *The Journal of Negro Education* 80 (3) (2011): 197–208, available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41341128>; National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education: Comments to the Department of Education proposed rule changes for teacher preparation programs available at: http://nafeonation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/NADEC_Teacher_Prep_Regulations_Discussion_Document_2-2-15_.pdf.

⁸ Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, “Teacher Diversity,” <https://www.hacuadvocates.net/teacherdiversity?1>.

⁹ Carver-Thomas, D. (2018). *Diversifying the teaching profession: How to recruit and retain teachers of color*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute; Bayliss Fiddiman, Colleen Campbell, and Lisette Partelow, “Student Debt: An Overlooked Barrier to Increasing Teacher Diversity,” July 2019 Center for American Progress <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-postsecondary/reports/2019/07/09/471850/student-debt-overlooked-barrier-increasing-teacher-diversity/>.